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# Stencilled Occasional Paper

YOUNG WOMEN AND WORK

The Transition from School to the Labour Market
for Young Working Class Women

by

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Introduction.

This paper is a revised version of the final report to the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) on the 'Young Women and Work' project.[1] It gives a brief summary of the study's main arguments and conclusions, since a fuller ethnographic analysis is available elsewhere (Griffin, forthcoming). The project was initially set up to be complementary to Paul Willis's work on the school to work transition for young white working class men (Willis, 1977); to combine an ethnographic cultural analysis with a social psychological perspective; and to employ mainly qualitative research methods based on interviews and observation. It aimed to examine the particular influences of gender relations and family life on the school to work transition for young working class women.

The research fell into two distinct stages, based in a range of schools and workplaces. The first stage involved visits to six Birmingham schools, both single sex (girls) and co-educational; Catholic, Church of England and non-denominational; ranging from 500 to over 1,500 students. One was independent (ex-direct grant), three of the remaining state schools had been secondary moderns, and one was an amalgamation of a grammar and a secondary modern, following Birmingham's shift to comprehensive education in 1974. These schools took in students from a range of class, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Each school was visited at least three times in the early part of 1979, when I interviewed headteachers, careers and form teachers, and career officers. I talked to 180 school students individually and in groups, including young middle and working class women; Asian, white and Afro-Caribbean students; and some boys. These were mainly 'non-academic' Fifth form girls who expected to leave school as soon as possible and look for full-time jobs. In order to put their experiences in educational context, I also talked to Sixth formers who hoped to go on to university and college

after their 'A' levels; to Fifth formers taking 'O' levels and/or CSE's who hoped to stay on at school, and to those who were unsure of whether to leave or to stay on.

Twenty five young white working class women were then followed from the Fifth form with few (or no) academic qualifications into their first two years in the labour market.(2) They were visited regularly at home, in local coffee bars, clubs and pubs, and at work if possible. I talked to young women's girlfriends, mothers and sisters: male relatives and friends regarded me with a distant and wary interest. The limited time and resources available meant that I focussed on young women's experiences in 'women's jobs' in offices and factories; in non-traditional 'men's work' in engineering, and during periods of unemployment. The ten workplace case studies involved interviews with employers, supervisors, co-workers, and YOPs workers.

The research relied on informal, loosely-structured interviews and systematic observations. Most of the interviews were tape recorded, and I made comprehensive and detailed fieldnotes throughout the project.(3) The school-based stage of the research relied mainly on interviews, and focussed on young women's expectations about leaving school and entering the full-time 'adult' labour market. The second, workplace phase involved systematic observation as well as a series of interviews with the young women, concentrating on their experience of waged work and unemployment, and the changes associated with the transition from school to the labour market.

Although there is a fairly extensive research literature on (mainly white working class) male youth sub-cultures and the school to work transition, young women's experiences have rarely been mentioned (McRobbie, 1980). Male researchers have tended to see young women in terms of their relationships (or lack of them) to young men. There is now a developing (and mainly feminist) literature concerning gender relations in schooling and the labour market which focusses on young women's lives and this study aims to contribute



towards that work (e.g. Amos and Parmar, 1981; Deem, 1980; Sharpe, 1976; Spender and Sarah, 1980; Pollert, 1981; Jamdagni, 1981).

Education and Leaving School

Most 'non-academic' female school leavers in 1979 moved into low paid, low status 'women's jobs' in offices, shops and factories, with negligible chances of training or promotion (CIS report, 1981; Bennet and Carter, 1983). They would also be expected to get a boyfriend, marry and eventually have children by their mid-twenties (Leonard, 1981). This section looks at young women's hopes and expectations as they faced simultanious pressures to get a job and to get a man.

One group did not expect to move straight from school into the full-time labour market: the mainly white and middle class Sixth formers in the more prestigious 'academic' schools. Most of these young women hoped to go on to university or college after their 'A' levels, and those who did want to go directly into waged work were in a minority. They all felt 'sheltered from real life' by their privileged position.

Gill: In this school we're conditions from the first year that you're gonna go to university.

Dianne: [leaving to get a job]: I think it's 'cos we're scared of getting a job actually (laugh). [......] Most people here will get a shock when they leave school to get a job. We've led sheltered lives and we couldn't leave at sixteen to earn a living.

Julie: Although we have Saturday jobs, we don't really know what life's about.

Liz: We don't know, we are very sheltered. I mean we've never come up against any sort of hostility in this school, never been beaten up (laughs). The ones who've come in now [since the school went comprehensive], they're more sort of working class and they all talk about boys. Mind you, you do tend to be a bit snobbish about these things.

(St. Catherines, white 6th formers)

The harsh material conditions of working class life were conflated with the nature of working class cultures. These young women were more likely to find secure and fairly well-paid jobs than their black and white working class sisters, and did not face equivalent economic pressures to



'get a man'. Heterosexuality, and to a lesser extent, marriage and motherhood, were seen as inevitable 'facts of life', with no acceptable alternatives available. The whole area of managing future domestic and career commitments was fraught with contradictions, and was often the subject of heated discussions.

The dominant exam-based educational criteria defined non-academic students as failures in all of the schools. In the ex-grammar and direct grant schools, 'non-academic' might mean leaving school at sixteen with a few 'O' levels, whilst the ex-secondary moderns saw non-academic students as those who left without taking any exams.(4) Careers officers and teachers advised black and white working class school leavers to be 'realistic' and fit their ambitions into the needs of the local labour market.

Sheila: I hate this school. Especially Miss Neville, she's so sarky [sarcastic]. She says "I can see what sort of home you're from, you'll never get anywhere" (...) She's mean.

(Moorcroft, white 5th former)

Sharon: School's awful. Ours is. They don't care about you. If you do exams they do, otherwise they don't care, they don't push you or bother with you. It's OK in the first and second years, but after that if they don't think you're any good and you don't work, they give up.

(Tildesley, Afro-Caribbean 5th Former)

Not all teachers and careers officers aimed to reinforce a sense of failure in these students, but the pressure to produce good exam results was overwhelming. Young women's decision to leave school at sixteen or stay on, to go to college or look for a full-time job was rarely straightforward. It could be drawn out over several weeks - even months. They compared the advice of teachers, careers officers, friends and relatives, and considered the relative availability (or lack) of local authority grants and college places, and the state of the local labour market.

All of the students felt ambivalent about leaving school, even those who had definitely 'had enough'. They looked forward to the end of boring lessons and the humdrum routine of school life, but regretted the possibility of losing touch with close girlfriends - and some teachers.

CG: How do you feel about leaving school?

Mary: I think you'll miss your friends mainly.

Sheila: Won't miss the lessons (laugh).

Mary: You might, you never know, you might think of, you know, all the larks and that you had at school, and you might be sitting at home just watching the telly or summat, and you'd think "ooh it was good at school", but you didn't think it when you was at school.

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Elaine: I won't miss the actual school. Perhaps some of the people, but not the school itself as an institute. (laugh).

(Moorcroft, white 5th formers)

Their headmistress viewed this process of leaving school in a wider historical perspective:

Mrs.Evans: I remember when they left school at fourteen, and in the third year we hated to teach them, they were a problem. They seemed so old, mature and confident, and then look at the fourteen year olds now - they are like children (....) School forces them to stay young.

(Moorcroft)

Leaving school also meant leaving the abhorred child-like status of the schoolgirl, and entering the more prestigious and 'adult' world of the full-time labour market. Non-academic young women were encouraged to move into traditional women's jobs by teachers, careers advisers, relatives and friends. This was not always an overtly positive pressure, but those with 'inappropriate' ambitions or interests in 'male' subjects or jobs, rarely received much encouragement. (cf. Newton, 1981).

Schools have been legally obliged to offer all subjects to female and



male students since the Sex Discrimination Act was passed in 1975. This legislation has led to a variety of curriculum changes in different schools, but subsequent shifts in the proportion of girls and boys taking non-traditional subjects have been minimal (Spender and Sarah, 1980). The Fifth formers I talked to were the last year to have been totally unaffected by the legislation, and this was a source of much resentment amongst the young women.

In mixed schools, male students (and teachers) tended to take woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing (TD) and physical science, whilst mainly girls (and women teachers) took cookery, needlework, childcare and commerce. Most of the 'male' subjects were not offered in girls' schools. The latter had a more academic bias, and frowned on such vocational subjects.(5) In the mixed schools I visited, most teachers assumed that boys taking a 'female' subject like cookery wanted a job in catering, whilst girls taking TD or woodwork were seen to be interested solely in flirting with the boys. I only found one example of positive discrimination which favoured a group of boys at Lodgehill, who were given special cookery classes after school.

This gap between 'female' and 'male' subjects in school was exacerbated by assumptions about the nature of women's and men's work in general, and by the separation between female and male friendship groups both in and out of school. Young women had a fairly low opinion of their male peers, and mixed mainly with small groups of girlfriends.

CG: Do you go around with girls or boys in school?

Cathy: Not the boys no! Have you <u>seen</u> them? If they was the last men on earth I'd turn queer. (laugh) I suppose they're OK really, but you can't talk to them, they're too stupid.

(Lodgehill, white 5th former).

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Sharon: Boys just run around and get in your way, and they always hit yer.

Marion: Boys are violent. When we want some peace we go and sit in the toilets.

(Tildesley, white 5th formers).

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Penny: Boys mess around more than girls do.

Jacinta: Only if they feel like beating the drum.

Penny: All that moaning if they don't feel like working.

