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Female Part-Time Workers:

Attitudes to Work and Trade Unions

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Abstract

In the last two decades, women's employment has continued to increase. At the same time, levels of trade union membership have continued to decline. Indeed, the restructuring of the labour market and the increase of part-time employment is argued to be one of a number of factors which have contributed to the decline in trade union membership.

This thesis has two related aims. The first is to explore the labour supply of female part-time workers. It has been argued that different 'types' of women exist in the labour force and that these can be identified by their level of employment commitment. It has been suggested that women who work full-time are committed workers while women who work part-time are uncommitted, yet highly satisfied with their employment. Little qualitative research exists on female part-timers in lower-level occupations, where the majority of part-time workers are concentrated, and for whom the 'Grateful Slave' label might be most applicable. Therefore, this thesis contributes to this body of research by providing a qualitative analysis of female part-timers' labour supply to low-level manual jobs.

The second aim of this thesis is to explore part-time workers' attitudes towards and experiences of trade unions and questions whether the low trade union membership rates recorded for female part-time workers stem from a low commitment to work or from other factors such as the approach which trade unions have taken towards part-time workers or their experiences of trade unionism.

Based on in-depth interviews with 50 female part-time workers employed by three national retail companies, the research shows that female part-time workers are not as highly satisfied as the survey data suggests. Furthermore, they do not possess homogeneous orientations towards their work: several differing types of work orientations are identified. It is the case then, that many of the part-time workers in the sample saw their part-time jobs as a temporary compromise. They did not plan to stay in these jobs for the whole of their working lives.

With regard to attitudes towards trade unions, working part-time did not lead these women to dismiss trade unionism as irrelevant to them. Indeed, the majority of the interviewees were supportive of trade unions, saying that unions had an important and necessary role to fulfil. The thesis argues that part-time workers' trade union membership depends on a combination of structural factors, attitudes towards trade unions and the approach which the trade unions have taken towards part-time employees.

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1 Introduction

Since the second world war, there has been a massive increase in part-time jobs[1] in Britain, the majority of which are performed by women. This increase has coincided with a number of labour market changes, one of which is the high losses in trade union membership which peaked in the late 1970s and has been in continual decline since then. The first aim of this research is to examine female part-time employees' experiences, attitudes and orientations towards their work. Are they as highly satisfied as the survey research suggests? Are they committed to work as a central life interest, or do they have more home-centred orientations? The second and related aim of the thesis is to provide new material with regard to female part-time workers' experiences of and attitudes towards trade unions. The thesis explores whether part-timers' low level of commitment to the labour force affects their attitudes to trade unions. Do part-time workers view trade union membership as unimportant and peripheral to their working lives? Or are part-time workers' attitudes towards trade union membership more complex than this? Based on in-depth qualitative interviews with 50 female part-time workers employed in low-level jobs in the North West of England, this research is able to address these important questions.

A vast amount of literature has been generated on part-time work. For the purposes of this thesis, the literature can be divided into three strands: that on the jobs; the workers; and part-time workers and trade union membership. The literature on part-time jobs is centred around labour market flexibility and employers' use of part-time labour. It is argued that part-time workers provide numerical flexibility by working hours which can be varied to suit the day-to-day needs of the firm and to match peaks and troughs in production (Atkinson and Meager 1986). The debate has

[1] Definitions of part-time work are either based on the number of hours worked or on self-definitions. The Census of Employment classifies part-time work as less than 30 hours per week and takes into account self-definitions (whether or not the employee sees herself as being part-time), while the Labour Force Survey sets the boundary at 30 hours or less (except for teachers and academics for whom the threshold is 25 hours) and also includes self-definitions. Although male part-timers are included in the LFS sample, the results are not published as the numbers are too small. Trade unions have different hours thresholds: USDAW (30 hours), GMB (20 hours) (Jacobs 1990:16).

been stimulated whether part-time jobs are a bridge or a trap. Proponents of the 'bridge' thesis argue that part-time employment is used to integrate or retain some groups of employees, while proponents of the 'trap' thesis argue that part-time employees are marginalised and part of the secondary / peripheral workforce (for a discussion of these issues see Fagan and O'Reilly 1998; Tam 1997; Rubery and Fagan 1994). Much of the literature on part-time jobs then has been concerned with the quality of the jobs. Indeed, it is well documented that part-time jobs are disadvantaged jobs (Rubery *et al.* 1994; Burchell *et al.* 1997).

The literature concerned with part-time workers questions why women work part-time when part-time jobs are so disadvantageous. Sociology has witnessed a renewed interest in work orientations: while men's orientations to work were the subject of much research during the 1960s, more recently the focus has been on women's orientations to work. The literature is centred around commitment to work, stimulated by various surveys which have shown that women who work part-time are less committed to their employment than women who work full-time (for the 1991 British Household Panel Survey see Warren 1998; for the British Social Attitudes surveys see Hakim 1991 and Hedges 1994; for the 1992 Employment in Britain survey see Gallie *et al.* 1998; for the 1986/7 Social Change and Economic Life Initiative survey see Rose 1994b and for the 1980 Women and Employment survey see Martin and Roberts 1984 and Dex 1988). However, most of these commentators are sceptical about these results arguing that issues such as work commitment need to be examined within the context of the individual's working life.

The third strand of the literature is that of part-time workers and the changes in trade union membership: there has been some concern around the growth of part-time work and the decline of trade union membership within the industrial relations literature. Indeed, the growth of part-time and other non-standard forms of employment are often cited as a contributory factor in the decline of trade union membership. In general, four broad explanations can be offered for the decline of trade union membership since the late 1970s: the effects of legislation; employers' policies; business cycle explanations and the changes in the industrial and occupational composition of the labour force (Waddington and Whitson 1995:166-173. See also

Gallie *et al.* 1996; McIlroy 1995; Marsh 1992). Regarding legislation, a series of Conservative Governments launched sustained attacks on the union movement throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.[2] Meanwhile, employers attempted to undermine union organization at established workplaces (for example, by derecognition) and prevent unionization at greenfield sites. Waddington and Whitson (1995) argue that although these two explanations provide some substance to the unions' failure to increase membership in the mid to late 1980s, they do not adequately account for the sharp downturn of union membership in the early 1980s. Rather, this is due to the latter two explanations: business cycle explanations (i.e. that union membership rises when increasing prices are not matched by increasing wages, and falls in times of high unemployment) and the restructuring of industry and the workforce. This restructuring has involved massive job losses in production (where union density was high), a fall in plant size and relocation of production (either abroad or from the large conurbations to greenfield sites). Employment in the private service sector has flourished, accompanied by dramatic changes in the composition of the workforce: male full-time workers have declined while the employment of women, part-timers and temporary workers has increased, all of whom have historically low levels of union organization. This, therefore, presents something of a challenge to the trade union movement.

This research focuses on the latter two strands in the literature (part-time workers and part-time workers and trade union membership). Firstly, the thesis addresses the on-going debates of women's labour supply. Why, and in what circumstances do women take part-time jobs? Do women work part-time from 'choice' or are they constrained? Are these employees 'Grateful Slaves' with high levels of job satisfaction? Controversially, Hakim (1991, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1998a, 1998b) has argued that there are two qualitatively different groups of women in the labour force. The first group 'Self-Made Women' invest in qualifications, have

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[2] Marsh sees that the Conservative Government had four main aims when elected in 1979: to reduce unions' role in the policy-making process; assert its authority and image of governing competence; stimulate greater 'realism' among unions and unionists and to alter the balance on the shopfloor in favour of management (Marsh 1992). Extensive legislation was passed, which weakened trade unions' ability to take legal action: *Employment Act 1980*, *Employment Act 1982*, *Trade Union Act 1984*, *Employment Act 1988*, *Employment Act 1989*, *Employment Act 1990* and the *Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993*. For details of this legislation see Labour Research 1997:17-19; McIlroy 1995; Martin *et al.* 1995; Shackleton 1998; Winchester 1988).

high levels of work commitment, and working lives similar to men. The second group 'Grateful Slaves' or 'Modern Home-Makers' prioritise family and choose to be employed in 'marginal' or 'half-time' part-time jobs. Hakim has been heavily criticised for placing too much emphasis on preferences and down playing structural constraints such as perceived gender roles, a lack of child-care facilities and the structure of the British part-time labour market (Caven 1998; Crompton 1997; Crompton and Harris 1998a, 1998b; Devine 1994; Ginn *et al.* 1996). The literature on women's attitudes and orientations to work is growing.[3] In the main, the empirically-based critiques of the 'Grateful Slave' debate have been based on female part-timers in high status professional jobs, and have shown that these women can be just as committed to their work as full-timers in similarly high status occupations (Caven 1998; Crompton and Harris 1998; Crompton and Le Feuvre 1996). However, until now there has been little qualitative research on female part-timers in lower-level occupations, where the majority of this workforce are concentrated, and for whom the 'Grateful Slave' label might be most applicable - women in very low status and low paid work. Therefore, this thesis contributes to this body of research by providing a qualitative analysis of female part-timers' labour supply to low-level manual jobs. This qualitative approach usefully contributes to the existing survey data in this area and goes beyond the dichotomy of women who are pro-work / pro-home.

Secondly, the thesis builds on the women's attitudes and orientations to work by examining female part-time workers' experience of and attitudes towards trade unions. Part-time workers have much lower union membership rates than full-time workers. Even when they are employed in an organized workplace alongside full-time workers, they are still less likely to be union members (Sinclair 1995; Tam 1997:96). Do part-time workers attach little importance to being an organized worker? Are their attitudes towards trade unions associated with their commitment to work? For example, are women with weak work commitment unwilling to invest in trade union membership? Or do part-time workers' attitudes to trade unions stem from other

[3] See Bradley (1997 and 1999) who compares the work aspirations of male and female full-timers in her qualitative sample. See also Spencer and Taylor (1994) for a qualitative study of attitudes to work of a group of women from different socio-economic backgrounds.

factors such as workplace organization or past trade union experiences? In order to contextualise the women's attitudes the research details experiences of trade unionism in their previous and current employment. Although the increase of part-time jobs is said to be one of the factors which has contributed to the decline in density of trade union membership, few studies have addressed the particular issue of female part-time workers and trade unions. The literature which does exist focuses on part-timers' barriers to participation within trade unions and this research is invaluable. However, we also need to examine the attitudes of this group of workers towards trade unions, in the hope of gaining a greater understanding of the influences on their union membership.

This introductory chapter begins by discussing the growth of part-time work and outlining the disadvantaged nature of part-time jobs. The chapter shows that the majority of these jobs are concentrated at the bottom of the occupational structure. Consequently, part-timers occupy a disadvantaged segment of the labour market, with low pay and limited access to 'fringe benefits'. Section two describes the characteristics of the workers in these jobs. The third section of the chapter outlines the trends in trade union membership, showing the industries and occupations where trade union density is highest. Section four summarises the structure of the thesis while section five concludes.

1.1 Part-Time Jobs

Part-time work in Britain has increased from 4 per cent of all employees in 1951 (12 per cent of the female workforce and 0.3 per cent of the male workforce) to 24 per cent in 1997 (44 per cent of the female workforce and 8.0 per cent of the male workforce) (Rubery and Fagan 1995a:66, table 1; Sly *et al.* 1998:98). There are now approximately six million part-time employees in the labour force and is it estimated that by the year 2010, there will be seven million part-time workers (Sly *et al.* 1998:98; Jim Conway Memorial Foundation 1989:13). In a wider context, Britain has the second highest rate of part-time workers in the EC after the Netherlands[4] (see

[4] Part-time jobs in the UK are particularly inferior compared to other European countries: for a comparison between part-time jobs in Britain and Denmark see Warren 1998 and for Britain and The Netherlands see Fagan *et al.* 1995.

table 1.1). The reasons for these national differences in part-time work include differing labour market regulations between countries, fiscal incentives and differing gender regimes, especially the organization of childcare (David and Starzec 1992; Duncan 1995; Fagan and O'Reilly 1998; Fagan and Rubery 1996a, 1996b; Pfau-Effinger 1998).

Table 1.1 The rate of part-time employment for the employed in the EU15 countries, 1996

	Total level of part-time employment	Female part-time employment	Male part-time employment
Austria	15	29	4
Belgium	14	31	3
Denmark	22	35	11
Germany (West)	17	36	4
Germany (East)	10	21	2
Greece	5	9	3
Spain	8	17	3
Finland	12	16	8
France	16	30	5
Ireland	12	22	5
Italy	7	13	3
Luxembourg	8	18	2
Netherlands	38	69	17
Portugal	9	13	5
Sweden	25	42	9
UK	35	45	8
EU15	16	32	6

Source: 1996 European LFS data (Fagan *et al.* 1998: table 1).

It is not just that part-time workers work shorter hours than full-time workers - part-time jobs are disadvantaged and occupy a different segment of the labour market by being concentrated in specific occupations and industries (Rubery *et al.* 1994). As we can see from table 1.2a, female part-time workers are vertically segregated in low level occupations: 61 per cent of female part-timers are employed in manual occupations compared to only 29 per cent of female full-time workers. Although there is evidence that some part-timers make it to the top of the occupational strata (Sideaway and Wareing 1992), only 11 per cent of women working part-time are employed in the two highest occupational groups (managers and administrators and professional occupations) compared to 29 per cent of female full-time workers and 31 per cent of male full-time employees. Indeed, 60 per cent of female part-time workers are concentrated in three occupational groups - personal and protective services (21 per cent), clerical and secretarial jobs (20 per cent) and sales occupations (19 per cent), while only 45 per cent of female full-time workers

and 19 per cent of men are employed in these occupations. In contrast to part-time work which is concentrated at the bottom end of the occupational structure, female and male full-timers are more evenly spread across occupations, yet they do different jobs in the middle of the occupational structure.

Table 1.2 Occupational profile by Sex and Employment Status (aged 16-59), 1996
a) Employment concentration

Standard Occupational Classification	Female Employees		All Male Employees	All Employees
	FT	PT		
Non-manual:				
Managers and administrators	17	5	19	16
Professional	12	6	12	11
Associate professional and technical	13	8	9	10
Clerical and secretarial	28	20	7	15
Manual:				
Craft and related	3	2	20	12
Personal and protective services	11	21	7	11
Sales occupations	6	19	5	8
Plant and machine operatives	6	3	14	10
Other occupations	3	16	7	8
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

b) Employment segregation

Standard Occupational Classification	Female employees		All Male employees	Total
	FT	PT		
Non-manual:				
Managers and administrators	26.3	6.0	67.7	100%
Professional	28.8	10.8	60.3	100%
Associate professional and technical	33.3	16.6	50.1	100%
Clerical and secretarial	47.6	27.0	25.4	100%
Manual:				
Craft and related	6.7	2.7	90.6	100%
Personal and protective services	26.8	38.4	34.8	100%
Sales occupations	18.2	45.4	36.3	100%
Plant and machine operatives	14.7	5.2	80.0	100%
Other occupations	10.0	39.3	50.7	100%

Source: Spring 1996 Labour Force Survey (Sly *et al.* 1997:117).

Regarding employment segregation (table 1.2b), part-timers account for a high proportion of employees in occupations such as sales (where they account for 45 per cent of the total workforce) and personal and protective services (where they occupy 38 per cent of the total jobs). In both of these occupations, female part-timers constitute a higher proportion of the workforce than female or male full-time workers, while in other occupations such as plant and machine operators, female part-timers form a much lower proportion of the total workforce (at only three per cent). Additionally, the SCELI research at the enterprise level highlighted that part-time jobs usually involve different tasks and responsibilities to full-time jobs (Rubery *et al.* 1994:206) and that female part-timers are more likely to work mainly or

exclusively in female jobs than women who work full-time (72 per cent compared to 58 per cent respectively. Horrell *et al.* 1994:209).