(Lodgehill, Afro-Caribbean 5th formers)

Studies of youth subcultures have concentrated on the predominantly male 'gang of lads' model, based around a fairly large and stable group with a recognisable style and identity, (see Hebdige, 1979 and McRobbie, 1980, for critiques of this work). Like Lynne Davies (1979), I found no direct female equivalent to this 'gang of lads' model. Young women, both middle and working class, Black and white, 'hung around' in fairly small female friendship groups which were continually shifting around. There were both long-established pairs of 'best friends', and more variable groups of three and four. Young Asian and Afro-Caribbean women tended to 'stick together' for support in the face of frequent racist remarks and even attacks from their white peers.

This does not invalidate the notion of female cultures, since the young women did operate some 'shared principles of life' with which they made sense of everyday experience. Such 'shared principles' have been presented as the basis of a culture (see Education Group, 1981, p.27; Griffin, in press). There were identifiable female cultures in school, in leisure and in the workplace, but these took a different form to comparable male cultures. I found no female equivalent to the counter-school culture of white working class 'lads', and no straightforward connection between female cultures in school and waged work (cf. Willis, 1977). This does not mean that Willis's analysis was mistaken, simply that it could not be easily transposed to explain women's experiences.



The distinction between female conformity and deviance centred on sexuality rather than disruptive aggression (see Griffin, 1982 b; Davies, 1979), and there was no neat link between 'problem girls', anti-school attitudes and counter-school cultures. One group of young women, for example, were seen as 'troublemakers' by teachers:

CG: So do you think you've changed as you've gone up the school?

Berni: Yeh we've gone madder (laugh)

CG: Who isn't mad in your form?

Shelly: Well there's three that don't laugh or mess around.

Berni: They don't laugh, I've never seen 'em laugh. They take life too serious, they should be laughing like us. (laugh)

CG: Are they going to stay on

Berni: A lot of them yeh, the pets. They're posh too, snobs, wanna do office jobs. We're the troublemakers (laugh).

(St. Martins, white 5th formers)

Within a month of leaving school, Berni was working as an office junior in a city centre firm.

Most young working class women expected to move into 'women's jobs' in offices, shops and factories. They had definite requirements of a full-time job even if they were not certain in which employment sector their future lay. They wanted interesting work, reasonable wages and working conditions, and a good social atmosphere: 'a good group of mates'. Young women were encouraged to 'choose' traditionally female jobs by teachers and careers advisers, but their 'choices' also reflected accurate assessments of the marked gender divisions in the local labour market, and a positive preference for more supportive female co-workers.

CG: Had you heard of this engineering scheme for girls

Cathy: I never thought of doing (....) nothing like that. It's funny, I can't imagine a woman engineer, but there's no reason why not. I suppose I don't like getting my hands

dirty. I tried woodwork and that in the first year at school, but when it came to options in the fourth year, you only had four choices, and I wasn't going to risk it.

Jeannette: Plus the fact because you didn't do it in the second year and the boys did, they had done a hell of a lot more than you, and the teacher would think "ugh, that's another one to catch up".

Cathy: And the careers officers, they don't come up to you and say: "do you want to be an engineer?" If you're a girl they say: "What do you want to do, a typist, hairdresser, nurse?" (....) Plus the fact that the thought isn't in your head in the first place, and they're not gonna put it there.

(Lodgehill, white 5th formers)

Teachers, parents and young women themselves saw office work as the most desirable employment for female school leavers. It was assumed to offer good pay, prospects and working conditions, and the chance to meet eligible men in high status, well-paid white collar jobs. Factory work was seen to present a far less attractive prospect by comparison; as dirty and noisy, and 'not a nice job for a girl'. This distinction between office and factory work operated in school to differentiate 'snobs' from 'mad girls' and 'trouble-makers', although this did not necessarily bear a direct relation to young women's subsequent employment. Office work was also associated with a particular 'nice' white and middle class ideal of femininity which 'bad girls' rejected in school.

CG: So what do you like about working in an office?

Von: Oh just do typing.

Janice: And dress nice, yeah, 'cos it's clean.

Von: I don't wanna work in a factory.

Janice: I'm not fussy, I'll do anything.

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Viv: Those lot that want to do office jobs, they're snobs, think they're it.

Loz: Yeh, look down on us lot.

(Tildesley, white 5th formers)



Penny: It'd be boring, man, in an office, I couldn't stand it, me. You make more friends in factories, they're friendlier.

Jancinta: Sitting down all day, being nice to people, huh.

(Lodgehill, Afro-Caribbean 5th formers)

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CG: So do your parents want you to do anything in particular?

Sue: No, not really, well anything as long as you get money, 'cos I ain't got any brains for a proper job like a secretary or something like that. That's what they all say.

(Lodgehill, white 5th former)

There was one other job area which marked out a clear division between groups of young women (and men): their view of the police and armed forces. No Black students would even consider such work because of their experiences of police harassment. Several white students saw the police or the forces as desirable, secure jobs which would allow them to leave home and travel. Whilst young white working class men were attracted to such work out of a desire for 'power', their female peers saw it as exciting and interesting 'work with people'.(6) None of the young women who hoped to join the police or armed forces ever realised their ambitions.

Young women's expectations about full-time work seldom matched their experiences in the labour market, especially where office work was concerned. The transition from school to work was rarely a sudden move, since over half the students had some form of part-time employment before leaving school. (see Table 1; and Finn, 1981). They worked mainly in local shops and hair-dressers, and as paid babysitters, for extremely low wages. Few young women wanted to continue their part-time jobs on a full-time basis, but for non-academic working class school leavers there were few alternatives, and little chance of finding more interesting or better paid work. The other areas of young women's lives which influenced the transition from school to the job market were family life, domestic commitments and leisure.

Family Life and Leisure

Young women's status in the family affected their schooling, leisure, and position in the labour market. Girls and women did most of the housework and childcare in the home, which was unpaid and largely unrecognised. (see Table 2). White middle class sixth formers did the least domestic work because of their academic workload, and they could use schoolwork as an excuse to avoid these chores. 'Non-academic' working class girls were the most likely to have their schooling disrupted because of domestic commitments. Their school 'non-attendance' was more likely to be attributed to domestic causes, and was taken less seriously than the 'truancy' of their male peers. (Shaw, 1978). Childcare commitments prevented one young woman (Sandra) from taking up her college place on a hairdressing course, and irrevocably damaged her chances in the labour market.

Contrary to recent suggestions that the white middle class is developing a new egalitarian symmetrical family form (Young and Willmott, 1973; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976), the most equal distribution of domestic work was in Afro-Caribbean households. All of the young women objected to the unbalanced gender-based division of domestic labour, but the sheer effort involved in forcing brothers and fathers to even help out was simply too much. Young women looked forward to the day when they could pass their domestic chores 'down' to a younger sister once they had a full-time job.

There is a widespread assumption that the nuclear family of father in full-time job, mother as a full-time housewife, and an average of 2.3. children is normal, even universal. In fact, this form is a relatively recent development which is most characteristic of the contemporary white middle class in Britain (Coussins and Coote, 1981). This was confirmed in the schools interviews, where the nuclear family was most prevalent amongst white (especially Protestant and middle class) students (see Table 3.). Any alternative family forms (e.g. Asian, Afro-Caribbean and Catholic family



structures) were seen as abnormal or deprived by teachers, employers and some students (see Race and Politics group, 1982).

Life in their families of origin was not without conflict for many young working-class women, often because of arguments with their step/fathers or brothers. Ten of the Fifth formers I spoke to admitted that they had left home at some stage. They had been forced to return due to lack of money and their minimal legal rights as young people below the age of sixteen. Four of the school leavers left home to live in shared rented flats during 1980 and '81 but lack of money had eventually forced them all to return.(7)

Although it was difficult to talk about, and almost impossible to quantify, male domestic violence and sexual abuse played a significant part in young women's desire to leave home. These areas were only mentioned in later interviews outside school, when young women began to talk about their own experiences:

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| Deb: | Did you see that film about battered women on the telly the other night? |
| El: | Yeh, it's terrible. She could have fought back like my mam does. <u>She</u> hits him back. |
| Penny: | Don't you think she might get beat up worse then? |
| | [...] |
| El. | What if you have a daughter and she looks like you: If you go and leave her he'll take it out on her 'cos she reminds him of you. |
| Sue: | If he beats you up does it mean he loves yer? |
| Deb: | When I first went with blokes I thought that getting beat up was just normal 'cos it happens all the time. I thought I had to put up with it 'cos that was what women was supposed to expect. Then I realised that it was wrong to have to put up with it. |

(Tildesley, white ex-5th formers, Deb was seventeen and left in 1978).

Although it is often assumed that such male violence only occurs in 'problem families', the research shows that it happens in all groups, regardless of class, race or region (Beezeley, et al, 1982). Recent

reports on domestic violence and sexual abuse estimate that there are at least 400,000 cases of 'indictable crimes of violence within marriage' alone in Britain, although only 2% are reported to the police (Dobash and Dobash, 1980). One in ten girls in Britain have probably experienced some form of sexual abuse from a (male) blood relative (Rush, 1980). The first annual report of Birmingham's rape crisis centre in 1980 found that young women aged between sixteen and twenty five were the most likely victims of rape, and 15% of their cases were under fifteen.(8)

I am not suggesting that all of the young women I talked to had been battered or sexually abused, but there is certainly a massive silence around this area. This is especially worrying because girls and young women are most at risk of such abuse. Where teachers and employers did mention domestic violence, it was in relation to the supposed 'problem families' of young working class and particularly Black women. The latter were just as likely to have experienced male domestic violence as their white and middle class sisters, and for young Black women, their family of origin could offer them a refuge from racist attacks and insults. (Amos and Parmar, 1981).