Table 1.3 Industrial Profile by Sex and Employment Status (aged 16-59), 1996
a) Industrial concentration

Standard Industrial Classification	Female Employees FT	Female Employees PT	All Male Employees	All Employees
Manufacturing etc.:				
Agriculture and Fishing, Energy and Water, Manufacturing, Construction	20	9	41	30
Services:				
Distribution and Wholesale	3	2	7	5
Retail	9	21	7	10
Hotels and restaurants	4	9	3	4
Transport and communication	4	2	9	6
Banking, finance and insurance	7	3	4	4
Real estate, renting and business activities	11	7	10	10
Public administration	8	3	6	6
Education	11	13	4	8
Health	18	22	4	11
Other services	6	8	5	6
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

cont.
b) Industrial segregation

Standard Industrial Classification	Female employees FT	Female employees PT	All Male employees	Total
Manufacturing etc.:				
Agriculture and Fishing, Energy and Water, Manufacturing, Construction	16.6	6.0	77.4	100%
Services:				
Distribution and Wholesale	16.4	9.3	74.2	100%
Retail	20.8	39.8	39.4	100%
Hotels and restaurants	22.0	37.7	40.3	100%
Transport and communication	15.9	6.6	77.5	100%
Banking, finance and insurance	39.8	12.8*	46.6	99.2%
Real estate, renting and business activities	27.4	14.7*	57.6	99.7%
Public administration	32.1	10.8	57.0	100%
Education	36.8	32.2	31.0	100%
Health	41.3	39.0	19.6	100%
Other services	26.0	27.6	46.3	100%

Note: *Some of the sub groups with less than 10,000 respondents were not included. Therefore these row totals do not total 100%.

Source: Spring 1996 Labour Force Survey (Sly *et al.* 1997:118).

As well as being segregated by occupational status, part-time workers are also segregated by sector. They are more likely to be concentrated in the service industries than full-time workers: 90 per cent of female part-timers are employed in the service sector compared to 80 per cent of female full-time workers and 59 per cent of men. Looking at table 1.3a we can see that over half (56 per cent) of female part-time employees are concentrated in three sectors: Health (22 per cent), Retail (21 per cent) and Education (13 per cent), while a lower proportion of the female and male full-

time workforce are employed in these industries (38 and 15 per cent respectively). Notably, the concentration of female part-timers is similar to that of female full-timers for most industrial groups. An exception to this is the Retail industry, which employs a much higher proportion of the female part-time workforce (21 per cent) than the female full-time workforce (nine per cent). It is clear then, that part-time workers provide a specific type of labour in specific industries. Examining female part-timers as a proportion of the total workforce, we see in table 1.3b that there are four sectors where they account for approximately one third of all employees: Retail, 40 per cent; Health, 39 per cent; Hotels and Restaurants, 38 per cent and Education, 32 per cent.

Table 1.4 Proportion of female part-time employees working 16 hours or less, 1978-1998

	Manual	Non-manual	All
1978	28	22	25
1980	31	25	28
1982	36	27	32
1984	37	30	34
1986	40	32	36
1988	41	32	36
1990	44	32	37
1992	40	37	38
1994	41	36	38
1996	43	38	40

Note: Average total weekly hours (normal basic and paid overtime for employees not affected by absence).

Source: New Earnings Survey, various years (table 183).

Not only does Britain have one of the highest levels of part-time employment in the EU, British part-timers also work the shortest hours (EC Network of Experts on the Situation of Women in the Labour Market 1995). Table 1.4 uses time series data from the New Earnings Survey[5] (NES) to illustrate this trend towards shorter hours: the proportion of female part-timers working 16 hours or less per week increased substantially from 25 per cent in 1978 to 40 per cent in 1996. (The table

[5] The New Earnings Survey allows trends over time to be examined, but is problematic as the sample design largely excludes employees who earn below the National Insurance threshold. It is estimated that between 20 per cent (Hakim 1996:27; Orchard and Sefton 1996:161) to 30 per cent of part-timers are excluded from the survey (Cox 1989:6). Although the LFS includes those earning lower than the PAYE threshold, this data has only been collected since 1992 and the sample size is much smaller than the NES. Nonetheless, LFS data confirms the trend that average weekly hours for part-time employees have fallen from 19 hours in 1979 to 17.6 hours in 1994 (Butcher and Hart 1995: table 4). Regarding hourly earnings, those calculated by the LFS are consistently lower (some eight percent for

also shows that female part-time manual workers are more likely to work shorter hours than female non-manual workers.) When looking at hours worked by occupation (table 1.5), a higher than average proportion of part-timers in other occupations and sales occupations (both at 46 per cent) and personal and protective services (42 per cent) work marginal or short part-time hours i.e. less than 16 hours per week. Considering the weekly hours of part-time employees by industrial group, half of the sectors employ higher than average proportions of part-time workers on marginal / short part-time hours. Retail is a good example of this, along with Education, Hotels and Restaurants and Other Social, Community and Personal Services.

Table 1.5 Percentage distribution of normal basic hours worked for part-time employees (male and female) by occupation and industry, 1995

	Number of basic hours worked per week			Total	Average weekly hours
	0-15	16-23	24+		
ALL	36.4	37.8	25.8	100%	19.1
Occupation:					
Managers and administrators	28.0	38.6	27.3	93.9	21.1
Professional	50.7	33.2	23.6	107.5	15.5
Associate professional and technical	24.4	43.1	29.2	96.7	20.8
Clerical and secretarial	23.3	47.1	29.4	99.8	20.7
Craft and related	21.9	34.8	35.9	92.6	22.7
Personal and protective services	41.5	31.1	23.9	96.5	18.1
Sales occupations	45.6	36.6	19.6	101.8	18.8
Plant and machine operatives	20.5	43.2	35.0	98.7	22.7
Other occupations	46.3	32.6	20.2	99.1	17.9
Industry:					
Manufacturing	22.0	41.8	36.2	100%	21.7
Construction	39.6	31.6	28.8	100%	NA
Wholesale and retail	41.7	37.0	21.4	100%	19.3
Hotels and restaurants	50.0	28.0	22.0	100%	16.5
Transport and communication	22.0	48.5	29.5	100%	22.9
Banking, finance and insurance	27.5	53.2	19.3	100%	20.3
Real estate, renting and business activities	39.0	35.1	26.0	100%	16.1
Public administration	27.9	45.2	26.9	100%	18.3
Education	52.3	28.1	19.7	100%	17.2
Health and social work	24.2	43.3	32.6	100%	21.1
Other community, social and personal services	44.1	33.3	22.6	100%	16.7

Source: New Earnings Survey, 1995 (Osborne 1996:233). Also NES tables F32/4 and 177/178).

The days of work and shifts which female part-timers work vary greatly, and are often unsociable. Data from a 1989 survey funded by the Equal Opportunities Commission showed that nearly 60 per cent of part-timers worked before eight

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weekly earnings and seven per cent for hourly earnings) than those calculated by the NES (Orchard and Sefton 1996:161; Wilkinson 1998).

o'clock in the morning or after six or eleven o'clock in the evening (Marsh 1991:48). More recently, the SCELI data found that full-time employees are used to provide working-time flexibility by working late, taking work home and doing occasional weekends while part-timers were used for weekend work, variable days, evenings and some night work (Rubery *et al.* 1994:229).

Part-time employees receive lower pay and fewer occupational benefits than full-time employees as they are segregated into poorly paid, weakly organized sectors. Concerning pay, part-time workers earn substantially less than full-time workers. As table 1.6 shows, female part-time workers only earn 58 per cent of male full-time and 73 per cent of female full-time hourly earnings. Indeed, female part-timers' hourly pay as a proportion of female full-timers' hourly pay is now lower than it was two decades ago: in 1978 female part-timers earned 81 per cent of female full-timers' hourly wage. Table 1.7 shows the variation of hourly earnings by occupation and industry, with part-time employees in professional occupations earning the highest hourly earnings (at £12.86 per hour). By comparison, those part-timers employed in sale occupations earned the lowest hourly rate at £4.34 per hour. When examining rates of pay by sector, we can see that employees in the Hotel and Retail sectors receive the lowest pay (£3.62 and £4.40 respectively) yet we know from tables 1.1 and 1.2 that a large proportion of the part-time workforce are employed in these low-paid occupations and industries. Moreover, the industries and occupations where part-timers are employed are highly segregated by gender, and those female part-time workers who only work alongside other women are paid less then those who work alongside men (Morton 1987:13). The recent introduction of the National Minimum Wage[6] is estimated to affect 54 per cent of the female part-time workforce (Labour Research 1998: 9-10. See also Metcalf 1998:18, table one).

[6] The National Minimum Wage was introduced in April 1999 at a rate of £3.60 for employees aged 22 and over and £3.20 for employees aged 18-21 (Labour Research 1999b:11).

Table 1.6 Hourly earnings of female part-time workers as a proportion of full-time earnings, 1978 - 1998

	Hourly earnings as a percentage of FT earnings	
	FFT	MFT
1978	81	58
1980	81	58
1982	79	57
1984	79	58
1986	77	57
1988	75	56
1990	75	57
1992	74	59
1994	74	59
1996	73	58
1998	73	59

Source: New Earnings Survey, various years (tables A13 and F32).

Although legislation has been designed to outlaw wage discrimination, pay gaps still remain between male and female workers and full and part-time workers. Paci *et al.* (1995) used longitudinal data from the National Child Development Survey to analyze these differentials. They found that differentials between men and women's pay were due to high levels of gender segregation in the labour market (which they call 'gendered jobs') and discrimination by employers. In attempting to explain pay differentials between female full- and part-time workers, they found that female part-timers have lower educational qualifications and had spent less time in the labour market than female full-timers. Part-timers were also more likely to be concentrated in low-level female occupations. This they called 'explained differentials'. Nonetheless, Paci *et al.* found that these differentials did not account for all of the pay differential, which they called an 'unexplained differential'[7] (discrimination). These remaining differences were attributed to the 'part-time effect' which may be a mechanism whereby the wages of part-timers are marked down (for a discussion of male / female wage differences at workplace level using 1990 WIRS data see Millward and Woodland 1995).

[7] Elias found the 'unexplained' differential between female full and part-timers to be between eight and ten per cent (Elias 1990:84).

Table 1.7 Hourly earnings excluding overtime for employees not affected by absence, 1997

	Male	Female employees		Female PTs as proportion of	
	FT	FT	PT	FFT	MFT
ALL	982	788	577	73	58
Occupation:					
Managers and administrators	1514	1101	933	85	62
Professional	1471	1334	1286	96	87
Associate professional and technical	1253	977	876	90	70
Clerical and secretarial	693	658	583	89	84
Craft and related	757	513	464	90	61
Personal and protective services	761	570	494	87	65
Sales occupations	820	582	445	76	54
Plant and machine operatives	675	516	466	90	69
Other occupations	580	448	406	90	70
Industry:					
Manufacturing	912	656	468	71	51
Construction	829	708	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wholesale and retail	857	638	430	67	50
Hotels and restaurants	652	520	362	70	56
Transport and communication	840	758	838	*	100
Banking, finance and insurance	1748	953	762	80	44
Real estate, renting and business activities	1146	833	387	46	34
Public administration	1073	865	466	54	43
Education	1140	1020	759	74	67
Health and social work	1024	778	435	56	42
Other community, social and personal services	947	756	390	52	41

Note: * denotes an error in the NES.

Source: New Earnings Survey, 1997 (tables A6-7, A13-14, F32 and F34).

In February 1995 (Dickens 1995:209) hours thresholds for unfair dismissal and redundancy were abolished, giving part-time workers equal rights with full-timers. Previous to this, only employees who worked 16 hours or more per week (with more than two years service) or eight or more hours per week (with more than five years service) were eligible for redundancy pay and protection against unfair dismissal. In order to be eligible for social protection such as Job-Seekers Allowance, State Maternity Pay[8], Statutory Sick Pay and in some circumstances Retirement Pensions, employees need to make National Insurance Contributions. However, it is estimated that 29 per cent of all female part-time employees earn below the Lower

[8] Maternity rights for part-time workers were improved under the 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights act. The main changes were that women were protected against unfair dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy (regardless of hours worked or length of service, which part-time workers had previously been unable to challenge) and a universal right to maternity leave for 14 weeks was introduced (Department of Social Security 1994; Earnshaw 1994). This will be increased to 18 weeks in the *Employment Relations Bill 1999*. The bill will also introduce parental leave: parents will be eligible to take three months unpaid leave before the child is eight (Labour Research 1999c:28).

Earnings Limit[9] (the level at which contributions are made) and are therefore ineligible for this protection (Burchell *et al.* 1997:218). An important change to take effect from April 1999 and estimated to affect one million low paid workers, is that employees (and employers) will only pay NI on the amount earned above the lower earnings limit, rather than on all earned income. Additionally, the LEL threshold will be raised (Taylor 1998). Raising the LEL will mean that a higher proportion of part-timers have higher take-home pay and will also be able to increase their hours slightly. However, the disadvantage is that it will also increase the proportion of part-timers who are ineligible for social protection as they fall below the LEL.

Until recently, part-time workers suffered from direct discrimination with regard to occupational benefits. For example, data from the 1992 LFS show that one third of part-time workers had no paid holiday entitlement compared to only three per cent of full-time workers (Labour Research 1994:10), while a 1984 study for the Equal Opportunities Commission found that 62 per cent of its sample excluded all part-timers from membership of occupational pension schemes (Beechey and Perkins 1987:154). Direct discrimination against part-timers with regard to paid leave entitlement and pensions has now been outlawed by various acts of legislation.[10] Part-time workers' rights are to be protected further under the European Directive on Part-time Working, to be implemented in the UK by April 2000. Under the directive, part-timers will be entitled to pro-rata terms and conditions; and to be treated no less favourably than other workers. Additionally, full-time employees will be able to request moves to part-time work (and vice versa) where it is available (Labour Research 1999c:13). Although part-timers no longer suffer direct discrimination, they

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[9] The threshold for April 1999-March 2000 is £66 per week (Labour Research 1999a:16).

[10] With regard to holidays, the 1993 European Directive on Working Time which was implemented in the UK in 1996 resulted in three weeks paid holiday being given to employees, rising to four weeks in 1999 (previous to this the UK was the only country in the European Union without legal minimum entitlement to annual leave). The directive also ensures that employees working more than six hours a day will be eligible for a break from work regardless of their total weekly hours and that total compulsory weekly working hours be limited to 48 hours (Milne 1996:10). With regard to pensions, the European Court of Justice ruled in 1994 that the exclusion of part-time workers from occupational pension schemes constituted sexual discrimination. It is estimated that some 70 per cent of part-timers will now be eligible to join occupational pension schemes (Miles 1997:21). A 1995 tribunal ruled that backdated pensions could be claimed, but these claims must be made within six months of leaving the job. More recently, legislation has been passed which enables divorcees to claim a share of their spouses' pension.

still experience indirect discrimination, mainly due to their concentration at the bottom end of the occupational structure. For example, these employees are less likely to be covered by occupational pension schemes[11] (Ginn and Arber 1996).

Finally, part-time workers also fare worse than full-time workers in terms of training and opportunities for promotion. Recent data on job related training showed that only 13 per cent of female part-time workers had received training from their employer in the last four weeks compared to 18 per cent of female full-time workers (Department for Education and Employment 1996:38. See also McGiveney 1994; Murphy 1996; Forrester *et al.* 1995; Walters 1997). Employers are less likely to want to train their part-time employees (CBI 1994) and when they do provide training, this is often reserved for part-timers employed in higher skilled jobs (Uden 1996). Regarding promotion opportunities, part-timers perceive that they are less likely to be promoted than their full-time colleagues. The SCELI data showed that only 29 per cent of female part-timers considered their job offered promotion prospects compared to 52 per cent of female full-timers and 63 per cent of male full-time employees (Rubery *et al.* 1994:214; see also Tam 1997:108-110).

In sum, this section has illustrated the location of part-time jobs in the British occupational and industrial structure and outlined the characteristics of these jobs. It is clear that the majority of part-time jobs occupy a different (and more disadvantaged) segment of the labour market to full-time jobs: they are vertically and horizontally segregated in low level occupations and are confined to certain industries within the service sector. Part-time jobs are low paid and have fewer fringe benefits attached to them than full-time jobs. Having examined the nature of these jobs, the chapter now briefly describes the workers in these jobs.