For most young women, the pressures to prove their heterosexuality and get a boyfriend were particularly crucial. Heterosexuality is not a 'natural' or inevitable biological phenomenon, nor a free sexual 'choice', but a social event. It is institutionalised in the practices of the contemporary medical profession (amongst others), so that heterosexuality is seen as the normal sexuality, and all alternatives (e.g. celibacy, bisexuality, homosexuality) come to be treated as abnormal and deviant (Rich, 1979; Rubin, 1975).

For all of the young women I spoke to , heterosexuality, like marriage, was seen as an inevitable part of their family lives and cultural traditions. Living outside of this 'normal' pattern would bring financial



problems and social sanctions. Young white women experienced these pressures to 'get a man' in relation to the powerful ideology of romantic love, whilst young Asian and Afro-Caribbean women were more likely to 'see through' this mythical ideal, (Griffin, 1982a; McRobbie, 1978).

Carol: I don't believe in marriage, me. Waste of time.

CG: [to Clare and Jane] What about you? Do you think you might

Jane & Clare: Yeh

Carol: I knew they would (laugh)

(St. Martins, Clare and Jane are white girls, and Carol is an Afro-Caribbean 5th former)

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Jasbinder: I want to be independent and have my own company - I'm ambitious to get on - to be a legal assistant. I want to be a lawyer eventually. I don't want to get married. I think my nationality is the most important thing to me - about me.

(St. Martins, Asian 5th former)

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Treena: If a bloke asks you for sex, what do you do?

Brid: I'd tell him to go off and have a wank!

Stella: You dirty thing!

Kate: It's wrong, you ought to get married in a white dress.

Stella: But I don't think it is, if you like a bloke why not Why wait till you're married?

(...)

Kate: You ought to sleep with a bloke if you loved him and he asked you to.

Stella: But you just said that you have to get married in white!

(St. Martins, white 5th formers)

Not all young white women rushed happily towards marriage and motherhood, and they were ambivalent about 'romance', but pressures to 'get a man'

were especially marked in the sphere of leisure. The local amenities available to school students and other young people catered mainly for young men. This was most marked in the main statutory provision, youth clubs.(9) Additional constraints included lack of money, parental restrictions, the very real threat of male violence and sexual harassment, and the increasing incidence of racist attacks on young Black women. Finding an older boyfriend with a good job could be a passport to more exciting and expensive leisure activities, although young women had to beware of potential drawbacks: 'they're only after one thing though: sex'.

Young women's leisure time outside of school was spent 'hanging around' or 'dossing' together, smoking, listening to records, sharing gossip and problems (cf. McRobbie, 1978). This was mainly based in the home, but it could include visits to the city centre on Saturdays or during the week, 'nicking off' school. Leisure activities could include secretive glue-sniffing and cider-drinking sessions: 'having a laugh'.

Sonia: A group of us cleared a whole counter at L...... up town [large city centre store]. Nicked the lot! (laugh)

(Lodgehill, white 5th former).

As the young women grew older, getting a boyfriend appeared to be more important due to pressures from their peers and the (female) youth-orientated media. They promised to stay faithful to each other, and not to 'deff each other out' if one began to 'go steady'. This sometimes worked, but in many cases female friendship groups began to break down, and this process intensified once young women had left the regular everyday contact of school life.

Ann-Marie: I don't see my friends so much now 'cos I've got a boyfriend, I only see the one. It feels funny 'cos I used to have ever such a good lot, a good group of mates, when I was at school.

(Tildesley, white ex-5th former)



Mandy: There was a crowd of about six [girls] at school who promised to keep in touch. Well Jenny got this boy-friend and an office job, and she can't be bothered with us. She thinks she's better than us but she's got no friend at all now. (...) It's OK to go out with fellas, but you don't have to deff out your friends do you? (10)

(St. Martins, white ex-5th former)

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Jeanette: We've know each other for years and we decided once we left school we don't want to split. So we've kept in touch, there's a group of us. We go out together, or sit in here listening to records and drinking.

Cathy: It's their spare room for guests, insurance men, rent men, policemen (laugh). The family all hide in the back.

(Lodgehill, white ex-5th formers)

Young women who lived close together in the same working class neighbourhood were the least likely to lose touch after leaving school or if one got a regular boyfriend. Unemployed young women were the most affected, often finding that they had little money to go out with, and no-one with whom to spend their hours of enforced idleness. It was 'going steady' that led to the breakdown of female friendship groups, as young women gradually saw less of each other, often at the boyfriends' insistence. This was most marked amongst young white women, because Asian and Afro-Caribbean women had stronger traditions of female support and solidarity.

This breakdown of female friendship groups undermined the basis of female cultures outside of school and the workplace, and paved the way for (white) women's future isolation in the home as wives and mothers (see Hobson, 1978). There was no corresponding split in male friendship groups if they began to go out with young women, and young men continued to see their 'mates' at the football club, or the local pub. 'Going steady' transformed young women's leisure time to a new focus around the couple, whilst young men's contacts with their male friends continued almost unchanged. (Griffin, et al, 1980).

Young women did not sit back and watch the gradual disappearance of their female friendships, they developed various strategies for maintaining these valued social contacts. These included refusing to 'deff out' their girlfriends, 'two-timing' boyfriends, and a whole range of methods designed to 'keep the boys at bay'. (Griffin, 1982a).

Cathy: We take blokes for a ride at discoes though (laugh) We're awful, we kid them on, last time we pretended we was French, or Swedish was it? I got that from my sister. You put on these accents so you make out you don't understand when they try something on. Then when they ask what you want to drink, it's "gin and tonic" quick as a flash in a Brummy accent. (laugh)

(....)

Jeanette: Yeh, and if you say you're a police cadet then flash your travelcard, that soon gets rid of them. (laugh)

So whilst the move from school to the labour market had an important impact on young working class women's lives, so did the shift towards 'going steady' with a regular boyfriend. Not all of the young women did have boyfriends, but the 'deffing out' process meant they were all affected to some extent by these changes.

## Entering the Full-time Labour Market

The twenty-five young women who were followed from the Fifth form in 1979 soon missed 'having a laugh' with their friends at school - especially other girls. They were all glad to have left the authoritarian atmosphere of control at school, but some did admit that they missed particular teachers. They were all pleased to have entered the 'adult' world of the full-time labour market, although their jobs did not necessarily match up to their expectations. Earning a full-time wage brought an enhanced social status, and some much-needed money, but 'nicking off' at work meant losing a day's pay.

These young women followed the national and local trend, moving into



a fairly narrow range of 'women's jobs' in offices, shops and factories (Tables 4, 5 and 6). These jobs were at a relatively low skill level, with negligible training or day-release provision, and fairly low wages (Table 9; CIS report, 1981; Bennet and Carter, 1983). Their gross weekly wages in 1979 varied from £20 - £25 (in hairdressing and some factory work); through £30 - £35 (office and shop work); to £40 - £45 (in some factory work and 'men's jobs' in engineering). Wage levels in factory work showed the greatest variation because they were usually paid on a piece-work rather than an hourly basis.

The workplace case studies focussed on 'women's jobs' in offices and factories, and 'men's work' in engineering, and they were all carried out in 1980 and '81 in different parts of Birmingham's central industrial area. Birmingham is Britain's second largest city, with a population of over one million. It began to expand fairly rapidly at the start of the industrial revolution, as people from the surrounding rural communities moved towards the area around the canal system in search of work. Birmingham was the centre of numerous 'small metal trades' which supplied metal buckles, badges, buttons, nails, screws and bullets to most parts of the 19th century British Empire. The city soon gained a reputation as 'the workshop of the world'.

In most parts of Britain, the process of industrialisation led to the development of the factory system, in which numerous small workshops were amalgamated under a single capitalist manufacturer. There were relatively few such large 'manufactories' in 19th century Birmingham, and many small workshops retained their own distinctive character in the various metal trades. They also retained a degree of autonomy, each having their own 'small masters' - some of whom were women. (Pinchbeck, 1930).

In the late 1970's, Birmingham industry was dominated by the large nationalised motor manufacturers (British Leyland) and their component suppliers (GKN, Lucas's, Fort Dunlop). However, it still relied on the

numerous small, family-owned businesses in the 'jewelry quarter' in the Soho and Hockley districts of the city. Many of these firms had employed working class girls and women to do low-skilled light assembly work for decades, and had a long history of opposition to union organisation.

The nature of women's work in the Birmingham labour market has changed considerably since the 18th century. Women lost many of their traditional domestic skills (e.g. brewing and spinning) with the shift from the domestic to the industrial system and the separation of the home from the place of employment for many working people. Women worked in Birmingham's small metal trades, but some younger women earned more in the heavier manual jobs (e.g. breaking limestone for the furnaces), and many married women and children continued to work from home, doing outwork for the nail, pin and needle making trades (Pinchbeck, 1930; Hall in Whitelegg et al, 1982).

Young single women gained some benefits from the industrial revolution, since they were paid an individual wage (rather than seeing their wages paid to the male head of the household). These minimal gains were undermined during the later 19th century as a result of the Liberal reforms. (Bland et al, 1978). Protective legislation restricted the conditions of women's and children's employment, pleasing the bourgeois philanthropists who were horrified, and the male craft unions who wanted to protect their own jobs from being undercut by employers' use of cheap female and child labour.