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[11] The coverage of occupational pensions is also affected by sector: the minority of part-timers employed in the public sector are more likely to belong to an occupational pension scheme than those in the private sector (Davies and Ward 1992). Even so, when they have the opportunity to join an occupational pension scheme, part-timers are less likely than full-timers to be members. Those part-time workers who do belong to occupational pension schemes generally receive lower pensions than female full-time workers and men, as contributions to occupational or SERPs pensions are earnings related. Needless to say women and part-timers earn less than men and full-timers and they also have less continuous, full-time employment (Ginn and Arber 1996; Arber and Ginn 1995).

1.2 The Characteristics of Part-Time Workers

Part-time employment across Europe is female dominated. In 1997, women accounted for 81 per cent of part-time workers in Britain (Sly *et al.* 1998:97). The proportion of women working part-time has remained stable over the last decade (rising from 43 per cent in 1986 to 44 per cent in 1997. Sly *et al.* 1998:97). Women who work part-time are a distinct group. Most fall into the 25-39 age group (Naylor 1994:475), have partners and these partners are in employment (only about three per cent of women with unemployed husbands work part-time in the UK. Arber and Ginn 1995). Female part-time workers are also less qualified than female full-time workers (see table 1.8). Only 9 per cent of female part-timers are highly qualified compared to 15 per cent of female full-time workers. Comparably, 40 per cent of female part-timers have low level qualifications compared to 19 per cent of female full-timers. However, as commentators such as Dex (1987) and Rubery *et al.* (1994) have pointed out, relative to the jobs they do, female part-timers are overqualified. For example, in the SCELI survey, respondents were asked about their qualifications and then asked to say what qualifications were necessary to apply for a job at their workplace. This showed that 40 per cent of part-timers were overqualified compared to 28 per cent of female full-timers and 27 per cent of male full-timers (Rubery *et al.* 1994:225).

Table 1.8 Levels of Education of Female Employees, 1991.

	PT	FT	PT P	PT C	PT M	FT P	FT C	FT M	All
High	9	15	43	4	2	36	3	4	13
Intermediate	51	65	51	74	40	57	83	54	59
Low	40	19	6	22	58	7	14	42	28
N	1062	1364	183	263	616	498	485	381	2426

Note: PT = part-time, FT = full-time, PTP = part-time professional/managerial/associate professional, PTC = part-time clerical, PTM = part-time manual, FTP = full-time professional/managerial/associate professional, FTC = full-time clerical, FTM = full-time manual.

Source: British Household Panel Survey 1991 (Warren 1998).

Furthermore, White women are more likely to work part-time than women from minority ethnic groups. Figures from the 1994 LFS show that 46 per cent of White women work part-time, compared to 33 per cent of Black women, 31 per cent of Indian women and 43 per cent of Pakistani / Bangladeshi women (Naylor

1994:477). Comparably, Holdsworth and Dale's (1997) analysis of 1991 census data shows that minority ethnic women are more likely to work full-time than White women. Walby (1997:62) argues that the difference in participation rates is due to direct discrimination, differing age structures between white and ethnic minority women (there are fewer ethnic minority women aged 45-64 than white women, an age group also associated with part-time work) and ethnically specific forms of gender regime i.e. Pakistani / Bangladeshi women are more likely to have a domestic gender regime, while other ethnic minority groups have a public gender regime. Holdsworth and Dale (1997) point out that cultural explanations of ethnic differences in employment patterns have been criticised by Black feminists. They cite Brah's work, who argues that employment patterns can not be separated from social and economic factors such as 'the structure of the local labour market, timing of immigration and knowledge of English'. For example, highly qualified Pakistani and Bangladeshi women do not have low economic activity rates. It is concluded that 'there is a need for a greater understanding of the processes that influence women's employment choices' in order that we can establish whether ethnic women work full-time rather than part-time from 'choice', or whether factors such as discrimination by employers constrain their labour force participation.

Finally, a high proportion of female part-time workers have dependent children.[12] Figures from the 1997 LFS show that 61 per cent of women with a dependent child under the age of 16 work part-time (Sly *et al.* 1998:101). The most common pattern of employment for mothers in Britain is the 'woman returner' model which involves withdrawing from the labour market on giving birth and returning to work part-time at some stage during the child's early years.[13] The length of time which women take out of the labour market to have children is getting shorter.

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[12] The LFS definition of a dependent child is a child under 16, or aged 16 but under 19, provided they are childless, never married and a full-time student. This includes adopted or step-children (Harrop and Moss 1995:423).

[13] This is also the case in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and former West Germany. However, this is not the only trajectory of mother's employment. In countries such as Finland and France, mothers work continuously and mainly full-time, while in Denmark and Sweden mothers' employment rates are high although the majority switch from full-time to part-time work (Rubery *et al.* 1995).

Male part-time workers are a different pool of workers to female part-time workers. The majority are either students, retired with an occupational pension or 'professionals' (Blanchflower and Corry 1989; Elias 1990; Delsen 1998). Data from the 1992 LFS shows that 82 per cent of male part-timers are either over 50 or under 25 compared to 38 per cent of female part-timers (Watson and Fothergill 1993:214). Although the proportion of women working part-time over the last decade has stayed the same, the proportion of men working part-time has increased from five per cent to eight per cent (Sly *et al.* 1998:97). This has led commentators such as Delsen (1998) to argue that the rates of part-time work may eventually converge between men and women. He draws upon the Netherlands as an example, where part-time employment has significantly increased for men in the prime age groups: OECD data show that in 1995, 23 per cent of men aged 40-54 worked part-time compared to only three per cent of men in the UK. Male part-timers in the Netherlands have also made some entry into industry and highly qualified jobs.

Somewhat optimistically, Delsen sees that part-time jobs could be used to redistribute employment, hence reducing working time and increasing men's availability for sharing household care work. While it is possible that this may occur in countries with societal frameworks similar to the Netherlands, it is unlikely that countries such as Britain will follow suit. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, Britain has a strong male breadwinner / female carer gender regime and British men need to earn a 'family wage' to support their female partners' caring role (Lewis 1992). This is reinforced by the fact that part-time work in Britain remains concentrated in 'women's jobs'. Consequently, these jobs are too low paid relative to full-time work for men to consider part-time work as an option: there is little choice but for British men to work full-time and women to work part-time if they have children and do not want to use full-time child care. Part-time work then, is only likely to increase for men without a family to support i.e. students and the retired.

This section has summarised the characteristics of part-time workers. The majority are women, of child rearing age, with employed partners. Female part-timers generally have low level qualifications and are disproportionately White. The chapter also discussed the increase in the proportion of men working part-time over the last decade and concludes that due to the particular gender regime within Britain, it is

unlikely that part-time employment for British men will increase on a significant scale. The next section examines levels of trade union membership and shows that in addition to female part-timers being employed in jobs at the bottom end of the occupational structure, they are also less likely to belong to a trade union.

1.3 Part-time Workers and Trade Union Membership

Since the late 1970s trade unions have suffered substantial membership losses. Figures from the Certification Officer show that membership peaked at 13.2 million members in 1979. Since then, trade union membership has fallen consecutively every year and in 1996, membership had fallen to 7.9 million[14] - it is now at its lowest level since 1945 (Labour Market Trends 1998:354). Using LFS data, we can see from table 1.9 that in 1989, 39 per cent (8.6 million) of all employees belonged to a trade union or staff association falling to 30 per cent (6.5 million) by 1997.[15] While membership rates for full-time employees have steadily declined (falling from 44 per cent in 1989 to 34 per cent in 1997), density rates for part-time workers have remained stable, falling only two percentage points between 1989 and 1997 (from 22 to 20 per cent) (Corcoran 1995:192; Labour Force Survey data 1998). If this trend continues then, it is probable that the union density gap between full- and part-time employees may eventually close. However, this would take between 10-15 years if, indeed, this was to occur. Meanwhile, part-time employment continues to grow, providing the trade union movement with a challenge if it is to increase its membership.

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[14] Trade union membership levels recorded by the Certification Officer for Trade Unions and Employers' Association are not directly comparable with those recorded by the LFS. The Certification Officer includes those members who are retired and unemployed, while the LFS excludes them. However, the LFS question on union membership only dates back to 1989, while data from the Certification Officer has been recorded since the early 1970s (Corcoran 1995:191).

[15] Union membership rates for minority ethnic employees are higher than for white workers. For example, West Indian and Asian women are more likely to be trade union members than are white women. Figures from the 1991 LFS show that 50 per cent of West Indian / Guyanese women and 34 per cent of Indian women are trade union members compared to 32 per cent of white women (Beatson and Butcher 1993:685). These differences are thought to be partly structural and partly attitudinal. West Indian and Asian women are more likely to work full-time than white women and are more likely to be concentrated in industries and sectors with high levels of union density. However, union membership rates of minority ethnic workers are found to be higher than for white employees even when controlling for industry. Wrench and Virdee (1995:5) cite research conducted by the PSI which concludes that minority ethnic workers' higher unionisation rates are due to a stronger ideological commitment towards the principles of unionism.

Table 1.9 also shows that male membership has declined at a faster rate than female membership. Since 1989 male membership has fallen by 12 percentage points (from 44 per cent to 32 per cent), while female membership has only declined by five percentage points (from 33 per cent to 28 per cent). Thus, a growing proportion of trade union members are women: while women (both full- and part-timers) made up 39 per cent of the total trade union membership in 1989, this increased to 45 per cent in 1997 (Corcoran 1995:199; Labour Force Survey data 1998). Despite women's growing presence in the labour force and as trade union members, there is still a gender bias in unionisation rates. Twenty eight per cent of female employees belong to a trade union compared to 32 per cent of male employees. This gender gap is due to the large numbers of women in part-time employment who have lower levels of union organization and disappears when union density rates of female and male full-time employees are compared. Indeed, female full-timers are now marginally more likely to belong to a trade union than male full-time employees (34.1 per cent compared to 33.5 per cent).

Table 1.9 Trade Union Membership by Sex and Employment Status in Great Britain 1989-1997, employees only

Year	All Employees			Male Employees			Female Employees		
	All	FT	PT	All	FT	PT	All	FT	PT
1989	39	44	22	44	45	12	33	40	23
1990	38	43	22	43	44	11	32	39	23
1991	38	42	22	42	43	13	32	39	23
1992	36	40	22	39	/	/	32	/	/
1993	35	39	22	38	/	/	31	/	/
1994	34	38	21	36	/	/	30	/	/
1995	32	36	21	35	/	/	30	/	/
1996	31	35	20	33	36	12	29	37	23
1997	30	34	20	32	34	13	28	34	21

Note: Data for union membership by sex and employment status is not available for 1992-1995.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Employment Gazette / Labour Market Trends, various years.

Part-time workers then, have lower union membership than full-time workers. Indeed, some commentators have argued that part-timers' lower propensity to belong to a trade union may be a contributory factor why employers choose to employ part-time workers (Blanchflower and Corry 1989:52). Currently, 20 per cent of part-time workers belong to a trade union compared to 34 per cent of full-time workers. Interestingly, men who work part-time are the least likely of all employees (male and

female, full- and part-time) to belong to a trade union. It is likely that this is due to the types of men who are employed in these jobs. As mentioned in section 1.2, men who work part-time are usually either students or older workers and are predominantly employed in sectors and occupations with low levels of union organization. In other cases, male part-timers are employed in professional occupations where they are likely to be self-employed (and therefore not in a union) for example, as company directors, consultants or accountants. Crucially then, differences in unionzation rates are greater between full and part-time workers than they are between male and female full-time employees. This dismisses the view that part-timers' lower unionisation rates are simply due to gender.

Examining trade union membership by industry (table 1.10), we can see that unionisation rates for all employees are highest in Public administration (62 per cent), Education (54 per cent) and Health and Social Work (47 per cent) and lowest in Hotels (seven per cent), Wholesale (11 per cent) and Real Estate (12 per cent). The unionization rates for part-time workers mirror those for full-time workers.[16] However, when examining those sectors which have high levels of trade union membership for female part-time workers, it is clear that (with the exception of Health and Social Work) only a small proportion of the total part-time workforce are employed in these industries. For example, trade union membership for female part-time employees is highest in the Public administration sector (44 per cent) yet only four per cent of the female part-time workforce are employed here. Similarly, 37 per cent of female part-timers employed in the Banking and Health sectors belong to a trade union, yet these groups only employ respectively three and eight per cent of the female part-time workforce. Most noticeably, the Wholesale, retail and motor trade accounts for a nearly one quarter (24 per cent) of the female part-time workforce, yet only 11 per cent of female part-time employees belong to a trade union in this sector.

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[16] The public sector (along with the manufacturing industries) has traditionally had high levels of unionisation density. It is generally agreed that these high levels of union membership (which increased sharply in the 1970s) are a consequence of direct sponsorship by the state (Potter 1987). However, it is anticipated that the restructuring of the public services may affect union organization in the long term (Gallie 1996:32).

Turning now to examine trade union membership by occupation, we can see from table 1.11 that unionisation rates for all employees are highest in professional occupations (50 per cent) followed by associate professional and technical occupations (46 per cent) and employees working as plant and machine operatives (38 per cent). Unionisation rates for part-time employees are also highest in these three occupations. As with the industrial sectors examined above, unionisation rates are high for female part-timers in occupations which employ a small proportion of total part-time employees. For example, only five per cent of female part-time workers are employed in professional occupations, nine per cent in associate professional and technical occupations and three per cent as plant and machine operatives. Conversely, the occupations where the majority of part-time employees work have lower trade union membership rates. For example, 23 per cent of female part-time employees are employed in personal and protective services yet only 17 per cent of these employees belong to a trade union; 22 per cent are employed in clerical and secretarial jobs with 19 per cent of these employees being union members and 19 per cent are employed in sales occupations which have the lowest proportion of union members - only 10 per cent of these employees belong to a trade union. Ultimately then, what tables 1.10 and 1.11 illustrate is that part-time workers are generally concentrated in sectors and occupations where unionisation rates are also low for full-time workers. A possible reason for this may be that the presence of unorganized full-time workers in these industries and occupations has allowed part-time work to spread.

Table 1.10 Union density rates by Industry, Gender and Working Time in Great Britain, 1997, employees only

Industry	All Employees			Male Employees		Female Employees		Proportion of PT employees in sector		Extent of PT work in industry
	All	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	Female	Male	
Agriculture and Fishing, Energy and Water, Manufacturing, Construction	28.4	25.9	13.0	32.0	11.2	20.5	13.6	7.9	11.9	8.4
Wholesale, retail and motor trade	10.6	11.1	9.9	11.2	6.7	11.0	10.7	23.5	29.5	39.6
Hotels and restaurants	7.1	8.0	6.4	6.8	4.7	9.3	6.9	9.2	14.7	43.6
Transport, storage and communication	45.0	47.7	25.9	52.3	29.7	29.7	24.1	2.6	6.5	12.2
Banking, finance and insurance	33.1	32.7	35.6	29.7	17.8	36.1	37.1	3.0	1.3	14.3
Real estate, renting, business activities	11.5	12.5	8.1	12.6	5.5	12.1	8.6	7.6	8.5	20.9
Public administration and defence	62.1	65.8	42.1	69.1	31.7	60.9	43.6	3.8	2.9	15.5
Education	54.2	68.7	29.9	69.1	30.0	68.4	29.8	12.8	7.1	37.3
Health and social work	46.5	55.5	36.4	59.1	29.6	52.8	36.8	23.0	7.2	44.1
Other	20.7	26.7	17.2	31.8	8.4	19.9	10.0	6.6	10.5	35.4
N	21,644,029	16,153,525	5,490,234	10,415,834	888,531	5,737,961	4,601,703	/	/	/

Table 1.11 Union density rates by Occupation, Gender and Working Time in Great Britain, 1997

Occupation	All Employees	Male Employees		Female Employees		Proportion of PT employed in occupation		Proportion of employees in occupation who work PT
		FT	PT	FT	PT	Female	Male	
Managers and administrators	20.2	20.0	7.3	21.8	16.9	3.5	5.4	6.5
Professional occupations	50.3	41.9	33.1	67.7	45.3	5.0	7.3	13.6
Associate professional & technical	45.8	35.5	31.5	55.6	55.9	8.5	5.4	20.3
Clerical, secretarial occupations	24.9	31.7	11.7	25.5	19.1	21.5	8.4	29.5
Craft and related occupations	34.2	35.2	12.5	33.4	21.0	1.2	5.2	4.6
Personal, protective occupations	28.0	47.4	12.2	29.8	17.4	22.5	15.4	47.8
Sales occupations	9.3	9.0	5.1	10.9	9.6	19.3	19.1	56.1
Plant and machine operatives	38.4	41.9	13.2	33.2	21.3	2.5	9.5	9.3
Other occupations	25.9	38.2	10.0	28.6	18.5	15.7	24.4	52.8

Source: Autumn 1997 Labour Force Survey, employees only.