So women had moved out of many areas which would now be seen as 'men's jobs', by the end of the 19th century. During the two world wars of the 20th century (so far), women were suddenly encouraged to move back into heavy manual 'men's jobs' in munitions factories and on the land. When 'our boys' returned from each war, women were forced out of these jobs and urged to stay at home and produce the next generation (Adam, 1975). In the period after the second world war, Britain's booming economy needed cheap unskilled labour once again, and the proportion of married women in the labour market increased. This time they were concentrated in low paid 'women's jobs' and part-time work.



British industry needed still more cheap unskilled workers, and Black people were recruited in parts of the New Commonwealth during the 1950s and '60s. In Birmingham, Asian and Afro-Caribbean people from parts of India, Pakistan, Africa and the Caribbean came to work in the public sector, in hospitals, the transport services and the lower levels of the motor industry.(11) Black people are still employed in the least skilled, lowest paid sectors of the Birmingham labour market, and black school leavers are more likely to be unemployed than their white peers. (Tables 8 and 9; Race and Politics Group, 1982).

<u>'Women's Work': Office Jobs</u>

One group of young women were followed from school into office work, which only became an area of female employment in the lat 19th century. Single or 'unattached' bourgeois women moved into office work first, followed later by their educated working class sisters. It was only <u>after</u> the introduction of typewriters and mechanical calculators had led to a sharp decline in male clerks' prospects, that women came to be used as a source of cheap labour in the office. Office technology has remained largely unchanged since then, until the recent introduction of microprocessors and visual display units; the 'new technology' (see Downing, 1981; McNally, 1979).

The office case studies covered a variety of young women's work as office juniors, telephone/receptionists, in typing pools and on data processors. Most young women found that office jobs did not live up to their glamourous image, and usually involved poorly paid, monotonous work with limited promotion prospects. Although secretarial and clerical work involved a range of skills, this was seldom reflected in the job hierarchy within office work, and in-service training was rare. Young women were expected to gain secretarial skills at school or college, in their own time and at their own expense.

One exception to this tendency was the Universal Metals (UM) secretarial school, where Tracey worked as a trainee (starting on £24 a week training allowance). UM is a British-based multi-national company with interests in wrought and refined metals, building materials, plastics and general engineering. Above their extremely plush directors' offices at the Birmingham site was the rather dingy premises of the secretarial school.

The school took on about ten young women each year (no males had ever applied) for the eight-month course. The latter aimed to produce (female) secretaries and personal assistants for UM management, the jobs at the top of the office work hierarchy. The course tutor explained the problems arising from the lack of a standardised skill-based job hierarchy in the office:

Ms.Stewart: Secretarial work is skilled, and it's not recognised. So there's no distinction between office juniors and women just out of training who all call themselves secretaries.

The attraction of office work lay partly in the promised chance of promotion from the typing pool or the switchboard to a prestigious personal assistant's job. Like all of the female office workers I spoke to, Tracey saw this as an illusory promise (Downing, 1981; Griffin, forthcoming).

Tracey: I mean, however far we go, we'll never be the boss will we? We'll always be secretary to the boss (laugh).

Banking was one of the most desirable sectors of office work because it offered training and the chance of promotion away from the more menial secretarial and clerical jobs. The manager of the small city centre branch where Elaine worked expressed this as follows:

Mr. Shaw: It's ideal for a girl, good clean conditions, nice people. The job itself is repetitious at first, but there is job security once you get in, as long as you don't do something awful (laugh). And girls can get on now, there are women even in management, if they've got it.

Yet most women progressed no further than working as cashiers on the front tills, whilst men moved on into management. Banks had been compelled



to offer day release training to women as well as men after the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, and yet few women stuck out the years of training required to move beyond a cashier's job.[12] Even in banking the promise of promotion rang hollow, but at least some training provision was available.

Women are concentrated in the lower status, lower paid menial office jobs, with men in the more powerful and prestigious managerial positions. This status difference rested on a marked gender-based division of labour in the office, and on the different employment patterns of women and men. In most of the firms I visited, women and men did different jobs and often worked in separate areas. This gendered division of labour was least marked at Jeanette's workplace, a small printing company, but it still operated. Both Jeanette and the manager of Townsend Graphics had noticed this division of labour, but they viewed it from somewhat different perspectives.

Jim Bayliss: We have equality here, the women and men do the same things. Mind you, women work together better than men. If there's a big collating job which needs four people, the men all say 'no' and disappear, so all the women do it together.

Jeanette: Women are better than men at work. They work harder and do it quicker. Women get down to it - men disappear. It is true though, this place is really run by women.

Apart from technical skills like typing and shorthand, office work also had an important non-technical component. This was most apparent in the syllabus of the UM course, which included sessions on grooming, make-up, contraception, elocution and social skills, as well as shorthand and typing.

Tracey: We take turns at being Ms. Stewart's secretary, answering her 'phone. It's OK, but sometimes I forget and say "hello, who's calling the Golden Shot." [in Birmingham accent] like at home (laugh). That's what we have our oral communication lessons for, to learn how to speak proper. (laugh).

Young women's office jobs required a particular form of 'nice' (i.e. white and middle class) femininity as part of the non-technical aspects of

the work: that service with a smile. This operated to exclude those who would not (or could not) conform to this ideal: mainly young Asian and Afro-Caribbean women and those adopting a 'rough' or 'unfeminine' manner (Griffin, 1982b). Those young women who were attracted to office work for the chance to 'dress nice' found it hard to maintain this glamourous image on £30 a week take-home pay.

Berni: The money I like, but it just goes (laugh) on clothes. Oh God, all these girls at work come in so posh, and I just go like a tramp. They're always saying "oh God I saw that on you before". You've got to have something different every day.

The importance of appearance and manner for these young women rested on their role as decorative objects for men to look at. Their contacts with male staff were based mainly on sexual innuendo and joking, even sexual harassment (Read, 1982). As Catherine MacKinnon pointed out in her study of sexual harassment in North America:

> The point is that it is the very qualities which men find attractive in the women they harass that are the real qualifications for the jobs for which they hire them. (1979, p.23).

Like their female peers in all other sectors of the labour market, these office workers were expected to leave full-time employment after a few years to start a family, returning perhaps five years or so later as part-timers. Employers did not treat young women as permanent full-time employees, unlike their male peers. So by 1982, most of the young women were still working in their original office jobs, dissatisfied and bored, but reluctant to leave because of rising youth unemployment levels. Elaine and Cathy were doing relatively well in banking and telephone sales respectively, whilst Clare had been through a disasterous five months as a data processor at the city council before moving on to an office junior's job at a stationery suppliers.



'Women's Work': Factory Jobs

The young women who entered traditionally female factory jobs were also expected to spend around five years in full-time employment before leaving to start a family. Their working conditions were very different to those of their female peers in office jobs. Female factory workers moved mainly into the many small, family-owned firms in Birmingham's jewelry quarter, employed in light assembly work, hand-press operation, and packing, in the 'small metal trades' of button and badge making. Several had more skilled jobs in electrical and electronics circuit assembly, and as sewing machinists in Birmingham's small (and declining) clothing trade.

The larger companies (e.g. Cadbury's-Schweppes and Lucas's) were reluctant to recruit young women straight from school with minimal experience of waged work disciplines to work on their assembly lines.(13) Most of the school leavers worked alone or in small groups alongside other young white, Asian and Afro-Caribbean working class women. To a greater extent than their peers in office jobs, these young women worked in predominantly female workplaces. Their immediate supervisors were usually older white women, and the firms' management were mainly white middle class men.

Those young women in the semi- and unskilled jobs had minimal training apart from the 'sitting by Nellie' type. The sewing machinists at Dalcourts and Lycetts had been through more systematic training programmes, and the circuit assembly workers at Trenthams had already completed the EITB girls' operatives scheme (see section on engineering jobs).

Most of the young women were employed on piece work rates, earning between £20 and £40 a week. They found their work boring and hard, finding it difficult to earn their 'basic', and in frequent conflict with supervisors and work study people. Employers despaired because 'the girls' had so little interest in their work, and showed a paternal concern for their young employees, but little real understanding of their position.

Pat and Sue were electronic circuit assembly workers at a small manufacturer of specialist measuring equipment. Mr. Trentham, the owner-manager, could not understand 'why they're so depressed', yet he had just offered day-release training in el ctronics to Jim, a young man who had been taken on a few weeks before Pat and Sue. The latter were simply not given the same degree of encouragement.

Young women's prospects of promotion were minimal, and limited to the unpopular position of supervisor. They tended to move from job to job, changing firms and making new friends in an attempt to make their (waged) working lives more interesting. Employers in the clothing trade disapproved of this practice because they had put some investment into the young women's training. Those employers who had a less skilled workforce accepted their high labour turnover rates with some reluctance. Despite their apparent sympathy for their young employees, the economic demands of the capitalist marketplace took precedence. The rapidly rising youth unemployment levels during the early 1980s produced a reduction in this job-changing as young women feared that they might not be able to find another job. (cf. Finn, 1981).

Employers' main priority was to have a cheap, multiskilled and adaptable workforce. Employers and supervisors (all of whom were white) picked out particular young women as 'troublemakers' or 'bad workers', and attributed their 'problems' to their supposedly 'deprived' or 'deviant' family background. This was either because they came from 'big' (i.e. Catholic) working class families, or from Asian or Afro-Caribbean families. This process was similar to teachers' labelling of 'deviant' school students. Employers also used racist stereotypes of young Asian and Afro-Caribbean women to differentiate them from their white peers, and to justify placing young Black women in the lowest paid, lowest status jobs. 'Race' was always central to whites' view of Black people, whereas it was simply not an issue in relation to white employees.