Regarding the coverage of trade unions at the workplace level, data from the 1984 Workplace and Industrial Relations Survey showed that 66 per cent of all employees worked in establishments where trade unions were recognised for negotiations over pay and conditions, falling to 53 per cent in 1990 (Millward *et al.* 1992:70). Results from the LFS show a further fall to 46 per cent in 1996[17] (Cully and Woodland 1997:238). As can be seen from table 1.12, at workplace level, female part-timers are less likely than female full-timers to work in an organized establishment[18] (45 per cent compared to 55 per cent). However, even when part-timers have the opportunity to join a trade union at their workplace, they are still less likely to be union members: only 55 per cent of female part-timers who have a trade union at their workplace are members compared to 69 per cent of female full-timers (see also Sinclair, 1995 for similar results from the SCELI data).

Table 1.12 Extent of Trade Union recognition and membership for female part-time employees, 1991

	All Employees			Female FT Employees		Female PT Employees	
	All	FT	PT	Man	Non-man	Man	Non-man
Work is covered by a union	51	55	45	43	54	39	54
Joined union - if available	63	69	55	74	67	52	60
N	2,426	1364	1062	381	983	616	446

Source: 1991 British Household Panel Survey data (Warren Forthcoming).

To recap, this section has presented recent data on trade union membership for part-time and full-time workers. It shows that part-time workers are less likely to belong to a trade union than full-time workers. Part-time workers have less opportunity to join a trade union than full-time workers, as they are concentrated in industries and occupations with low levels of trade union organisation. However, even when they are employed in organised workplaces, part-timers are still less likely to be union members.

[17] The LFS and the WIRS are not directly comparable. The LFS did not include a question on union recognition until 1993.

[18] In addition to this, part-timers in the private sector are less likely to have a recognised trade union at their workplace compared with part-timers employed in the public sector (Corcoran 1995:198-9).

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

In total the thesis is divided into ten chapters. Chapter two provides a review of the literature and identifies the gaps within this literature. It begins by assessing how part-time employment has been theorised within Sociology. Firstly, demand-led theories are discussed, from dual and segmented labour market theories through to the flexible firm thesis. The chapter then reviews the development of supply-side explanations of women's employment. Essentially, it is argued that both supply and demand theories need to be integrated along with an understanding of the influence of the state in order to provide a theoretical explanation of women's involvement in part-time work. The chapter then presents the literature on part-time workers and trade unions. It outlines the various explanations which can be offered for part-time workers' lower union membership rates. The chapter argues that more exploratory research is needed on part-time workers' attitudes towards trade unions to provide an understanding of why part-time workers are less likely to belong to a trade union than full-time workers.

Chapter three describes how the research was carried out. Fifty in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with female part-time workers (employed as checkout operators or general assistants) employed by three national retail companies. Two of these companies recognised a trade union while the third did not. A range of union members and non-union members in the organised workplaces were interviewed in order to provide some insight into part-time workers' attitudes towards trade unions and to assess whether these attitudes differ between members and non-members. Additionally, interviews were conducted with female part-time workers in an unorganised company to assess whether these employees would like to join a trade union at their workplace. The chapter begins by examining the rationale for choosing the retail sector as a strategic case study. It then describes the problems encountered when trying to gain access to organisations, and shows how this led to the revision of the original research plan. The section then discusses how the sample was generated and the practical and ethical problems raised by the research. The chapter concludes by summarising the profile of the interviewees and discussing how the interviews were conducted.

The following six empirical chapters are divided into two parts. Section one (chapters four, five and six) is primarily concerned with the interviewees' experience of part-time employment and their attitudes and orientations to work. Chapter four profiles the women's work histories by chronologically tracing the women's working lives from leaving school through to their current job. It shows how the majority of interviewees have low level qualifications and have spent their working lives in low status, low paid occupations. The chapter provides an interesting account of the effect which motherhood has on women's employment and details the 'employment careers' taken on becoming a mother. By profiling employment histories we gain an understanding of the decisions which women make with regard to their employment. It is important to stress that these decisions are made within a household context and depend upon the stage which the family is at. Finally, the chapter unfolds why these women initially returned to work and in particular, why they had currently opted for part-time as opposed to full-time work. Reflecting the findings of previous research, the majority of interviewees initially returned to work for financial reasons, although a substantial proportion of interviewees cited other positive aspects of paid work such as the social nature of the job and the confidence / self-esteem gained from being in paid employment. Reasons for working part-time as opposed to full-time were generally centred around issues of childcare for women with dependant children, while older women in the last phase of their working lives were 'winding down' towards retirement.

In chapter five, the focus is on extrinsic aspects of the women's jobs; hours of work and pay, and the women's level of satisfaction with these aspects of their work. The chapter unpacks notions of satisfaction and preference, and illustrates how high levels of satisfaction found by surveys are misleading. Although many of the part-timers in the sample initially expressed satisfaction with their hours of work and pay, when probed qualitatively about these issues, it emerged that many women were not as satisfied as first thought. The majority of women were not working their preferred hours, being either constrained by their own domestic commitments or their employers' unwillingness to change their work schedules and / or increase their hours. Similarly, with regard to pay, while many women initially express satisfaction with their pay, they would like to be earning more money. The key finding to emerge in

this chapter is that women form their answer as to how satisfied they are with certain aspects of their job in the context of the constraints which operate on their labour supply.

Chapter six continues the discussion of satisfaction at work, by exploring the women's level of satisfaction with intrinsic aspects of their work. The chapter begins by examining the women's satisfaction with the work itself and their jobs overall. As with hours worked and pay in chapter five, it becomes clear that the majority of these women are not as satisfied with their work as the survey data suggest. Indeed, there is a crucial difference between part-timers' satisfaction with their job (i.e. the actual work) and their satisfaction with their employment (i.e. the fact that they are in paid employment, their jobs are close to home and fit in with their domestic commitments). Although around a quarter of the interviewees were fully satisfied with their jobs and enjoyed the nature of the work, the majority of women were less satisfied and less enthusiastic about the work itself. While some of these women expressed satisfaction with their overall employment stating that their jobs are 'OK for now', a substantial proportion of women disliked their work, feeling trapped in their current jobs. The second part of the chapter examines the women's future plans as a way of uncovering their orientations to work. The chapter argues that Hakim's characterisation of the part-time workforce as mass of uncommitted workers is simplistic. The work orientations of the women in this sample are diverse: there are a group of women who are involuntary workers who would give up work if they could afford to and a group of women who resemble Hakim's 'Modern Homemakers'. While both of these groups of women may demonstrate commitment to their job, they do not exhibit a high level of commitment to work itself at this stage in their lives. A significant proportion of the sample have more ambitious orientations to work. These women hold long-term goals for their future employment and plan to get promoted or gain more qualifications in the future. For these women then, their part-time jobs were 'just for now'. The chapter concludes that commitment to employment is not the same as commitment to a job. For example, while some of the involuntary workers and 'Home-Makers' expressed job commitment and organizational commitment, many of the women with a higher level of work commitment did not.

The second part of the thesis (chapters seven, eight and nine) documents the women's experiences of and attitudes towards trade unions. Chapter seven documents the women's trade union membership in their previous and current job. The majority of interviewees had some experience of trade unions from their previous employment, having been either union members or non-members in an organized workplace, and on the whole had positive recollections of the trade unions in these workplaces. A substantial number of these women recounted experiences of industrial action and a small number of women had been trade union representatives in their previous jobs. The second part of the chapter examines the women's current union membership status. Reasons for membership and non-membership are explored in the two organized companies, while the unorganized case study provides useful data on favourability to unionise. On the whole, those women who were trade union members in the two organized companies had joined their workplace union as they saw it as a form of insurance or 'backing'. There were a variety of reasons why the non-union members in the organized companies had not joined / opted out of their workplace trade union: these women either perceived the union to be ineffective, had not been asked to join or were opposed to trade unions in principle. The majority of part-timers in the unorganized company felt they would benefit from trade union membership while a minority (who generally had no experience of trade union membership) were unsure whether they would like to be a trade union member or indeed if they needed trade union representation in their company.

Chapter eight examines industrial relations in the three case study companies. The chapter examines the interviewees' attitudes towards management / employee relations in the respective companies. The chapter also outlines the role which the trade union plays in the two organized companies to establish whether the company's orientation to trade unionism had any influence on the women's attitudes to their workplace union. One of the main points to emerge from the chapter is the way in which trade unions are becoming increasingly marginalised in the 1990s workplace. Both of the organized companies had taken steps and / or implemented new policies (whether explicitly or implicitly) which reduced the power of the union. In each of the two organized companies a group of employees criticised the union representatives for not 'fighting' their cases, while another (smaller) group of women

argued how these representatives were constrained by the union's lack of power within the company. An important distinction to make here then is that the majority of the women who were critical of their workplace unions in the two organized workplaces were not opposed to trade unionism in principle.

Finally, chapter nine discusses attitudes towards trade unions more generally by exploring the women's support for and criticisms of the role of trade unions in a wider context. An overwhelming majority of the sample had favourable attitudes towards trade unions, considering trade unions to be useful and membership to be important. The majority of these women had no criticisms to make of the union movement and many expressed regret at the unions' loss of power over the last two decades. However, there were a group of women who while favourable towards trade unions, had some criticisms to make of union ineffectiveness and / or union militancy over trivial issues. There were also a small number of women who felt they did not know enough about trade unions to be able to decide whether or not they had favourable attitudes, while a minority of women held 'anti-union' attitudes. Regarding influences on the women's attitudes, a clear finding to emerge is that as may be expected: women's favourability towards trade unions is affected by their experiences (and / or their husband's / other family members' experiences) of trade unionism.

1.5 Conclusion

The first aim of this thesis is to explore female part-time workers' attitudes to their work. Is it the case that this group of women in low level jobs exhibit high levels of satisfaction with their jobs? Moreover, do these women have low levels of commitment to employment? The thesis concludes that female part-time workers are not as highly satisfied as much of the survey data indicate. Nor are female part-time workers a homogeneous group as has recently been proposed. Within the small sample of women in this research, different orientations and levels of commitment to work emerge. For example, some of these women expressed a preference to be full-time home-makers, while others resembled Hakim's 'Modern Home-makers'. However, unlike Hakim suggests, this group of women did exhibit commitment to

their jobs. For another group of women, work is an even more important part of their lives. This latter group of women differ from the 'Home-Makers' in that they have aspirations to work in 'better jobs', often on a full-time basis when they are no longer constrained by child care commitments. For this group of women their current part-time jobs are a temporary compromise: part-time work is a transition period in their lives.

A second and related aim of the thesis is to examine female part-time workers' attitudes to trade unions by interviewing a range of trade union members and non-members. An overwhelming majority of the sample were supportive of trade unions, saying that unions had an important and necessary role to fulfil. The research demonstrates that part-time workers' trade union membership is a complex issue. Much of the differential between part- and full-timers' union membership can be attributed to structural factors: that part-timers are employed in industries and occupations which are less likely to be organised. However, this does not explain why when employed in an organised workplace, part-time workers are less likely to belong to a union than full-time employees. Non-union membership may be due to a variety of reasons. These employees may simply not have been asked to join the union. Alternatively, part-timers may be 'put off' joining the union as they perceive their workplace union to be ineffective. The key finding then is that attitudes to work and attitudes to trade unions seem to be unrelated. It cannot be assumed that female part-time workers are uninterested in joining trade unions due to low work commitment. The following chapter contextualises these issues by presenting a summary of the literature on women's part-time employment and trade union membership.

2 Theories of Women's Part-Time Employment and Explanations of Part-Time Workers' Trade Union Membership

The previous chapter provided an overview of the characteristics of part-time jobs and part-time workers. Britain was highlighted as having one of the highest levels of part-time work in the EU, yet it has low levels of employment and social protection. The majority of part-time jobs then, are low paid, concentrated at the bottom of the occupational structure and have few opportunities for promotion. Meanwhile the workers in these jobs are predominantly female, married with employed partners and children, and are disproportionately White. The chapter also illustrated the trends and patterns of part-time workers' trade union membership, showing how part-time workers are primarily employed in industries and occupations with low levels of trade union membership. The key point to emerge from the discussion was that even when female part-timers are employed in a workplace with a recognised trade union, they are less likely to be union members than female full-time workers.

In order to situate this research, the chapter outlines the theories which are used within Sociology to explain women's paid work and women's part-time employment[19]. As noted in chapter one, supply-side arguments have recently witnessed a revival after a period of general consensus that demand side factors determined women's employment. The chapter shows how the majority of literature in this area is focused on women in high-level jobs. The chapter also summarises the literature on part-time workers and trade unions. For the most part, this body of literature has focused on part-timers' barriers to participation within trade unions, rather than on explanations of their lower union membership rates or attitudes

[19] Theories of women's paid work have been extensively documented (see Crompton and Sanderson 1990; Dex 1985; Walby 1988, 1990, 1997), and several commentators have discussed these theories with reference to part-time work (Beechey and Perkins 1985, 1987; Fagan and O'Reilly 1998; O'Reilly 1994; Tam 1997; Warren 1998).

towards trade unions. The research which does address the lower union membership rates of part-time workers has focused on structural explanations and the approach of trade unions to part-time workers. Thus, it is argued that more exploratory research is necessary with regard to female part-time workers in low level jobs and their attitudes towards trade unions.

The chapter begins with demand-led explanations followed by an analysis of supply-side arguments. The chapter demonstrates how both demand and supply approaches have evolved in order to take account of part-time work. However, the section concludes that both demand and supply explanations of part-time work are inadequate on their own: we need to incorporate them with a gender focus to be able to understand why part-time work is gendered and why rates of part-time employment differ between countries. Regarding the literature on part-time workers and trade unions, the chapter identifies the gaps in this existing literature. There are several explanations which can be offered for women's (and more particularly) part-timers' patterns of trade union membership. The first of these are structural explanations, which argue that part-time workers are less likely to have the opportunity to join a trade union as the industries and occupations where they are employed are less likely to be organized. A second explanation relates to the individual characteristics of these workers, such as age, gender, class etc. Within individual explanations, attitudes to trade unions are also discussed. Finally, the approach which trade unions have taken towards women and part-time workers is examined. The third section of the chapter concludes by tying the previous two sections together.

2.1 Theories of Women's Paid Work and Part-time Work

Some commentators have questioned why women take part-time jobs as they are so disadvantageous and debate has been stimulated around how women's part-time employment should be theorised. Theories accounting for women's inferior employment situation attach different degrees of emphasis to labour supply and demand issues. The basic differences of the arguments are that while demand-led theories of the labour force focus on the structural characteristics which shape the

labour market (such as economic conditions), supply-side theories focus on the characteristics of the individuals who take these jobs. This has led the former demand-side theories to be described as 'job-centred' explanations, and the latter as 'gender-centred' explanations (Tam 1997).

Demand-led Theories of Part-Time Work

The earliest demand-side theory to make reference to women's paid work was dual labour market theory which described two labour markets. This simple version of the labour market emerged as a critique of supply-based economic labour market theories and the neo-classical model of a perfectly adjusting labour market. Moving on from dual labour market theory, segmented labour market theories became a more popular way of explaining the labour market as they discussed why these divisions existed. Early writers in this field were Doeringer and Piore (1971) who observed that the segmented labour market has two main sectors - the primary sector and the secondary sector. Employers created these segments as a response to increased technology - they wanted to retain employees with firm specific skills as they were expensive and difficult to replace. Thus, employees in the primary sector were highly valued and highly paid, with access to training. These employees are encouraged to progress up through the internal career structure.