The young women at Lycetts clothing manufacturers worked in small groups of about six, whilst their counterparts at Dalcourts moved on to assembly lines after a six week training period. They were all paid on a piece work basis once they had learnt the basic sewing operations, and found the pressure to work with speed and accuracy for hours at a stretch both boring and exhausting.

At Lycetts:

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| CG: | Are the conditions here alright? |
| Nadine: | It's dirty here (...) all the dust and fluff that goes up your nose, and it comes out horrible. (laugh) |
| Monica: | Makes you cough too. |
| Babs: | Yeh (...) I've got backache and eye-strain at the end of the day. |
| Monica: | Yeh, it's sitting still all day, stuck in one place. |
| Nadine: | I've put on loads of weight me since I've been here (laugh). I've tried to diet but it's no good (...) |
| Babs | It's terrible, you long for the breaks, you sit at lunchtime and look at the clock. Your heart sinks when you think Oh God, you've only got one second left. (14) |

And at Dalcourts:

| | |
|---|---|
| CG: | So are the conditions here quite good? |
| Jo: | Yeh, they're alright, quite good. I dunno, it's got a bit harder to earn your money since I've been here (...). It was terrible at first. I thought I'd never pick up my speed. It was horrible, I hated it when I first came down. (...) But you do get into it. It just takes time - practice. |

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| Jan: | I didn't want to go into a factory when I left school (...) I don't like it now (laugh) and I didn't want to then... It's the work, you feel as though you're shut indoors all the time, it's a weight. I don't like it. (laugh). |

The main compensation for the poor pay and exhausting work was the chance to 'have a laugh' with a group of other young women. Employers and supervisors tried to limit such activities during working hours because 'it

interferes with production'. In most firms this led to continual friction between young women and management. The rows of individual sewing machines at Dalcourts were designed to restrict communication between 'the girls' to a minimum, and all 'unnecessary' talking or movement from the machines was forbidden. The firm's production manager, Mr. Appleby, was proud of this new 'efficient' production process, but the women workers were far from happy with the new system which had been introduced without prior consultation.

These employers, like the office managers I spoke to, had almost total control over working conditions and labour processes due to the lack of union organisation in these companies. Birmingham's numerous small family-owned firms had a history of opposition to trade unions and to employees' attempts at collective organisation. In the firms I visited which had predominantly female workforces, any such attempts at union organisation had resulted in individual workers being singled out for reprimand or dismissal. These practices put an effective block on unionisation, especially in the context of the almost hysterically anti-union popular press. Young women's knowledge of trade union history came from following the employment experiences of their relatives and friends.

Although none of the female factory workers were unionised, three of the office employees had joined a union or staff association. Elaine and Wendy, the two bank employees, were members of the BIFU, the union for banking, insurance and finance workers. Jeanette had been approached to join the local government workers' union NALGO because of Townsend Graphics' previous association with the nearby university. She refused, preferring to join CASA (Clerical and Administrative Staff Association) instead 'for the social life'. None of the other six office workers, the five shop and hairdressing employees, or the nine factory workers were unionised.(15) The two female factory workers who were unionised workers were in Birmingham's main sector of working class male employment: engineering.



'Men's Work': Engineering

Loz had joined the thirty male apprentices on UM's four-year craft apprenticeship. Jill was on the Engineering Industry Training Board (EITB) craft technician's scheme for young women. This two-year college-based scheme was designed to correspond to the UM apprenticeship if followed by two years of relevant work experience in an appropriate engineering job. These young women's workplaces operated closed shop agreements, so they were both members of the large engineering workers' union, the AUEW.

Loz was one of the three young white women who had joined the UM scheme as lone females each year since 1976. Her wages were the highest (starting at £45 a week gross) of any of the young women in the study, and like Jill, she was learning a recognised skill which had some value in the labour market. All of UM's female trainees had been interested in engineering for some years, and they expressed real pride and satisfaction in their work.(16)

These token women had to survive as 'one of the lads' in the dominant male culture of the shopfloor and the drawing office. They faced continual 'put downs' and practical jokes, as well as having to work with pornographic pictures all over the factory walls. As lone isolated women, they could do little to prevent these taunts, apart from 'stick it out' and survive. The female apprentices missed the company and support of other women, but their interest in the work was some compensation for these drawbacks.

Sue: I mean when I first started with the lads I was the first girl, and they looked at me like I was a two-headed zombie that had just walked in fresh from the grave.

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Loz: You get like a tomboy working with boys. You agree with them to keep the peace. At school me and my friends used to get together and argue all week about something with them. Now you just shut up. You find yourself thinking differently too. They don't think of me as a girl anyway. (laugh).

These UM apprentices went through exactly the same training as their male peers, but the scheme supervisor was still reluctant to put young women in work placements involving hard physical work. Mr Wright also avoided sending them to parts of the UM site which had 'heavy masculine cultures, and he used swearing as an index of this 'heaviness'.

Sue was one exception to this rule, since she spent the final year of her apprenticeship in the rolling mill, which Mr Wright described as 'a very blue area language-wise'. She was logging and planning the preventative maintenance repair work, and not doing heavy physical work, but she dismissed the view that women were too weak to lift heavy weights as misguided rubbish: 'nobody lifts anything in this day and age anyway'. Mr Wright attributed Sue's success to her unique personal qualities: the exception proving the rule that engineering was not really women's work.

Mr Wright: The problem is not the girls, the problem is the male chauvinists' idea (....) There's got to be a certain breed of girl who will stand the rigours of a factory like this, 'cos it's pretty heavy and dirty. They have to be pretty special.

Some of the young women in these engineering jobs had the support of their families and boyfriends (if they had one), but they survived the almost daily taunts at work on their own. The EITB girls' technician scheme was designed to overcome some of these problems and to encourage more young women to consider engineering as a full-time job.

The EITB scheme was piloted in Birmingham at the UM craft training centre in 1976. Seven young women worked alongside the male apprentices, but conflicts ensued and the EITB scheme continued as an all-female course at a nearby technical college. Lone token women could integrate as 'one of the lads', but the group of seven had proved too much of a threat to the dominant male culture.(18)

Ms Lowe was responsible for the EITB's 'girls in engineering' initiative in Birmingham. The technician course required four 'O' levels



or CSE equivalents in English, maths and preferably physics and/or a technical subject. Female school leavers were less likely to have the appropriate scientific and technical subjects than their male peers (see Kelley, 1978) but Ms Lowe's main problem was the poor response from local schools and careers offices. Eventually she ran adverts in the local press and radio, and broke through to young women: she received over a hundred replies in a matter of days.

The EITB craft apprentices were all young white women, mainly working class, and with a range of academic qualifications. Most had been interested in engineering for some years, but a minority had applied to the course after failing to find a job (see Newton, 1981 for a quantitative analysis of this scheme).

Young women found the all-female college course supportive, although there were some complaints about the wide range of academic and technical experience across the group. Some of the trainees were overtly feminist, and they were all questionning women's expected role in society, so there were some heated discussions with Mr. Prestwood, the course tutor, about 'a woman's place'.

This supportive female culture at college was in sharp contrast to trainees' work placements in local engineering firms. Although the scheme was designed to correspond to the standard craft apprenticeship, young women were steered into the 'female' side of the industry to an even greater extent than female UM apprentices. They worked mainly in work study departments and drawing offices, and in the 'lighter' shopfloor production jobs, and were usually placed in pairs.

Ms Lowe: The most important thing is that girls are put with sympathetic people and treated as individuals. Quite a few (male engineers) have said "I don't believe a girl can do it, but OK, I'll tell her how", and then she'd have to be twice as good just to compensate for being female.

Like their female peers at UM, the EITB trainees also had to survive as 'one of the lads' and/or as 'special cases'. They had gained a sense of collective confidence from the other female trainees, and were less willing to 'fit in' as token women in this way. They experienced life on the two sides of industry through their placements in offices and on the shopfloor, seeing the offices and shopfloor as in a state of deep conflict, even 'war'. The EITB trainees felt more at ease on the shopfloor, but admitted that both the latter's working class culture and the 'snooty' middle class office culture presented problems for them as young women and aspiring engineers.

The EITB junior operatives scheme was also for women only, but it was not intended to provide a craft apprenticeship, nor to encourage young women to move into 'male' engineering jobs. The fiteen week course aimed to give non-academic female school leavers some basic engineering skills, experience in waged work disciplines, and the confidence gained from training in an (almost) all-female environment.

The operatives course was run by Ms Webb, a white working class woman in her forties, assisted by Mr Walker and Bob, two white working class men in their fifties and thirties respectively. Although most of the trainee operatives moved into traditionally female factory jobs in light assembly work, hand-press operation and electrical circuit assembly (e.g. Pat and Sue at Trenthams), they were still learning 'male' skills like soldering, machining, drilling - and maths (see Walden and Walkerdine, 1982). They all benefitted from training in a more supportive female group

Wendy and Sue were followed from school into this scheme, which had no official academic entry requirements. They earned the standard YOPS rate (for 1980) or £23.50 a week, since the scheme was then funded by the MSC. There was an even mix of Asian, Afro-Caribbean and white trainees, all of whom were working class. Those with a long-standing interest in engineering were in a minority, since most of the young women had applied to the course



rather than 'waiting about on the dole', and because 'it looked different'. Once again, young Black women were viewed by the white supervisors and trainees according to a series of racist stereotypes which labelled them as 'problems' or 'troublemakers'.