Meanwhile, employees in the secondary sector were easily replaceable. These workers were poorly paid, with insecure jobs and had few opportunities for promotion and advancement. Secondary segment workers are essentially trapped, and movement between secondary and primary labour markets is minimal - it is likely to be 'intra-segment' rather than 'inter-segment'. Barren and Norris (1976) developed segmented labour market theory by arguing that women and members of ethnic and other minority groups were found primarily in the secondary workforce due to supply side characteristics such as domestic responsibilities and discrimination leading to fewer labour market opportunities. Secondary sector workers possessed five characteristics: dispensability, clearly visible social difference, little interest in acquired training, low economism and lack of solidarity (Dex 1985:131-6; Walby 1986).

Segmentation theory has subsequently developed into the 'flexible firm' thesis (see Atkinson 1987; Beechey and Perkins 1987; O'Reilly 1994; Rosenberg 1989). This theory argues that the workforce is divided into core and various categories of peripheral workers. The core workers have the same characteristics as those core or primary segment workers in earlier versions of labour market segmentation theory. These employees are used to achieve functional flexibility (also known as flexible specialisation or polyvalence) which ensures that employees are able to switch between jobs in the organization. The peripheral workforce are the firm's secondary workers. The first group of peripheral employees work full-time but do not have a 'career' like employees in the primary segment. Rather than being used for functional flexibility, these employees provide numerical flexibility. This is achieved by either increasing or laying off employees depending on demand in the market place. The second group of peripheral workers (which include part-time workers, and employees on short-term contracts) are also used to provide numerical flexibility, while the third group of peripheral workers are the 'externals': agency workers or the self-employed.

By incorporating an explanation of part-time work, segmentation theory has pushed the debate forwards. It is useful for highlighting labour market inequalities (Fagan and O'Reilly 1998:21) and recognises the difficulty which employees have in moving from part-time to full-time work (Tam 1997). However, it is incorrect to categorise all part-time employment as secondary: Fagan and O'Reilly (1998:15-22) argue that it is necessary to differentiate between different categories of part-time employment. For example, some part-time workers (usually those in the public sector) are 'primary segment' workers and are offered work on a part-time basis in order that employers can retain these employees. A different picture emerges for part-timers in lower quality jobs (where the majority of part-time workers are concentrated): these women are not valued and their employment is marginal (see also Gallie *et al.* 1998).

A further problem with segmentation theory is that it does not explain why part-time work is predominantly carried out by women. Beechey and Perkins (1987:144) argue that it is necessary to examine flexibility from a gender perspective

as flexibility has a 'gender-related' dimension to it. Their case studies of the manufacturing industry and public sector found that employers devised different methods of attaining flexibility from men and women. For example, employers offered certain jobs on a part-time basis as they were seen to be 'women's jobs';

> The crucial fact to emerge from our research is that there is nothing *inherent* in the nature of particular jobs which makes them full-time or part-time. They have been constructed as such, and such constructions are closely related to gender (Beechey and Perkins (1987:145-6).

In contrast to these demand-led theories of part-time work, supply-side arguments of the labour market focus on 'gender-centred' explanations and it is to these theories that the chapter now turns.

Supply-side Theories of Part-Time Work

Supply-side arguments emerged in both sociology and economics. These theories focus on women's role in the family and how this shapes their participation in the labour market (Warde and Hetheringon 1993). By taking a historical approach it is possible to see how these arguments have evolved over time. One of the earliest theories was 'women's two roles theory' which emerged in Sociology. This theory predominated during the post-war boom in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s when there was a massive increase of women in the labour market. The government wanted to increase married women's participation in the labour force yet concern was stressed over women's competing roles of work and family life: part-time work was therefore perceived to be the ideal solution. Yet even at this early stage part-time work was regarded by some commentators to be suitable only as a temporary bridge from full-time home-making to employment. For example, Mrydal and Klein (1956) were anxious that part-time work would become to be seen as the only option for women. As Beechey and Perkins summarise;

> ...women needed to be regarded as full-time workers and not as 'helping hands' if the difficulties married women faced in attempting to reconcile a career with family life were not to be perpetuated (Beechey and Perkins 1985:248).

Beechey and Perkins (1985) see that the strengths of women's two roles theory are that it acknowledges the effect which women's domestic role has on their participation in employment and captured women's desire to engage in paid work. However, the theory was criticised for three reasons. Firstly, it did not question the sexual division of labour within the family. Women's primary role as wife and mother

was assumed to be natural, thereby pointing to unsatisfactory biological accounts for women's confinement to the private sphere. Secondly, it assumed that women are naturally suited for certain jobs and thirdly, it assumed that women's increased participation in the labour market would result in equality between male and female workers (Beechey and Perkins 1985:120-3).

The influence of women's two roles theory declined while the economically based human capital theory (which focuses primarily on explaining differential earnings) became more popular. In Human capital theory, both employers and employees are rational economic actors and the labour market is freely competitive. Employees are free to move between jobs in search of the highest wage rates. Those employees who invest more in human capital, for example, by gaining qualifications and giving continuous commitment to the labour market, are more likely to be able to command a higher wage than those who do not. Crucially then, part-time workers' lower job rewards are explained by the lower investments which they make in human capital when compared with full-time workers.

Several empirical studies have attempted to test human capital theory (Main 1988; Mincer and Polachek 1980; Paci *et al.* 1995) and have found that it does not fully account for the difference between men and women's pay. Similarly, it cannot explain why part-timers possessing the same human capital as full-time workers earn less. As we saw in chapter one, this is explained by labour market discrimination - workers receive differential rewards for the same human capital (Paci *et al.* 1995). Other criticisms of human capital theory are that an individual's investment in her human capital is not primarily determined by choice - it also depends on the employers' willingness to allow employees to gain this experience. Also, human capital theory does not explain why it is women who make up the majority of part-time workers, so we need to turn now to new home economics theory.

New home economics theory departs from human capital theory as it seeks to explain the behaviour of the household and the family in the labour market rather than focusing on the individual. Households need to maximise their income and they do this by achieving efficiency via specialisation. For example, one adult will be

responsible for domestic work while the other engages in waged work. Becker (1981) has developed the theory to explain why it is primarily women who are responsible for domestic work while men are wage earners. He argues that as it is women who bear children, they are therefore more suitable for caring for their children and any domestic work is an extension of this, leaving men free to specialise in paid work. As the labour market is assumed to be perfectly competitive in neo-classical theory, movements between full-time, part-time and non-participation are unrestricted. Thus, when women no longer need to provide child care, they simply increase the number of hours worked.

Becker's thesis has undergone much criticism, mainly centred around the issue of efficiency. Fagan and Rubery (1996a) have argued that the 'breadwinner family' system, where the male specialises in paid work and the woman in domestic work, is inefficient for households. When women exit the labour market to raise children they lose their 'human capital' and hence often return to jobs lower down the occupational structure resulting in financial loss. Employers and the market also suffer when women leave the labour market as they lose skilled and / or experienced workers. Thus, Fagan and Rubery conclude that both efficiency and equality gains would be made for households, employers and the economy if policies were introduced to help women remain in employment during the family formation period. Owen (1987) has also questioned the extent to which specialisation gives rise to efficiency. She argues that it is no longer necessary for specialisation to take place in the domestic sphere due to the increase in household labour saving devices.

More recently, Catherine Hakim has developed a line of argument which parallels that of Becker's. Rather than Becker's emphasis on economic specialisation, she explains women's employment in terms of individual tastes and preferences (Hakim 1991, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1998a, 1998b). As outlined in chapter one, Hakim argues that there are essentially two types of women in the labour force: 'Self-Made Women' and 'Grateful Slaves'. 'Self-Made Women' choose to follow a 'labour market career': they work full-time, possess a 'work ethic' and have a normative commitment to work as a central life interest (their levels of work commitment are

similar to men[20]). These women view their employment as a long-term career, not a short-term job and invest in training and qualifications to ensure that they are able to obtain a secure, well paid job with good promotion opportunities.

'Grateful Slaves', on the other hand, generally do not posses this work ethic. They choose to work part-time and follow a 'marriage career'. Their families and domestic commitments are more important to them than their jobs, and they have a clear preference for the home maker role. They view their employment in instrumental terms: their jobs are not seen in terms of a career, 'primary breadwinning activity' or as a means of exercising skill and ability, but a source of social activity and a secondary source of income. These women lack a long-term commitment to their jobs (drifting in and out of employment) and are primarily interested in 'convenience factors' associated with their job such as their ability to socialise at work, their hours, and journey to work.

Thus, Hakim argues that it is women's preferences which determine their labour market behaviour, rather than household economic rationality. She proposes that women are now able to make unconstrained choices and decisions: they are in control of their fertility and the education system is equally accessible to men and women. Women are not '...downtrodden and grateful slaves', but self-determining actors. She couches women's actions within the language of 'preference' and 'choice';

> It is time to abandon the concept of women as so totally formed and constrained by past patterns of economic activity and sex-role stereotyping that they are unable to shape their own lives to any meaningful degree. Women may have little say in the choice of employer, but they have a large measure of freedom in the choice of occupation and of husband. Yet most still choose occupations and husbands which maintain traditional views of women's roles... It is time to bring women back into the picture as actors and agents in their own (work) lives. Women make choices as often as men do, and those choices have real effects. Those who choose domesticity, the marriage career and hence a large

[20] Although empirical evidence now shows that female part-timers' levels of commitment to work has increased to the same level as female full-timer's commitment to work (Fagan 1997; Rose 1994b), Hakim argues that this is not the case. She criticises the way in which the data is collected and also argues that the commitment which a part-time worker shows to her part-time job is not the same as that shown by a full-time worker to her full-time job. While 'Self-Made Women' are committed to their 'career', 'Grateful Slaves' are committed to their 'job' (Hakim 1995, 1996a). Hakim's thesis (1997:63) is constantly being revised and she no longer uses employment status as an indicator of work commitment. Additionally, she now suggests that there may be three types of work orientation, the new addition being a group of 'secondary earners'. These may be full- or part-time workers and rely on a principle wage earner but make a necessary contribution to the household income. The difference between the purely instrumental worker and the secondary earner is that while the purely instrumental worker is not constrained by child care arrangements, the secondary earner is.

> degree of economic dependence are self-made women just as much as those who choose, and stick with, an ongoing employment career and all that entails. The degree and pattern of job segregation in any country are historically determined, but the persistence of job segregation from now on should be regarded as a reflection of women's own preferences and choices... (Hakim 1991:114).

According to Hakim then, women who work part-time choose to do so voluntarily, and are not constrained in any way (Hakim 1995, 1996a, 1997).

Hakim's 'Preference Theory' has been extensively criticised (see Bruegel 1996; Caven 1998; Crompton and Harris 1998a, 1998b; Crompton and Le Feuvre 1996; Ginn *et al.* 1996; Warren and Walters 1998). For the purposes of this discussion, these criticisms can be grouped into two main areas. The first criticism is that employment status cannot be used to identify different types of worker. Employees are not committed or uncommitted workers, depending on their employment status (Warren and Walters 1998). It is not the case then that all female full-time workers are 'Self-Made Women' and all part-timers 'Grateful Slaves'. For example, Crompton and Le Feuvre's (1996) research on female pharmacists and financiers showed that although both groups of women match Hakim's criteria of 'Self-Made Women' in that they are highly qualified with good careers, the pharmacists were more likely to work part-time than the women employed in the finance industry. Crompton and Le Feuvre showed that the pharmacists were not less committed to their employment but simply had a greater opportunity to work on a part-time basis as hours of work in their jobs were more flexible than hours of work in the finance industry. Caven's (1998) research on female full- and part-time architects showed that while several of her interviewees fitted the typology of 'Self-Made Women', the majority of her interviewees fell into another group. Caven's 'other' group of women reflected a sort of compromise - although they were committed to their work, many of these women worked part-time. They wanted to follow a career but on certain terms, and stressed the importance of career and home. As Caven remarks;

> The polarity of working patterns described by Hakim does not allow for any form of compromise between the 'fully committed' and the 'uncommitted' worker (Caven 1998:22).

From these empirical studies of women employed in high status jobs then, it is clear that 'Self-Made Women' are not a homogeneous group. Similarly, Warren and Walters (1998) point out with regard to female part-time workers that women

working long part-time hours may have different work orientations to those on short part-time hours. Additionally they see that women move between full-time, part-time and non-employment during their life-cycle[21] and that orientations to work may also change over time. Factors like age, labour market experience, education and prospects all inevitably influence women's commitment to paid work (Dex 1988).

The second problem with Hakim's dichotomy of the female labour force focuses around notions of choice. Devine's research (1994) on 'Self-Made Women' in Science and Engineering found that these women did not consciously map out and rigorously follow their career plans. Similarly, critics of Hakim have tended to focus on her discussion of women who 'choose' domesticity and the marriage career - the 'Grateful Slaves'. These argue that Hakim ignores the structural constraints which women face. For example, women with children may have little opportunity other than to engage in part-time work due to the structural or societal system that is in operation: child care provision in Britain is particularly inadequate compared to many neighbouring EU countries, thus making it very difficult for women to opt for full-time work (EU Child care Network 1990, 1994 ; Rubery and Fagan 1995:226). Even though many women who work part-time have children of independent age, they may be 'trapped' in these part-time jobs. These women have often spent years in low-level jobs, thus losing any 'human capital' which they may have once possessed. Alternatively, they may be unable to cope with full-time work due to the domestic work created by their 'grown-up' children or their caring responsibilities for dependent relatives (Ginn *et al.* 1996).

Tied in with this is Hakim's avoidance of the notion that the choices and constraints which are available to women depend on their class position. For instance, it is likely that 'Home-Makers' have few or no qualifications and / or are working-class women, while 'Self-Made' women are highly qualified and / or middle-

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[21] However, Hakim has modified her arguments and now says that women switch between groups during their lifetime (Hakim 1996a). This has led Crompton and Harris to criticise her for revising her theory, seeing that Hakim wants the argument 'all ways at once' (Crompton and Harris 1998a: 120). Hakim states that she has always seen that there are three groups of women in the labour force: Grateful Slaves / Modern Home-makers; Drifters / Adaptives; and Self-Made women / Career Planners. This is not the case, as Crompton and Harris point out - she has only mentioned the Drifters / Adaptives in passing, and does not speculate what their work orientations may be. Indeed, she says that they 'probably defy explanation' (Crompton and Harris 1998b:144).

class. It has long been recognised that women in professional and highly qualified occupations will be in a much better position to deal with constraints placed upon them by their domestic activities. These women are more likely to be entitled to maternity leave, more able to afford child care and the part-time jobs which they do will be less disadvantaged (Scott and Burchell 1994:153). Ultimately then, many women (and men) are not able to make real 'choices' with regard to their employment. Therefore any assessment of women's attitudes, preferences and orientations regarding their employment must take into account the factors which constrain women's lives. For example, many commentators argue that it is necessary to understand 'preferences' within the context they are made (Dex 1988; Fagan and Rubery 1996b; Fagan 1997).

In summary, this section has examined demand led theories of the labour market from dual and segmented theories to the flexible firm thesis. The chapter has also traced supply side theories from 'women's two roles', through human capital and new home economics theory, to Hakim's preference theory. These theories have been discussed with specific reference to women's part-time employment. However, neither supply nor demand theories are able to adequately account for the phenomenon. For example, demand led explanations of the labour market are useful for highlighting labour market inequalities yet they do not explain why it is predominantly women that work part-time. Additionally, demand-led theories of part-time work place too much emphasis on structural factors and fail to appreciate that orientations, preferences and attitudes to work have some influence on an individual's participation in the labour market. While supply-led approaches address these latter points, they are criticised for ignoring labour market conditions and neglecting institutional frameworks. It is therefore necessary to integrate both the demand for and supply of women's labour along with an understanding of the role played by the state, in a theoretical explanation of women's involvement in part-time employment[22]. The chapter now turns to the issue of female part-time workers and trade union membership.

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[22] At the time of writing, a new development in theorising women's part-time employment is to use 'gender systems theory' which attempts to bring both the supply and demand side together with a gender focus (see Duncan 1995; Fagan and O'Reilly 1998; Fagan and Rubery 1996a; Fagan *et al.* Forthcoming; Pfau-Effinger 1998). Whereas patriarchal theories of the labour market have historically

2.2 Gender, Part-time Workers and Trade Unions

As has already been discussed in chapter one (table 1.9) part-time workers are much less likely to belong to a trade union than full-time workers. Despite the lower union membership rates of part-time workers and the interesting case it proposes, there is a dearth of literature on this area[23]. The majority of literature which exists in this area examines barriers to participation for part-time workers, such as the problems of attending meetings and lack of time-off for trade union activity (Cook *et al.* 1992; Frieze 1989) rather than focusing on the lower union membership rates and attitudes of part-time workers. Indeed, as Green (1990:378) argues;

> What remains empirically unclear is to what extent women and part-timers in the present day are reluctant to join because of their own family circumstances and attitudes, and to what extent they are unable to join due to the absence of a recognised union at their place of work.

The explanations which have been offered for female part-timers' lower unionization membership rates can be grouped into three categories: structural explanations, individual explanations and the approach taken by the trade unions (Schur and Kruse 1992; Sinclair 1995). The remainder of this chapter examines these explanations.

Structural Explanations

Structural explanations argue that part-time workers are less likely to have the opportunity to join a trade union as the industries and occupations where they are employed are less likely to be organized. Using 1991 BHPS data, table 1.12 in chapter one shows that while 55 per cent of female full-time employees have a recognised trade union at their work place, this is the case for only 45 per cent of female part-timers. The reasons why these industries are less organised are historical: unions have traditionally organized male workers in the manufacturing industries, rather than women and part-timers in the service industries (Booth 1986; Bain cited in Brown 1976; Grint 1991).

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been understood to structure both the supply and the demand side of women's employment, the debate has now moved away from this towards 'gender systems' to capture the sense of male domination structuring women's lives (Fagan and O'Reilly 1998). Hence, a detailed summary of patriarchal theories of the labour market are not given here (see Walby 1986, 1990, 1997 for this).

[23] There has been an abundance of research on female full-time workers and trade unions (Bradley 1994, 1999; Beale 1982; Boston 1980; Cockburn 1987; Coote and Kellner 1980; Cunnison and Stageman 1993; Lawrence 1994). This literature has expanded to offer explanations of why women who work full-time have lower unionisation rates than men (Booth 1986; Fiorito and Greer 1986; Green 1990; Leigh and Hills 1986; Schur and Kruse 1992; Sinclair 1995).

Although trade unions have recently attempted to 're-market' themselves, the recruitment of part-time workers is a difficult job. The sectors where women and part-timers are concentrated are difficult to penetrate. Furthermore, the very nature of part-time work makes recruitment difficult, time consuming and expensive: part-timers are generally not at work for the whole of the working day, and they may work outside the core working hours of the firm (Frieze 1987, Labour Research Department 1996:13). However, structural explanations can only go so far in explaining part-timers' trade union membership rates. For example, they do not explain why it is that part-timers in similar structural circumstances are still less unionised: table 1.12 in chapter one shows that 69 per cent of female full-time employees who have a recognised trade union at their workplace are members compared to 55 per cent of female part-timers (see Sinclair 1995 and Tam 1997 for similar results from the SCELI data).

Individual Explanations

Individual explanations for different propensities to join trade unions can be divided into personal characteristics and attitudes towards trade unions. Personal characteristics include factors such as gender, class, race, age, marital status, whether the woman is the head of household, number of dependent children and hours worked (Booth 1986; Hernández 1995). It has been assumed that these personal characteristics affect the likelihood that an employee will be a trade union member. For example, it might be argued that women are less interested than men in trade unions as they are preoccupied with the domestic sphere. However, existing research on attitudes towards unions suggests that this is untrue. For example, analysis of American data by Schur and Kruse (1992) found that non-unionized white-collar women were more likely to desire trade union membership than non-unionized white-collar men (for similar American studies see also Leigh and Hills 1987; Fiorito and Greer 1986). Nonetheless, men and women have been found to differ in their experiences of trade unionism, with women being more likely to express negative experiences (Sinclair 1995).

Booth's (1986) multivariate analysis of the 1975 National Training Survey found that the only personal characteristics which affected women's propensity to

be in a union were age for female full- and part-timers (number of years spent in the labour market was used instead of age as it is recognised that women's labour force participation is affected by child-rearing and other domestic constraints) and an educational dummy for female full-time workers. She concludes;

> A striking feature of the analysis is the insignificance of all other personal characteristics that may measure a woman's commitment to the labour force, such as marital status, whether or not the woman was the head of household and the number of dependent children. This suggests that a woman's personal responsibilities have no effect on her decision to unionize, which contravenes the traditional view that the reason women do not unionize is because they regard their position as temporary (Booth 1986:54).

Sinclair's (1995) analysis of a sub-group of the SCELI data (those employees who had a trade union at their workplace) found that overall, the most important determinants of trade union membership were political preference, followed by sex, self-assessed class membership and age. Sinclair found that sex was a significant determinant of trade union membership - while 85 per cent of male full-time workers belonged to a union, only 77 per cent of female full-timers did. She attributed these differences in density rates to more men having closed shops at their workplaces[24]. Considering the most important determinants of union membership for female full-timers, Sinclair found these to be 'believing in the principles of trade unionism' (support for the aims of the trade union movement) and 'favourability towards trade unions' (whether the women had favourable experiences of trade unions). She concludes that the male / female differential in union membership is not due to the differences in men and women's attachment to work or their interest in unionzation, but due to *women's concentration in low-paid occupations* and their *negative experiences of trade unions*. By this, she means that although women have as strong a belief in the principles of trade unionism as men (see also Bradley 1994:50), they may be less satisfied with their experiences of unions, and indeed, may have negative perceptions of unions. Thus, although sex has a small effect on trade union membership, this cannot be used as an explanation for female part-timers' lower union membership rates (only 58 per cent of female part-timers were union members).

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[24] The closed shop was weakened by legislation during the early 1980s and finally made unlawful in the 1988 Employment Act (Labour Research, May 1997:19).

Regarding female part-timers, the most important determinant of trade union membership was the presence of workplace representatives. Only 45 per cent of the female part-timers in the SCELI data who had a recognised trade union at their work place also had a trade union representative at their workplace, compared to 71 per cent of female full-timers. Sinclair concludes that part-timers' lower membership rates in organized workplaces may (among other variables not controlled for) be due to the lower availability of union representatives for part-timers;

> ...the presence of workplace representatives appeared to be the only variable which could be shown to contribute to the different union membership levels of part-time women workers (Sinclair 1995:185).

However, she points out that the numbers of union representatives in organised workplaces are in steady decline, thus posing consequences for the successful recruitment of female part-time workers. The second most important determinant of trade union membership for female part time workers is their favourability towards trade unions.

USDAW (1990:14) surveyed 177 non-union members to uncover their reasons for non membership (the sample included part-timers who had a trade union at their workplace and part-timers who did not). It is clear from this survey then, that the employment circumstances of part-time workers are important. For example, the largest proportion of the sample (34 per cent) said they had not been asked to join a union, while 6 per cent gave their temporary employment status as the reason for their non-membership. Reasons associated with the part-time workers' perceptions of trade unions included union membership not being worthwhile given the short working week[25] (18 per cent) while 16 per cent said that 'unions can't do anything for part-time workers'. A further reason was that subscriptions were too expensive (9 per cent). Only 12 per cent of the sample were opposed to unions in principle (a figure which is broadly representative of the work force as a whole. Gallie 1996). Clearly then instrumental attitudes towards the unions' ability to represent part-time workers have an effect on union membership, while few part-timers were opposed to unions in principle.

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[25] Hernández's (1990) analysis of American data found that part-time workers on short hours were less likely to be trade union members than those on longer hours.

Although there is little research on part-time workers and their attitudes towards trade unions, the area has attracted speculation. For example, some commentators argue that part-time workers' low level of work commitment may be the reason for their lower trade union membership rates. In his discussion of secondary workers, Goldthorpe (1985:143) argues;

> ...what these groups have in common is that their commitment to the work they have taken on tends to be strictly limited and, in turn, their expectations of what they will be able to derive from it: typically, they have other sources of identity and satisfaction, and also perhaps of economic support. On account therefore of their location within the wider social structure, as well as the forms of employment, such workers are unlikely to constitute a labour force in which any very strong interest in developing greater organizational power and in curtailing managerial prerogatives either exists or can be easily developed.

Perhaps of greater consequence for part-time workers is the attitude of high level officers in trade unions who believe that part-timers are less committed to their work. Research conducted for the TUC's (1996) recent campaign on part-time workers focused on the problems of recruiting and organising part-time workers and was based on interviews with high level officers from 12 unions (General Secretary, National and Regional Officers). The research clearly demonstrates that even at this high level within trade unions, part-time workers are still perceived to have different orientations to work than full-time workers: one-third of the interviewees said part-time workers were more difficult to recruit as they are less committed to the workplace / union (TUC 1996:21).

Despite these attitudes, other commentators stress that part-timers' lower union membership rates are not associated with their attitudes towards trade unions. For example as Gallie *et al.* (1996:23) have pointed out;

> ...it seems probable that it [part-timers' low unionisation rates] reflects the structural conditions in which part-timers work and the nature of trade union recruitment efforts, rather than anything distinctive about women's attitudes.

The key point to note here, is that we do not have any qualitative research which addresses these issues. For the most part, surveys have been used as the tool of measurement in research on part-time workers and trade unions. Qualitative research is needed to assess female part-timers' attitudes and experiences more directly: whether women who work part-time see their employment as temporary and peripheral to their lives, whether they have favourable trade union experiences and

whether this has an impact on their attitude towards trade unions. In sum, the differences in trade union membership rates are not attributable to gender as the gap in union membership between female full- and part-time workers is greater than that between female and male part-timers. Sinclair (1995) argues that another possible explanation which is offered for part-timers' lower trade union membership rates is the approach which trade unions have taken towards part-timers which the chapter will now discuss.

Trade Unions' Approach to Part-time Workers

This body of literature has centred around questions of whether or not trade unions have targeted part-time workers effectively. In the past, trade unions have been reluctant to recruit part-timers, and have not been sympathetic to their needs. Indeed, some trade unions directly refused to recruit part-timers (Beechey and Perkins 1987:53; Delsen 1990; Hewitt 1993; Walby 1988). Across Europe, part-time employees were resented and viewed as a threat as they were seen to be undercutting full-time jobs. They were not 'real workers', 'principal wage earners' or 'breadwinners', but a source of cheap labour (Hakim 1997:47). Management and shop stewards viewed part-time employment as marginal women's work and it has been suggested that some unions deliberately sought to disadvantage the position of these workers, in order to protect 'men's' jobs (for a discussion of trade unions as patriarchal institutions see Walby 1986).

Although NUPE were the first union to see the potential of organizing part-timers, by targeting school meals workers in the Midlands in the 1960s (Cunnison and Stageman 1993:205), it was not until the sharp decline of union membership in the early 1980s that unions began to look towards women in general and to part-time and atypical employees as their key to survival (Beale 1982; Beaumont and Harris 1990; Waddington and Whitson 1997). Some unions, particularly those in the service sector, have been more successful then others in meeting women and part-timers' demands. The Transport and General Workers Union launched the 'Link-Up' campaign in the late 1980s, which aimed to recruit and represent part-time and temporary workers. The campaign was largely successful: in the early 1990s, female membership of the Transport and General Workers Union was only 18 per cent, yet

women made up 26 per cent of new recruits (Snape 1994:230). However, bearing in mind the existing workloads of trade union representatives and officials, some commentators have raised questions about unions' ability to sustain the level of recruitment initiated by these campaigns (Beaumont and Harris 1990:227).

Recently the TUC has launched several campaigns[26], one of which focuses on part-time workers (TUC 1996). The campaign sought to raise the awareness of the general public and gain support for part-time workers. It also lobbied Westminster and the European Parliament. In addition to this, the campaign sought to encourage trade unions to view part-time workers as central to their agenda, rather than marginalising them or seeing part-timers as a threat to the core membership. The importance of the recruitment of part-time employees was stressed and reduced subscription rates for part-time workers were recommended.[27] Unions were advised that the successful recruitment of part-time workers depended on prioritising issues of importance to them, such as holidays, over-time and training. Unions were also advised to make changes to their organizational structures in order that participation by part-timers would increase (Heery 1998).

The campaign was successful in that it raised the profile of part-time work in the labour movement and beyond: trade unions recognised the need to recruit part-timers and to encourage their representation within the union. A recent survey of TUC unions (and non-TUC unions with more than 3,000 affiliates), aimed to assess the level and nature of union recruitment activity. It found that unions at national level are beginning to recognise the level of diversity within the workforce and are attempting to recruit accordingly: 85 per cent of the sample placed high or moderate priority on recruiting part-timers, 80 per cent of unions placed high or moderate

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[26] A new development which many of the larger trade unions are involved with is the TUC's Organising Academy. This is based on successful Australian / American models whereby unions sponsor trainees to recruit union members.

[27] Most trade unions calculate subscriptions according to different hours bands yet problems exist with this method. Some respondents said that even their lowest subscription level was too high for some part-timers on short hours and felt this may discourage them from joining a union. Most of the union officers interviewed favoured subscriptions being linked to earnings, yet problems also arise with this method as employees may be quick to inform the union when their earnings decrease, but less likely to contact the union when their earnings increase (TUC 1996:13).

priority on recruiting women, 72 per cent on recruiting ethnic minority workers and 69 per cent on fixed term or temporary workers (Cardiff Research Group 1998:5, table 3). However, despite the effort which trade unions have made towards recruiting part-time workers, Hakim (1997:50-1) argues;

> Part-time workers, including homeworkers, generally display little interest in unionization as a solution to their problems because trade unions are perceived as defending the interests of male workers and primary breadwinners.

In conclusion, it is clear that industrial and occupational distributions go some way towards explaining the differences in union density rates for men and women full- and part-time workers. However, as Sinclair (1995) has shown, when employed in organized workplaces, female part-time workers still have lower union membership rates than female full-time workers. This is clearly not due to gender. Sinclair (1995) argues that these lower union membership rates may be attributable to the presence of trade union representatives and the approach which trade unions have taken towards part-time workers.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter began by discussing the way the theories of women's paid employment have adapted to take account of part-time work. It began by outlining the demand-led theories of part-time work and then presented the supply-side arguments of part-time work. As mentioned at the outset of the chapter, one of the aims of this thesis is to examine female part-time workers' supply of labour. The chapter showed how there has been a resurgence of interest in supply-side explanations of the labour market, stimulated by Hakim's categorisation of part-time workers as highly satisfied, with low work commitment. However, the empirical research so far on female part-time workers' attitudes and orientations to work has concentrated on women in high status jobs, not low level occupations, where we may expect to find women with the lowest levels of work commitment.

The chapter then examined the literature on part-time workers and trade unions, and argued that there is an omission within this area. The majority of research focuses on barriers to participation for part-time workers, while another body of literature offers explanations for part-time workers' trade union membership rates,

which can be divided into three explanations. Structural explanations argue that part-timers are less likely to belong to a trade union because of the types of industries and occupations where they are employed. Individual explanations attribute part-timers' lower unionisation rates to personal characteristics and attitudes towards trade unions. While commentators stress it is unlikely that part-timers' attitudes account for their union membership, there is as yet no substantial body of research which addresses part-timers' attitudes and experiences of trade unions. Finally, the third explanation given for part-timers' trade union membership rates is the approach which unions have taken towards this group of workers.