The operatives scheme had a long waiting list and an excellent job placement record (90%) because of Ms. Webb's close contacts with local employers. As youth unemployment levels soared in 1981 and '82, Ms Webb watched in despair as applications dropped along with the job opportunities for school leavers. The scheme had been affected by young people's increasing disillusionment with 'government courses' and the whole Youth Opportunities Programme.

Unemployment and YOPS

When the young women in this study left school in 1979, 5% of the local workforce were registered as unemployed: by October 1980 the figure was 9.8% rising to 15% in late 1981 and 17% by the end of 1982. These last figures were some 2% above the national average, and by early 1983, one in five of Birmingham's population was unemployed, as were almost half of the city's sixteen to eighteen year olds.(19) This study was never intended to focus on young women's unemployment, but the decline in the local youth labour market made some changes inevitable.

Most of the young women I followed from school missed the worst effects of this recession : eleven had never signed on; seven had been unemployed for less than six months; and four for twelve months or more.(20) Those with office jobs were the least likely to have been unemployed, with female factory workers tending to have had more short periods out of work.

Of the four long-term unemployed, Ann spent a year as a voluntary worker in a local primary school before finding a job as a shop assistant, and then an office junior. Pippa worked in a city centre clothes shop, but

she was made redundant in November 1980 on the 'last in, first out' principle. Mandy and Sandra had both moved through various poorly paid hairdressing jobs, eventually leaving when they each contracted dermatitis, a painful skin infection caused by using shampoos and conditioners with continually wet hands. Domestic commitments had prevented Sandra from going to college, and claimed increasing amounts of her time whilst she was unemployed (see p.12). Mandy had a short-lived packing job in a small engineering firm, but l ft when the manager refused to giver her the rise to which she was entitled on reaching eighteen.

When the fieldwork officially ended in early 1982, Pippa had been unemployed since November 1980, Sandra since June 1980, and Mandy since October 1981. Young women in full-time jobs were sympathetic to the plight of their unemployed peers, attributing their predicament to the state of the local lab our market. Those who were unemployed also blamed these external factors which they felt were outside of their control. Long-term unemployment in particular positioned young women in a psychological and social limbo, feeling increasingly rejected by society, with no recognised role or value. There was also a sense of personal failure because of their continued problems in finding a job (cf. Breakwell, 1983; Presdee, 1982).

Young women's unemployment was a result of the sudden increase in available jobs, but it also marked their refusal to accept poorly paid and exploitative 'rubbish jobs'. They all felt that older people, and especially parents and employers, had little understanding of the contemporary youth labour market. Some employers and supervisors welcomed the rising unemployment levels as a potential means of undermining young people's defiance at work.(21)

CG: What about your parents?

Sandra: Well my dad I can't really talk to, it's my mum, she's always at me to get a job. She doesn't understand that there are none, and it drives me mad.



Sandra became increasingly isolated at home, trapped by lack of money and domestic work, but Mandy's experiences on the more exploitative margins of the youth labour market had a politicising effect.

Mandy: What these small first are doing is making money exploiting young people, taking them on for a month or so on trial, and then finishing them (...) I dunno how the government think they're gonna get things back. The way things are going it'll be world war III next.

Most research on youth unemployment has focussed on the position of young men, and most local provision catered mainly for their needs (Thorpe 1982). These unemployed young women were only the tip of a largely invisible iceberg, and they did not see government schem s as a real alternative to 'a proper job'.

CG: So what made you take the YOP place?

Marion: I was getting so bored with not finding a job, but not with being at home. It was doing the housework that was sending me round the bend (laugh)

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Mandy: I mean young people have got no choice now, you have to stay in work but the pay is terrible. These government schemes are the worst. They should pay a real wage. I mean working a forty hour week for £23.50! Plus busfares and keep! The dole isn't much less! (22)

The YOPS programme as introduced in 1978 could have provided Jim Callaghan's Labour government with an ideal opportunity to demonstrate their supposed commitment to ending discrimination on the grounds of race, gender or class (Griffin, 1982). Sadly this policy commitment never materialised. Although equal numbers of young women and men have moved through YOPS, traditional gender-based divisions of labour have continued to operate in most schemes (Brelsford et al, 1983). Young Black people have been disproportionately concentrated in college and workshop-based schemes which are less likely than work experience placements to lead to permanent jobs (Smith, 1981). YOPS provision in Birmingham followed this national pattern

(Thorpe, 1982).[23]

Seven of the young women had been on YOP schemes, Marion in an office job for the city council, Jan and Liz at Dalcourts, and Babs and Monica at Lycetts as trainee sewing machinists. These were work experience placements (WEEP) and all five were taken on full-time. Sue and Wendy were in the workshop based EITB junior operatives girls' engineering scheme, and both found full-time jobs at the end of the course.

Statistics on the placement rates of YOPS trainees in permanent jobs have been notoriously difficult to come by. With an estimated placement rate of between 40% and 60% during 1979 and 1980, the young women in this study were unusually fortunate in their experiences of YOPS (Webb, 1980).

Although young people did not see YOPS places as real jobs, employers often treated work experience posts as normal vacancies. They tried to demand academic and/or technical qualifications and to reject 'unsuitable' applicants, in direct contradition to official MSC policy (Hilgendorf and Welchman, 1983).

By 1982, unemployed young women and YOPS workers were viewing the future with considerable pessimism. More and more young people were rejecting government schemes as 'a waste of time', and the proposed Youth Training Scheme was greeted with scepticism. As the supervisor of a Job Preparation Unit told me in early 1982:

Ms Crawley: I can't see a way out, it's so huge. In the future things won't be the same again. If unemployment picks up then they'll have more money again, and first thing that companies will do is buy new technology in offices and shops. They just won't need young people any more. Particularly girls.

Summary and Conclusions

The 'Young Women and Work' study has confirmed the results of previous research in that most young working class women moved into traditionally



female jobs in offices, shops and factories (e.g. Deem, 1980; Pollert, 1981). This work is characterised by poor pay and conditions, low status, and minimal training and promotion prospects. Young women occupied a tenuous position in full-time employment because they were expected to leave by their mid-twenties to have children. These 'women's jobs' had fairly low levels of union organisation, but this was due to opposition from employers rather than young women's apathy or acquiescence.

This study also found that whilst young women were discouraged from entering non-traditional 'men's jobs', many had a positive preference for the supportive atmosphere in traditionally female jobs. Engineering was well paid and interesting work which brought recognised skills, but these advantages were undermined by the continual harassment and opposition of male co-workers and supervisors. Female apprentices also missed the company of other young women.

Domestic commitments (unpaid housework and childcare) played an important role in shaping young women's entry to the labour market, as well as cutting into their leisure time (Shaw, 1978). Although those with full-time jobs could avoid some of their domestic chores, the latter were usually passed on to a younger sister, and they remained very much 'women's work'. Apart from a few studies of young women's experiences (e.g. McRobbie, 1978; Sharpe, 1976; Jamdagni, 1981), most research on the school to work transition has had little to say about young people's domestic commitments - or the lack of them.

There was no direct equivalent to the gang-based male groups, described in studies of (mainly white and working class) youth subcultures (e.g. Hall and Jefferson, 1975). Young women's social networks were based on continually shifting close friendships (cf. Davies, 1979). Economic and social pressures to get a boyfriend led to the breakdown of many of these friendships through the 'deffing out' process, to which there was no

direct male equivalent. This fragmentation of female friendships and the powerful ideology of romantic heterosexual love affected young white women to a greater extent than their Asian and Afro-Caribbean peers, and laid the foundations for an isolated future as young wives and mothers (Hobson, 1978).

Young women used numerous strategies to undermine male attempts to dominate their leisure time, and to deflect male demands for sex. They created their own leisure at school and in the workplace, in opposition to the authority of teachers and employers. Some young women managed to avoid the 'deffing out' process by promising to remain faithful to their girl-friends and planning their leisure activities with care and foresight. What could be called feminist ideas had considerable resonance for young women when they discussed male attempts to control them or their leisure time.

Racism was an integral part of all young women's lives. For young white women, this ranged from their 'commonsense' racist ideas, exaggerated fears of black male sexuality, steeling from Asian-owned shops to verbal and even physical attacks on black people.[24] Institutional racism permeated Birmingham schools, the Careers Service, Job Centres, YOP schemes and workplaces.[25] Young Asian and Afro-Caribbean women were in the worst paid menial jobs, and had greater difficulty in finding work than their white and male peers. They were often singled out as 'problems' because of their family and cultural backgrounds by white teachers and employers (Amos and Parmar, 1982; Lawrence, 1982).

This study also confirmed other research results in demonstrating the extent of gender divisions (cf. Deem, 1978; Spender and Sarah, 1980; Brelsford et al, 1982). In schools there was a marked distinction between 'female' and 'male' subjects; in the home and in workplaces there were sharp divisions between women's and men's work.[26] Individual young women (and men) did manage to break through these barriers, but they were treated as tokens and exceptions (cf. Newton, 1983).



Employers have used, even widened these gender-based divisions of labour to hinder the implementation of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.[27] It is extremely difficult to win a claim for equal pay unless the jobs to be compared are almost identical. The British government has recently been forced to toughen up its legislation to include equal pay for work of equal value in line with EEC recommendations. A decision still rests on the judgement of an 'independent expert', whose report cannot be challenged in the industrial tribunal. The Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination legislation cannot deal with the concept of women's subordination, and many single sex projects for girls and young women have floundered because of the strict restrictions on positive discrimination initiatives.