The findings reported above would seem to illustrate that it is women's labour market experience - including whether or not they work part-time - which act as a factor on their union membership. It is therefore necessary to explore female part-time workers' experiences of and attitudes towards work and trade unions. Is it the case that due to female part-timers' low commitment to work, they attach little importance to being an organized worker? The research aims to profile the experiences and attitudes of a group of female part-time workers employed in low level jobs in the retail sector in order to understand whether orientations to work and orientations to trade unions are related. The research highlighted above suggest that the relationship is more complex than this. The following chapter outlines the reasons for choosing the retail sector as a case study, notes the practical problems gaining access into organizations and details the profile of the interviewees.

3 Conducting the Research

The last chapter provided an overview of the various theories which are used to explain women's part-time employment. The chapter noted how there has recently been a resurgence in supply-led explanations of the labour market, sparked by Catherine Hakim's thesis that there are different 'types' of women in the labour market, and that these women are characterized as either committed or uncommitted depending on their employment status. It is concluded that both supply and demand theories need to be integrated along with an understanding of the role played by the state in order to provide a theoretical explanation of women's part-time employment. The second part of the chapter examined the existing literature on part-time workers and trade unions. It argued that there is little research on part-time workers' attitudes towards trade unions although it is commonly perceived that part-timers' lower union membership rates are a consequence of their home-centred orientations. The chapter concluded by arguing that part-timers' attitudes to trade unions are more complex than this.

This chapter provides an outline of what the research involved. A single sector case study of the retail industry was chosen in order that the attitudes and work experiences of women in this sector could be explored in detail (the aim was not to generalise across sectors[28]). Within the case study, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 50 female manual part-time workers in the North West of England, employed by three national retail chains. These particular companies were selected for their union status: two of the companies recognised a trade union (one was a 'pro-union' company while the other was an 'anti-union' company), while the third was unorganized. By holding the sector constant and choosing companies with

[28] The aim of case study research should not be to make generalizations: 'The aim is not to infer the findings from a sample to a population, but to engender patterns and linkages of theoretical importance' (Bryman 1989:173. See also Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). In addition to generating theory, case studies can be used in an exploratory manner to gain insight. They can also be used to test theories and confirm findings from other studies (Bryman 1989:173-175).

different union status, it is possible to suggest factors which may contribute to the women's attitudes.

The chapter is organised in five sections. The first section outlines the reasons why the retail sector is a strategic case study for examining female part-time workers' attitudes and orientations to work and trade unions. The retail industry is a high user of part-time employment and employs the largest absolute number of part-time workers. Secondly, part-time work in retail is broadly characteristic of manual part-time work in general. It is highly feminised and the quality of the jobs are inferior: hours are short, pay and other remuneration is low, training is limited and opportunities for promotion rare. Thirdly, part-time work is expanding in the context of specific restructuring of the labour process: ownership has become monopolistic, new technology is continually being introduced and the nature of the work has changed. The fourth reason for using the retail sector is that it has low levels of union density.

Section two outlines the original plan for the research and discusses how this had to be modified to overcome a number of problems such as gaining access to organizations and ensuring that the sample contained equal numbers of union members and non-members. The third section begins by discussing the desired population of the study and then focuses on how the sample was generated. It highlights complications which can occur when gaining access to interviewees via their employer. The section also describes the profile of the sample and provides a summary of the biographical details of the individual employees. Section four discusses the interviews, and how rapport was established between myself and the interviewee. It discusses how the interview situation was not 'ideal' in several cases as children or husbands were present. Finally, section five concludes by drawing together the research design.

3.1 Growth and Trends in the Retail Sector

There are four reasons why the retail industry provides a particularly interesting case study. Firstly, as seen in chapter one, the retail sector relies heavily on part-time employees. The retail industry is the largest employer of part-time workers,

accounting for 21 per cent of the total part-time workforce in 1997[29] (Sly *et al*, 1997:118). Other forms of flexible working arrangements are also prevalent in retail, such as temporary (fixed term contracts), seasonal work, annualised hours, shift work, flexitime, term-time only working, Sunday working and zero hours contracts[30] (Perrons and Hurstfield 1998: 122). Moreover, table 3.1 illustrates the change in employment structure in UK retailing over the last decade: part-time work has increased from 44 per cent of the workforce in 1985 to 56 per cent in 1995 (this figure remains unchanged for 1997). Many of the large retailers now rely heavily on a part-time workforce. For example, half of Debenhams' and Boots' employees work part-time compared to two-thirds of employees in The Co op and British Home Stores and three-quarters of those employed by Sainsbury and Marks and Spencer (MacEwen Scott 1994:235). Additionally, retail employs the largest absolute number of part-time workers in the labour market - some 1.4 million (Labour Market Trends 1998:S21).

Table 3.1 Employment Structure of UK Retailing, 1985 and 1995

	Food Retail		All Retail	
	1985	1995	1985	1995
Female FT	21	13	26	21
Female PT	41	51	37	45
Male FT	28	18	30	23
Male PT	9	15	7	11
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Employment Gazette (various issues) (Shackleton 1997:3).

The second reason for choosing the retail industry as a case study is that part-time work in retail is broadly characteristic of manual part-time work in general: it is highly feminised, segregated by gender and has poor employment conditions. Regarding the feminisation of the retail sector, employers prefer to recruit women for their 'female - specific skills', the wages are too low to attract men and there are a ready supply of women who want to do work of this nature (MacEwen Scott 1994:246). MacEwen Scott points out that although it would be cheaper for

[29] In 1980, 12 per cent of female part-time workers were employed in sales occupations. By 1997, this had increased to 19 per cent of the total female part-time workforce (Martin and Roberts 1984:23, table 3.2; Sly *et al.* 1997:117).

[30] Perrons and Hurstfield (1998:122) see that the increase in flexible working is in part due to the 1994 Sunday Trading Act (which legalised Sunday opening), 24 hour opening and the 1989 recession when employers needed to reduce labour costs. As Shackleton (1997:1) reports, labour costs represent 50 per cent of the gross margin in food retailing.

employers to recruit school leavers to the position of shop assistant / cashier / shelf filler, the majority of employers prefer to employ married women as they are perceived to posses the necessary social skills.

Both vertical and horizontal gender segregation exist in the retail sector. The majority of jobs in retail are concentrated at the bottom end of the occupational hierarchy with very few female managers: only 12 out of 481 randomly selected stores in Freathy and Sparks' (1994:507) research had a female store manager. Where women do make it into primary sector occupations, they are concentrated in positions like personnel, administration and supervisory posts. Considering horizontal segregation, women are confined to a small range of jobs. For example, in the food industry, women are employed as sales assistants and check-out operators (in food stores women occupy 73 per cent of sales positions) while the few men who are employed in these areas are usually employed in traditionally 'male' areas, such as butchery, bakery and the storeroom (Freathy and Sparks 1994:509). In the specialist retail sector such as electrical, mixed retail and other non-food sales, it has been noted that women and especially part-time workers are not employed. Instead, male full-timers are relied upon (Morton 1987).

Considering material indicators such as hours of work, pay and other remuneration, the retail industry provides a critical case of part-time jobs at the lower end of the occupational structure. Hours of work in retail are short (although hours of work are even shorter in sectors such as 'other community, social and personal services', see table 1.5). Due to increases in technology and other factors, the hours worked by part-time women in the retail industry have fallen: between 1981 and 1992, the proportion of check-out operators working less than 16 hours a week rose from 40 per cent to 53 per cent[31] (Rubery 1994a:135). Although many employers have followed the trend for shorter hours, Perrons and Hurstfield's research (1998:130) found that this policy was not always beneficial to the company. One of

[31] One of the reasons for this is the labour intensive working practices which have been introduced into the large supermarkets. Zero hours contracts are beginning to become popular in retail and other industries such as hotel and catering, but there are no figures for this at the time of writing (Dex and McCulloch 1997). Nonetheless, companies such as Aldi and Netto (which usually have small outlets and employ a small number of staff in each store) use these contracts, as well as larger companies such as British Home Stores.

the large retailers in their UK study no longer sought to keep employees on short hours as they felt that this policy had contributed to high turnover and absenteeism rates. A related factor of concern was to provide a high standard of customer care: an employee on short hours would have less product knowledge. As a consequence of these factors, all new appointments were to be made at 15 hours or above.

Retail is also a low paid sector. Out of a total of 119 non-manual occupations in the NES, sales assistants and check-out operators' pay falls in the bottom six (Broadbridge 1995:20). Mirroring the pay gap of the wider occupational structure, women in retail only earn two-thirds of male shop workers' wages (MacEwen Scott 1994:241-2). Broadbridge argues that this is due to women's shorter working week and less overtime than men. Also, men are more likely to be given the opportunity to work overtime and shifts and to be involved in 'payment by results' schemes (Broadbridge 1995:29). Commission tends not to be paid to those in grocery retailing, however, where it does apply, it is found to be highest in departments which only employ men (Robinson and Wallace cited in Broadbridge 1995:17). Craig and Wilkinson's (1985) study of the retail sector found that 'Hardware' and 'Menswear' employers were more likely than grocers to pay their staff above the statutory minimum rate. Not surprisingly, few women are employed in these areas.

Craig and Wilkinson (1985) also found that the majority of small retail businesses fixed the hours of their part-time workforce so that they fell below the National Insurance threshold, thus making them cheaper to employ. Indeed, NEDO estimate that '...retailers can increase their profits by more than five per cent if they employ part-time staff...' (Labour Research 1986:16) while Penn and Worth (1993:254) note that the hourly cost of employing a part-timer is 12 per cent less than a full-time employee. Employees are in a better position if working for one of the multiple retailers, as they are more likely to pay above the statutory minimum rate - 83 per cent of multiple retailers paid above the minimum rate compared to 58 per cent of independent retailers (Broadbridge 1995:16). Similarly with overtime, 62 per cent of part-timers working in a large establishment were paid overtime compared to only 14 per cent in a small establishment. The recent increase in Sunday Trading has weakened the position of shop workers even further. Whilst Tesco and Safeway

still pay double time to their Sunday working staff, Sainsbury pay a £3.40 an hour premium. New employees in Woolworths' are only entitled to time and a half on a Sunday if they have worked 39 hours in the previous week (Labour Research 1992:21).

In terms of holiday and bonuses, part-timers in larger establishments are more likely to benefit than employees in smaller establishments (88 per cent to 54 per cent, and 65 per cent to 16 per cent respectively) (Robinson 1990:296). Regarding pensions, only one third of part-timers in establishments with more than 50 part-time workers receive pensions while only one in 10 part-timers were included in the pension scheme if they worked in an establishment employing fewer numbers of part-time workers. Similarly, with sickness benefits, two-thirds of part-timers in large establishments received sick pay, compared to less than half for those in establishments employing between five and 50 part-time employees. Only 22 per cent of part-timers in establishments with between one and four part-time employees received sick pay (Robinson 1990:297).

Chapter one showed how limited part-time jobs are with regard to opportunities for promotion and training. As with other benefits, the chances of a part-timer receiving training and promotion are increased if she works for a large establishment. For example, over half of new recruits in smaller stores are left 'to get on with it' while a further 20 per cent of employees receive formal training for the first few days or next few weeks. This compares to 78 per cent of new recruits in the larger stores who receive training. The possibility of further training is enhanced the more hours a part-timer works. Of those part-timers working less than eight hours per week, 54 per cent had received further training compared to 87 per cent of those working over 21 hours per week (Robinson 1990:298). Training programmes may be scheduled to take place over a process of weeks (e.g. Saturday staff), or part-timers may attend training sessions outside of their designated working hours. A relatively new option which is being introduced, although not widely, is the administration of learning packages. This requires the part-timer to work at home, being paid on completion of the course (Robinson 1990:293).

Promotion in the retail sector demands mobility and long hours, thus placing pressure on the employee to work and train outside normal work hours. It seems that employers only turn to the external labour market to recruit employees at the lowest levels of the hierarchy, such as shelf fillers or sales assistants with the majority of employee promotion arising internally (MacEwen Scott 1994). Robinson's research (1990) on promotion and training opportunities in retail found that if part-timers are promoted, it is usually to the position of supervisor - yet only eight per cent of part-timers in DIY retail and less than one per cent in food retailing and department stores are supervisors. In addition to this, part-time supervisors have a narrower area to supervise compared with full-time supervisors. A common misconception made by management is that part-timers do not want promotion. On the contrary, when questioned it was only the older workers who rejected it. Some 53 per cent of the part-timers would like to be considered for promotion and many part-timers felt that their qualifications, abilities and experience were not utilized to their full potential. This was more prevalent in establishments employing higher numbers of part-timers. Part-timers then, are seen by management as a 'last resort', only to be employed outside 'normal' working hours. The part-timers interviewed in Robinson's survey did not rate their chances of promotion very highly, yet interestingly many thought their chances may improve if they were to switch to full-time work (Robinson 1990:284-305).

The third reason for choosing the retail sector for a case study is that the expansion of part-time work in retailing is linked to the restructuring of the sector: ownership has become monopolistic, new technology is continually being introduced and the nature of the work has changed. The retail industry has become increasingly concentrated and competitive over the last decade - ownership of the UK food retailing industry is now dominated by four companies: Tesco, Sainsbury, Safeway and Asda (Shackleton 1997:1). In 1980, although large multiple retailers accounted for less than one per cent of retail businesses, they accounted for 55% of the turnover (Craig and Wilkinson cited in MacEwen Scott 1994:240). Concentration in grocery retailing has been even more pronounced: the multiple retailers' share of the grocery market increased from 42 per cent in 1970 to 70 per cent in 1985 (Beaumont cited in

Sparks 1990:39). To this end, nearly half (46 per cent) of all employees in retail are employed in less than one per cent of retail businesses (Bargaining Report 1996:7).

The introduction of new technology, in the form of EPOS (electronic point of sale) during the mid-1980s provided a major impetus to the reorganisation of the workforce. EPOS involves scanning bar codes of grocery items with a laser rather than individually keying in the price of each item. The system allows the employer to identify peaks and troughs of the working day, week and year, thus allowing staffing levels to be matched to demand. For example, items no longer need to be individually priced and stock levels are automatically updated - large shops have their tills linked to computers in the warehouse and ordering department, thus reducing work which was previously undertaken by clerks (Labour Research 1983:278). Employers then, could have dealt with these changes in a number of ways, for example, by using flexible shifts. However, part-time work has now become the norm. Beechey and Perkins (1987) would argue that this is due to 'gendered flexibility' (see chapter two).

The nature of work within the retail industry has changed. As well as measuring peaks and troughs of business, EPOS monitors the speed of items being passed through the till, echoing Taylorist principles by providing a form of control over employees: some employers require a certain number of goods to be processed per minute. These changes have led some commentators to argue that the skill level of the shop worker has been reduced (Freathy and Sparks 1995:193). Indeed, Rose *et al.* (1994) argue that female part-timers in non-skilled manual occupations (such as cleaning, shop work and catering) constitute an underclass in the 'objective' skills hierarchy. Nonetheless, employers rely on employees to provide a certain level of emotional labour. This involves giving the customer a high level of personal service by smiling and making eye contact. Many large companies now market themselves on the high level of 'customer service' offered[32] (for discussions of this emotional labour see Ogbonna and Wilkinson 1990; Shackleton 1997; Turnbull and Wass 1998:106). Finally, the implications of these changes for the employee mean that s(he) may feel alienated from the work, although Robinson (1990:296) found that job autonomy for

part-timers in smaller shops was higher than for those employed in large establishments. By focusing on large retailers, the research is able to examine whether women employed in large stores feel alienated from their work.

The fourth reason for using the retail sector as a case study is that it has low levels of union density making it a strategic case study. In 1997, only 11 per cent of employees in retail belonged to a trade union or staff association (table 1.10). Furthermore, in their case studies of 15 retailers, Neathy and Hurstfield (1995:190) found that union membership for part-time workers was typically one-third to two thirds that of full-time workers. We have seen from the evidence presented above, that part-time workers employed in retail are a disadvantaged group, so it is interesting why their membership rates remain so low. Does the retail sector recruit women with no interest in unions? Or are there other factors at work? For example, we know that trade unions have historically been less likely to recruit employees in the private service industries. It is important to uncover attitudes towards trade unions in a sector such as this so the trade union movement can gain a deeper understanding of the needs of these employees.