This study has demonstrated the importance of single sex provision for young women in training programmes and youth clubs. The young women's female friendships were under considerable threat at this time, and women-only groups gave them the space to build up their relationships in a supportive atmosphere. Young women gained considerable confidence from working, talking and 'having a laugh' together, away from the disruptive influence of their male peers. A separation between women's and men's work maintained women's subordinate position in education, family life and the labour market, but once women operated as a group outside of male control, they posed a considerable threat to the dominant male culture. Building up cultural connections between young women undermined the force of social pressures to get a boyfriend.

Finally, much has changed since these young women left school in 1979. The new Tory government began to make its political presence felt as the youth labour market decreased at an alarming rate. Young women, Black people and those with few academic or technical qualifications have been affected to a disproportionate extent by the sharp rise in youth unemploy-ment. The majority of working class school leavers left school in 1983

with a minimal chance of getting a 'proper job'.

It is difficult to look at the prospects for young working class women and end on a positive note. Growing numbers of young white, and especially young Black women are unemployed, either isolated in the parental home or homeless, and apparently invisible to politicians, policy makers, and even social scientists. Many of the adults who make decisions which will affect these young women's lives operate a series of racist, sexist and class-biased assumptions about 'typical girls'. Young women are seen variously as 'silly giggling girls', sexually precocious, 'supermums', or fecless and irresponsible.[28]

One positive development is the expansion of work with girls and young women, and with young Asian and Afro-Caribbean women; the (somewhat slower) development of anti-sexist and anti-racist projects in schools, youth clubs and colleges. Despite government cuts in funding for social science research, there is still an urgent need for studies with more immediate practical implications which look at the processes by which gender, class, race and age divisions have been affected by the recent period of rising youth unemployment.



Footnotes

1. The SSRC funded the research from January 1979 to July 1982, based at CCCS. They limited the length of the final report to 5,000 words, so this extended version includes more of the participants' own words. Everyone quoted here has been referred to via pseudonyms, including the schools and workplaces.

Key to interview transcripts:

| | |
|---|---|
| [ ] | Background information |
| ______ | Emphasis |
| (..) | Phrase edited out |
| (...) | Sentence edited out |
| [...] | Passage edited out |
| - - - - - - - | Transcription from another passage follows |

2. Four of these young women had four 'O' levels (three of whom were from St. Catherines), and eight had no qualifications (two each from Moorcroft, Tildesley, Lodgehill and St. Martins). Although I talked to young Asian and Afro-Caribbean women (and men) in schools and workplaces, I decided to follow a group of young white working class women into the labour market. As a white woman, I wanted to avoid the usual tendency of white academics to 'investigage' Black people's lives, providing patronising accounts of Black cultures and communities (see Race and Politics group, 1982, for a critique of such studies). I wanted to reverse this tendency, and focus on the various psychological, social and institutional forms of white racism.

3. Most of the interview tapes were transcribed by part-time secretarial workers, and I am grateful to Liesel Rosindale, Ann Lane, Mary Ballard and Deirdre Barker for their help in this extremely tedious task. See Griffin (in press) for a more detailed analysis of the research methods involved, and of the particular advantages of qualitative cultural analysis this study.

4. About half of Britain's school students leave with no academic qualifications (Department of Education Careers Service statistics).

5. In the 'academic' schools, physics and maths are seen as 'male' subjects, whilst biology is the most acceptable science for young women. More girls in single sex schools take physics, chemistry and maths as compared to their counterparts in coeducational schools. (Deem, 1980).

6. One young white man told me that he wanted to join the police force or the army 'to beat up Blacks in Brixton or kill paddies in Northern Ireland'. When I asked him why, given that he was from an Irish Catholic family of Labour voters, and hated the local police, a length discussion ensued. See Griffin (forthcoming) for a more detailed account of the meaning of jobs in the police and armed forces.

7. These young women did not earn enough to live independently of their families, so it might be assumed that marriage or living with a man would be seen as a potential means of leaving home. By the end of the research in 1982, five of the young women (then aged 18 or 19) were engaged and only one was married. Mandy had to stay living at her parental home with her husband, because she was unemployed and he had just been made redundant.

8. More than a third of the rapes reported to the RCC were not reported to the police, and of those that were, only 26% were investigated. This reflects a national trend, in that women are reluctant to report sexual assaults if the crime may not be investigaged, and if they are likely to be treated as the guilty party. There is now a national network of rape crisis centres and refuges for battered women which are run by and for women. There are also increasing numbers of incest survivors groups (see Spare Rib for 'phone numbers and contact addresses).

9. In 1980/81, only two out of the twenty-six youth club leaders in Birmingham were women, and young women formed far less than half of the regular senior club (13 plus) members. There were only three regular club sessions which catered specifically for young women (see Thorpe, 1982).

10. A few months later, Mandy had a boyfriend, and was 'deffing' her best friend Sandra in a similar way, much to Sandra's disgust.

    Sandra: I saw her last night, but that was 'cos her fella was on nights, or else it's on her day off. I could kill her sometimes, it gets on my nerves. If I do meet someone, it doesn't last, or I don't like them much. (laugh)

11. These people were part of a long history of immigration to England from all over the world, but notably Ireland and the Empire (see Race and Politics group, 1982).

12. There was one woman assistant manager in another Birmingham branch of the same bank. This follows the pattern found in other sectors of office work. In 1979 and 1980, 70% of office staff were women, as were 99% of typists and secretaries. Yet only 14% of office managers were female (CIS report, 1981).

13. Only at Dalcourts clothing manufacturers were young women working on assembly lines of individual sewing machines, as part of a workforce of some two hundred people.

14. Pat and Sue were paid on an hourly basis, at £42 gross for a forty-hour week. This was a fairly high wage compared to most of the other young women to whom I spoke, but it was the official minimum wage for young workers at that time (early 1981)

15. Jo, Monica and Babs are white, and Nadine is a young Afro-Caribbean woman.

16. In recent years, an increasing proportion of female employees have joined unions, and they have begun to play a greater part in union activities and decision-making. This has not happened without some opposition from the trade union hierarchy of older white men. (Table 10; Coote and Kellner, 1980; Boston, 1980).



17. Some of the office workers also expressed a pride in their secretarial and/or clerical skills, but these skills were rarely recognised as such, and they were not incorporated into a standardised job hierarchy (cf. Downing, 1981).

18. Peggy Newton's work with the EITB female technicians confirms that 'token' women in predominantly male areas of employment operate as 'one of the lads' and/or as unusual 'special cases'. She suggests that only where the female to male ratio rose above 1:6, would women's position improve to a significant extent (Newton, 1983).

19. Local unemployment figures for Birmingham quoted in Thorpe, 1982. See also Jones, 1983, which gives the results of a study of MSC provision and youth unemployment in a Birmingham council estate.

20. These figures only refer to young women's registered unemployment school leavers are not able to register until the September after they leave school.

21. Several researchers have suggested that similar reasoning lays behind contemporary government economic policies and provision for unemployed youth (Green, 1983; Finn, 1981).

22. Like most of her unemployed peers, Mandy paid her mother around £8 a week 'keep' whilst drawing around £16 a week unemployment benefit.

23. The one exception to the numerous schemes operating with traditional gender divisions was a weekly group for unemployed young women based at a community school.

24. Apart from the forms of white racism which affected young Asian and Afro-Caribbean women's lives, the young women from Irish families objected to being treated as 'thick' or stupid by English people. (cf. Ullah, 1983).

25. For definitions of institutional and personal racism, see IRR, 1982.

26. Throughout most of this report I have put quote marks around 'women's' and 'men's' work, and 'female' and 'male' school subjects. Particular areas of work have been done mainly by women (or men) and these have been seen as especially suited to women's (or men's) supposed abilities. These gender-based divisions have varied historically and across different cultures: they are social constructions rather than biological or 'natural' distinctions. So whilst most secretaries, hairdressers and cleaners are female, women have shown themselves to be capable of doing even the most demanding of 'men's work'. (Adam, 1975). Such divisions help to maintain the myth that differences between women and men as groups are greater than differences between individual women and between individual men (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1975).

27. By 1983 women's gains under the 1975 equal pay act had been eroded, as their average gross weekly wages fell to around 50% of men's average wages (Department of Employment New Earnings Survey 1983; see also Coussins, 1980).

28. See Griffin, 1982b, for a more detailed analysis of images of young women in the labour market, and Hemmings, 1982, for a book or young women's writings and cartoons which challenges these assumptions.



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TABLE 1

Young Women's Part-time Employment

| No. (%age) of young women | Working Class 5th Formers White | Asian | Afro-Caribbean | 6th Formers. Middle Class White. | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No part-time job. | 23(50) | 2 | 19 ( 80) | 16 ( 56) | 60( 60) |
| Part-time job(s) | 23(50) | 1 | 2 ( 20) | 13 ( 44) | 39( 39) |
| Total | 46(100) | 3 | 21 (100) | 29 (100) | 99(100) |

NB. This table gives the proportion of young women who had part-time jobs. Due to equipment failure, the exact responses of the young Asian women were lost, and could not be included in the analysis to any significant extent.

TABLE 2

Domestic Responsibilities : Who Does the Work?

| No.(%age of those with domestic resp. | Young women: Working Class 5th Formers White | Asian | Afro-Caribbean | 6th Formers Middle Class White | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self | 24(51.1) | 2 | 14(66.7) | 7(20.6) | 47(45.2) |
| Mother | 39(83) | 2 | 12(57) | 24(70.6) | 77(74) |
| Sister(s) | 6(12.8) | - | 11(52.1) | 3(8.8) | 20(19.2) |
| Father | 2(4.3) | - | 2(9.5) | 4(1.[illegible]) | 8(7.7) |
| Brother(s) | - | - | - | - | - |
| Gran | - | - | 1(4.8) | - | 1(9.6) |
| Daily | - | - | - | 2(5.9) | 2(1.9) |
| Left Home | - | - | - | - | 1(9.6) |
| Total of Young Women | 47 | 2 | 21 | 34 | 104 |

NB. This table gives the incidence of young women's perceptions of different individuals' involvement in domestic work. The percentage of young women in each group (white, Asian, etc.) who said that a particular person (self, mother etc.) did some domestic work is given in brackets. The percentages for each group do not add up to 100%, since most young women named more than one individual in their households who had domestic commitments. Only those who were mentioned as having fairly regular domestic responsibilities were included: occasionally doing the washing up was not counted.



TABLE 3

Family structures

| No.(%age)of young women with: | | Young women Working Class 5th Formers White | Asian | Afro-Caribbean | 6th Formers Middle Class White | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mother: | in full-time employment | 8( 17) | - | 12( 57) | 11( 32) | 32( 29) |
| | in part-time employment | 19( 40) | 1 | 5( 24) | 9( 26) | 34( 32) |
| | unemployed/ at home | 19( 40) | 3 | 3( 14) | 14( 42) | 39( 37) |
| | absent | 1( 3) | - | 1( 4) | - | 2 |
| | Total | 47(100) | 4 | 21(100) | 34(100) | 106(100) |
| Father | in full-time employment | 37( 78) | 2 | 7( 33) | 30( 88) | 76( 72) |
| | in part-time employment | - | - | - | - | - |
| | unemployed/ at home. | 5( 11) | 2 | 4( 19) | 2( 6) | 13( 12) |
| | absent | 5( 11) | - | 10( 48) | 2( 6) | 17( 16) |
| | Total | 47(100) | 4 | 21(100) | 34(100) | 106(100) |

NB. This table gives a breakdown of the different young women's family structures. For each group (white, Afro-Caribbean, etc.), the totals add up to 100%.

TABLE 4

Young People Entering Employment: Distribution by Industry

| Industries | | Male School-Leavers Total | Male School-Leavers Apprentices | Female School Leavers Total | Female School Leavers Apprentices |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I: | Agricultur , Fishing and Forestry | 4.3% | 1.9% | 0.9% | 0.8% |
| II | Mining & Quarrying | 2.0 | 2.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| III: | Manufacturing | 37.4 | 41.6 | 35.1 | 9.5 |
| IV | Construction | 14.9 | 20.9 | 1.3 | 0.7 |
| V: | Gas, electricity and water | 1.3 | 2.9 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| VI: | Distributive Trades | 14.7 | 4.0 | 26.0 | 5.4 |
| VII: | Other services | 22.0 | 22.8 | 33.3 | 82.4 |

NB: Tables 4 and 5 are based on the results of the 1979 Careers Service survey of 10% of school-leavers in England and Wales. These statistics are quoted in the Spring 1982 issue of <u>Careers Bulletin</u>. Tables 4 and 5 refer to the first destination of 16 year old school leavers



TABLE 5

Young People Entering Employment: Distribution by Occupation

| Occupational Groups | | Male School-leavers Total | Male School-leavers Apprentices | Female School-leavers Total | Female School-leavers Apprentices |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I: | General Management | - | - | - | 0.1% |
| II: | Professional & Related management & administration. | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0.7% | 0.2 |
| III: | Management & admin. in health, education and welfare. | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| IV: | Literary, artistic and sports | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 1.4 |
| V: | Management in science | 8.8 | 18.7 | 0.6 | 3.1 |
| VI: | Management (not general) | 0.9 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 0.5 |
| VII: | Clerical and related | 5.0 | 1.1 | 32.9 | 6.6 |
| VIII: | Selling | 6.2 | 0.5 | 18.2 | 1.1 |
| IX: | Security & Protected Services. | 4.0 | 2.3 | 0.3 | 0.8 |
| X: | Catering, cleaning, hairdressing & personal services | 3.4 | 1.8 | 12.5 | 74.2 |
| XI: | Farming, fishing, etc. | 4.9 | 2.3 | 1.4 | 1.2 |
| XII: | Material processing (not metal) | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.8 | 1.3 |
| XIII: | Making & repairing (not metal & electrical) | 9.3 | 11.5 | 13.1 | 1.9 |
| XIV: | Processing, making and repairing (metal and electrical) | 24.3 | 43.6 | 1.6 | 2.9 |
| XV: | Painting, repetitive assembly work, inspection packing etc. | 4.9 | 3.5 | 7.7 | 0.5 |
| XVI: | Construction, mining etc. | 8.[illegible] | 6.1 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| XVII: | Transport | 6.1 | 0.8 | 0.5 | - |
| XVIII | Miscellaneous | 8.9 | 3.6 | 6.0 | 2.8 |
| Total Number of SL | | 19,286 | 7,395 | 13,897 | 1,018 |

TABLE 6

First Destination Jobs [illegible] Birmingham's 1979 School and College Leavers

| Occupational Categories | Female S. & C. Leavers Total | Asian & Afro Caribbean Gs | Male S. & C. Leavers Total | Asian & Afro Caribbean Gs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01:Working with Metal | 2[illegible]7 (14.7%) | [illegible] (14.6%) | 1,[illegible] ([illegible]) | 214 (74.6%) |
| 02:Working with Wood | -- | -- | 40 ([illegible]) | 11 ([illegible]) |
| 03:Working with Other Materials | 15[illegible] ([illegible]) | [illegible] ([illegible]) | [illegible] ([illegible]) | 7 ([illegible]) |
| 04:Building and Construction | - | - | [illegible] ([illegible]) | 14 ([illegible]) |
| 06:Farming | [illegible] ([illegible]) | - | 23 ( 0.[illegible]) | -- |
| 07:Transport & Communication | 6[illegible] ( 3.7%) | [illegible] ([illegible]) | 22[illegible] (10.1%) | 15 ( 5.2%) |
| 10:Medical and Nursing | 11 ( 0.01%) | -- | [illegible] | -- |
| 11 Catering and Personal Services | 1[illegible] ( 9.[illegible]) | [illegible] ( [illegible]) | [illegible] ( 1.8%) | [illegible] ([illegible]) |
| 13:Sales | [illegible] ([illegible]) | [illegible] (1[illegible]) | 1[illegible] ( 6.9%) | 7 ( 2.4%) |
| 15:Admin & Data Processing | [illegible] ([illegible]) | 43 (31.4%) | [illegible] ([illegible]) | 1 ( 0.3%) |
| Total | [illegible] | [illegible] | [illegible] | 287 |

NB [illegible] first [illegible] tendencies [illegible] (Asian and [illegible]) were excluded [illegible] Table [illegible] gathered by [illegible] for 'ethnic minority' (ie. Asian and Afro-Caribbean) [illegible] separately, in addition to [illegible] school leavers.



TABLE 7:

Positions of Birmingham School Leavers (count in September after leaving school)

| No. and %age of school students: | Sept. 1979 | | Sept. 1978 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Entered employment | 7,394 | 35.0% | 7,140 | 34.2% |
| Training courses (YOPS) | 616 | 2.9% | 319 | 1.5% |
| Stayed at school (S.S) | 4,238 | 20.1% | 4,557 | 21.8% |
| Other full-time FE | 9,910 | 9.1% | 1,911 | 9.1% |
| Still seeking work | 3,493 | 16.6% | 4,076 | 19.5% |
| Awaiting information | 3,026 | 14.3% | 2,673 | 12.8% |
| Others not seeking work, left city | 424 | 2.0% | 233 | 1.1% |
| Total in count | 21,101 | | 20,909 | |

TABLE 8:

Birmingham School Leavers, November 1979: First Destination Statistics

| No. and %age of students | Female school students Total | Asian & Afro Caribbean Gs | Male school students Total | Asian & Afro Caribbean Gs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SSS/FE | 4,932<br>47.0% | 1,117<br>58.1% | 3,753<br>33.4% | 723<br>34.5% |
| Seeking Work | 2,881<br>27.4% | 634<br>33.0% | 2,996<br>26.6% | 942<br>44.9% |
| Found job in 1st choice occupation | 2,688<br>25.6% | 172<br>8.9% | 4,493<br>40.0% | 432<br>20.6% |
| Total (100%) | 10,501 | 1,923 | 11,242 | 2,097 |

TABLE 9:

Academic Requirements and Skill Levels in First Destination Jobs of Birmingham's 1979 School and College Leavers

| Skill Level of 1st Dest.Job. | Female S.&C.Leavers Total | Asian & Afro Caribbean Gs | Male S & C Leavers Total | Asian & Afro Caribbean Gs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P/T(4 'O' Levels-2 'A' Levels) | 209 ( 7.8%) | 9 ( 5.2%) | 484 (20.6%) | 20 ( 4.6%) |
| C(2.grade 3 CSE's and over | 727 (27.0%) | 26 (15.1%) | 1,801 (40.2%) | 125 (29.0%) |
| X(routine work: on-job training) | 1,753 (65.2%) | 137 (79.7%) | 2,208 (49.2%) | 287 (66.4%) |
| Total | 2,689 | 172 | 4,493 | 432 |

TABLE 10

U.K. Trade Union membership amongst Female and Male Employees

TU.membership as%age of employees: number of employees in brackets.

| Year | Men | Women |
|---|---|---|
| 1951 | 56%(7745) | 25%(1790) |
| 1961 | 53%(7911) | 24%(2025) |
| 1971 | 58%(8374) | 32%(3176) |
| 1976 | 61%(8816) | 38%(3560) |

NB: Information from Social Trends, 1979.