Furthermore, the growth of employment in the service sector has fuelled the call for industrial relations to be examined from a gender perspective. An important criticism of the majority of industrial relations literature is that it has focused on men in male dominated manufacturing industries, rather than exploring women's experiences of work in the service industries (Rubery and Fagan 1995b; see also Pahl 1984). Studies which have concentrated on women are largely confined to manual work in manufacturing industries (Cavendish 1982; Pollert 1981; Westwood 1984). Although highly valuable, these studies no longer reflect an accurate picture of the workforce in contemporary Britain. To this end, the thesis aims to contribute to this gap in the literature and go some way towards redressing the balance in the research on women's employment.

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[32] MacEwen Scott sees this as challenging Braverman's notion of de-skilling - whilst there has been an introduction of technology into the retail industry, employers still look for 'social skills and industry-specific skills' (MacEwen Scott 1994:265).

In sum, this section has outlined the reasons why the retail industry provides a critical case study for examining female part-time workers' experiences and attitudes towards work and trade unionism: retail is a high user of part-time employment and employs a significant proportion of the total female part-time workforce; the quality of part-time jobs in retail are broadly representative of part-time jobs in general; restructuring of the sector has increased employer's demand for part-time labour and it has a low level of union organisation. Having outlined the rationale for choosing the retail industry as a case study, the next section of the chapter discusses the research design and the way in which it became necessary to make modifications to the original research plan.

3.2 Designing and Re-designing the Research

The original intention of the research was to gain access to two large retail companies, both of which would recognise a trade union. A mix of union members and non-members were to be interviewed in the two companies (60 female part-timers in total). The research was to establish why some part-timers had chosen to become union members while others had not[33]. Additionally, the research set out to explore the women's attitudes to the workplace union and to trade unions more generally. It was envisaged that the two companies would have different union status i.e. that one would be 'pro-union' and the other 'anti-union' to explore whether the nature of industrial relations had any influence on the women's attitudes and perceptions of the effectiveness of their workplace union or on their attitudes more generally. However, as the following section shows, the research did not adhere to this 'neat' model, and had to be modified to overcome a number of problems.[34] The first of these problems was that of gaining access to organizations.[35]

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[33] Sinclair (1995) points out the difference between an employee's opportunity to join a union (whether or not there is a union at the workplace) and propensity to unionize (the likelihood of joining a trade union where one exists at the workplace union).

[34] Bryman (1989) discusses the necessity that in qualitative research, a flexible approach must be maintained. Qualitative research (as well as most quantitative research) is not a linear process but one of continual revision. Buchanan *et al.* (1988:53) make this point succinctly;

> *Fieldwork is permeated with the conflict between what is theoretically desirable on the one hand and what is practically possible on the other. It is desirable to ensure representativeness in the sample, uniformity of interview procedures, adequate data collection across the range of topics to be explored and so on... In the conflict between the desirable and the possible, the possible always wins* (Buchanan *et al.* 1988:53).

In order to discover which companies would be the most profitable to target, discussions took place with the head of research and women's officer at USDAW. The union advised access to be sought via the employer, to ensure a range of union members and non-members were interviewed (a sample selected by the union may have been biased towards union members). Acting on their advice, I telephoned the head offices of all the large food retailers to ask for the name of the Personnel / Human Resource Director (Crompton and Jones 1988, suggest making contact with managers who are senior enough to approve the research). Letters requesting assistance with the research were written by my supervisor, as it was assumed that the companies may be more receptive to an established academic, rather than a 'student' (see Appendix C for a copy of the letter sent out to the companies). The research was presented as a case study of female part-time workers with family commitments in the retail sector, with the aim being to explore women's preferences for part-time work and their levels of job satisfaction. The union aspect of the research was not highlighted.

Gaining access proved to be a time consuming process. Buchanan *et al.* (1988:55) suggest that there may be two reasons why organizations refuse access: the company may currently be (or have recently been) involved in research, or may have little time to devote to research. The reasons given by the national food retailers in my own research (where reasons were given), fell into these two categories;

> 'Thank you for inviting me to participate in your project relating to women in part-time employment which sounds very interesting. Unfortunately due to our current commitments to numerous 'Equal Opportunities' research programmes I will be unable to help you with this project'.
>
> 'Although we have been pleased to help with various research in the past, we regret that on this occasion we cannot be of assistance'.
>
> 'As you know, I asked [Personnel Manager] to contact you about this research and I understand from [Personnel Manager] that this is only a 'two player study' - namely [National food retailer] and ourselves. I honestly don't think that this

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Similarly, Bradley (1999:6) notes;

> *...out there in the field, tight academic schemes tended to fall apart. Methodological designs of beautiful elegance and purity prove unworkable; one is forced to compromise and to grasp pragmatically at the chances that are offered. Coming out with anything at all becomes more important than coming out with what one went in for.*

[35] The difficulties of gaining access into organizations are now well documented (see Beynon 1988, Buchanan *et al.* 1988, Crompton and Jones 1988).

> limited survey will tell us much or have validity for the industry as a whole, and therefore I feel that I must decline your invitation on this occasion. Another reason that detracts from the project is that our stores are very busy from now until new year, and all our staff are very busy supporting this build up to Christmas'.
>
> 'I regret that owing to pressures of work we are unable to help'.

Four months and eight letters later, only one company had agreed to provide interviewees. The company, which has been given the pseudonym 'Alldays', recognised a trade union and is generally regarded to be a relatively 'pro-union' company: a 'partnership agreement' had recently been signed between the company and the union (chapter eight discusses this in more detail). A meeting was arranged at the head office of the company to explain the purpose of the research. It became apparent during the visit that the company had its own agenda for the research. They were interested in exploring the attitudes and problems experienced by part-timers with children in managerial positions, and wanted the research to incorporate this. This would have involved interviewing women who worked at head office. It was explained to the company that the research needed to focus on women employed on the general assistant grade and to accept their offer would be to deviate too far from the original 'hypothesis'. Through a process of negotiation, the company agreed to provide access to interviewees in return for feedback on the findings.

Time was passing and as access had only been gained into one company, the decision was taken to seek access to interviewees via a trade union. The GMB, who organize in a number of retail companies, were approached to see if they could help gain interviewees in a second company, Bradleys[36]. Access to this company had already been denied by the employer but I was particularly keen to interview these employees as Bradleys were an 'anti-union' company (compared to Alldays which was a relatively 'pro-union' company). A Chairman had been recently employed by Bradleys who was unsympathetic towards the trade union. Under his direction, steps had been taken to discredit the union and membership levels were falling. Initial contact was made with the regional research officer who invited me to a meeting for the Bradleys shop stewards. At the meeting, I was able to explain the nature of the research to the representatives and to ask for their assistance in gaining access to

[36] Although USDAW had offered advice on contacting employers, they could be of no further help as access had already been granted in Alldays, the company in which they organize.

interviewees. The representatives were very willing to help with the research (several interviews were also carried out with union representatives in Alldays and Bradleys to give context to the interviews. See Appendix B for a copy of the interview schedule[37]).

Table 3.2 Union status of companies and Number of interviews conducted

Company	Union members	Non-members	Total
Alldays (Organized, 'pro-union')	17	1	18
Bradleys (Organized, 'anti-union')	10	7	17
Cheaper DIY (Unorganized)	N/A	15	15
Total	27	23	50

It was at this stage in the research that the second problem was encountered. It became apparent that the interviews conducted in both Alldays and Bradleys did not feature enough non-members: of the 35 interviewees, only eight turned out to be non-union members (see table 3.2). One possible solution to this problem would have been to ask Alldays for more interviewees who were non-union members, but as I had not highlighted the union aspect of the research this was not an option. The decision was therefore taken to include a non-unionised company in the research. It was assumed that this would provide an interesting angle to the data in that part-timers' willingness to join could be examined. Additionally, it would be interesting to explore whether these women felt they would benefit from union representation at their current workplace, or if they were satisfied with the company as it was. As all of the main food retailers had refused to provide access to interviewees, it was necessary to widen the scope of the research to include the whole of the retail sector. A further twelve letters were sent to retailers in Clothing, DIY and large Chemists (in total, 20 companies were invited to participate in the research). This resulted in three

[37] In Bradley's, a union representative was interviewed from each of the three stores. In Alldays, only one union representative was interviewed (at the Manchester store the union representative declined an interview but one of the female part-timers who was interviewed had recently given up her role as union representative so valuable information was provided by her. The store on the Wirral did not have a representative at the time the interviews took place).

more companies agreeing to provide access to interviewees[38]. Cheaper DIY was chosen to provide the third case study and a meeting was arranged with the Personnel Director to discuss the research in more detail.

This section has set out the original research plan and discussed how it became necessary to modify this so that problems encountered in the research could be successfully dealt with. For example, problems of gaining access to interviewees were such that it was necessary to shift between employer and union access. The end result saw access being gained to interviewees in three companies: two food retailers and a DIY retailer. The following section details how these women were selected to be interviewed.

3.3 Selecting Interviewees in the Three Case Study Companies

A feature of qualitative research is to sample a limited number of cases, and to explore the detail within this context. As shown in chapter one, a large proportion of women in the UK work part-time and the majority of part-timers are women with children. Furthermore, part-time work accounts for a substantial proportion of many women's working lives. For these reasons, the research focused on female part-time workers with children (it was assumed that specifying women with children would largely avoid students who may have different work orientations). The research excluded male part-timers as part-time work (as yet) is not a prevalent feature of the male employment trajectory, the majority of whom are either students or approaching retirement. An alternative way of doing the research would have been to build in a comparison with women who work full-time. This was rejected as the aim was to conduct exploratory work with female part-time workers by exploring the diversities and similarities of their experiences, rather than to compare them with full-time workers.

The interviewees were selected in two different ways: in Alldays and Cheaper DIY, access was gained via the employer. In both of these companies, the store

[38] These latter companies may have been more receptive to the research as they received their letters after the Christmas period, with the former eight companies being contacted between July and December, a notoriously busy time for retailers.

managers asked the supervisors / department managers to approach a number of women of differing ages, who were known to have children, to see if they would be willing to participate in the research. As noted above, Alldays were not informed of the trade union aspect of the research and it was therefore not possible to ask for an equal number of trade union members and non-members in the sample. This was not the case in Bradleys, where access to interviewees was gained via the union representative: these union representatives tried to ensure that both union members and non-members were interviewed. It is possible that the sample of women generated by the employer may be more company orientated than if the interviewees had been randomly selected. However, it became clear throughout the course of the research that this did not seem to be the case: as we shall see these women were quite critical of their employers.

Arranging the interviews in the three case study companies was quite a complicated affair. For example in Alldays, I requested contact names of 30 female part-timers during the meeting at Head Office to gain access to the company. These women were to be employed in the same store, as either general assistants or check-out operators and would be willing to be interviewed in their own time, in their own home. However, the Employee Relations Manager at Head Office was keen for me to interview employees in two stores. Although her proposal did not fit with the original plan of the research, it was nonetheless accepted, as I did not want to appear awkward. Both of these stores were subsequently visited, where I briefed the Personnel Managers about the research. Both women appeared to be interested in the issues raised by the research as they themselves had young children. The first of these women was very helpful. She asked two of her departmental managers to distribute letters to women of different ages, who were known to have children (the letters outlined the nature of the research and ensured confidentiality. See Appendix D). A list of willing interviewees was quickly generated and these women were then contacted to arrange a convenient time to do the interview. Twelve interviews were carried out in this store.

The other Personnel Manager who had originally been nominated to participate in the research by the Employee Relations Manager at Head Office failed

to provide a list of potential interviewees. She was contacted on numerous occasions over a two month period, and although she was always polite and gave assurances that she would assist with the research, I decided another route was necessary as time was pressing on. Head Office were contacted again and the Employee Relations Manager provided the names of two further personnel managers who were willing to assist with the research. Thus, interviews were now to take place with women in three stores rather than the original one. The Personnel Manager in the second store where interviews were conducted was again very helpful by providing a list of willing interviewees and five interviews were carried out with employees from this store.

Table 3.3 Interviews conducted in Alldays

Company and store location	Number of interviews
Alldays	
Manchester	10
Liverpool	4
The Wirral	4
	(18)
Bradleys	
Liverpool	7
Runcorn	5
St Helens	5
	(17)
Cheaper DIY	
Leigh	9
Southport	6
	(15)
Total	50

Research at the third store proved to be more problematic. The personnel manager wanted the research questions to be administered in the form of a questionnaire, saying that the women had expressed a preference not to be interviewed at home. I explained about the importance of using consistent research methods, and said that the interview material would not easily lend itself to questionnaire format. The compromise was to interview the employees in-store. This was by no means an ideal solution, but the only option available. Ten interviews were carried out in-store, in either the General Store Manager's office or the training room. The first interview (conducted in the interviewees' own time at the end of her shift) lasted for approximately an hour and a half. The Personnel Manager seemed unhappy with this and made comments such as 'I thought you'd be in there all day' and 'What did you find to talk about for so long?' After this, she arranged some of

the interviews in half hour slots. The implications of this were that large sections of the interview schedule had to be excluded. I was aware at this point that many of the interviews would not be able to be used, but went through the motions in the hope that some may be of use.

Some of these interviews were conducted during work's time, the others in the women's own time. Of the interviews which were conducted within works time, I was anxious that the interviewee would not be reprimanded for taking too long off her shift. Another problem with interviewing in-store was that the women seemed (understandably) anxious that they may be overheard while they were being interviewed. Indeed, the personnel manager or other duty managers came into the room on several occasions to 'see how it was going' while the interviews were taking place. On another occasion, one woman thought that the research was being conducted for Alldays even though I had stressed at the beginning of the interview that the research was independent. For example, when asked how relationships between management and employees had changed in the workplace, she replied; '...things are a lot better nowadays. They're always asking for feedback and *getting us to do things like this'*. Due to these problems then, only four of these interviews (which were conducted in the interviewees' own time and lasted between an hour to an hour and a half) were included in the final analysis. Thus, 18 interviews with employees from Alldays were used in the analysis. Table 3.3 summarises the number of interviews used in the analysis by company and store location.

Arranging interviews in Cheaper DIY was much more straight forward. The Personnel Director of the company nominated two stores to participate in the research, and the store managers quickly provided lists of women who were willing to be interviewed. Fifteen women were interviewed in their own time, in their own home. Finding willing interviewees in Bradleys via the GMB union representatives was more difficult than in the two companies discussed above where the employer had provided access. When asking women to participate, the shop stewards told potential interviewees that their employer had refused access to the company. These women were then able to make an informed decision as to whether or not they wanted to be interviewed. This informed consent meant that a small number of

women declined an interview, saying they feared for their jobs[39]. Interviews were conducted with 17 women from three stores.

In total then, 50 interviews with women employed by three large retail companies were used in the final analysis: two in the food retail sector and one in DIY[40]. Of the 50 women interviewed, 45 were married or cohabiting (five women were lone parents). Their partners were employed in a variety of jobs, but were mostly manual workers (31 men). The remaining men were employed in non-manual occupations, some of whom had high status jobs: Company Director for a commercial building firm, Bank Manager, Sales Manager for a medium sized textile company (tables 3.6-3.8 give a biographical summary of the individual women interviewed in each of the three companies). The majority of interviewees were in their thirties and had children (see tables 3.4-3.5). All of the women in the sample were White and most had low level qualifications, having left school at the earliest opportunity (a small number of women were currently studying to gain higher qualifications. This is discussed in more detail in chapter four). Tables 3.6-3.8 also detail which women currently belong to a trade union and those who have belonged to a trade union in their previous employment. Roughly half of these women were union members, while the other half were non-members.

Table 3.4 Age profile of the interviewees

Age group	Number of interviewees
20s	2
30s	32
40s	12
50s	3
60s	1
N	50

[39] The representatives also advised the women not to talk about the research to their work colleagues, in light of some new policies which the company had introduced. One of these new policies, 'Shop a Colleague', encouraged employees to report any pilfering by colleagues, unauthorised absence and other events of this nature to the management in return for a reward.

[40] Sixty four interviews were actually conducted. Of the 14 interviews which were not used, six were incomplete due to the time constraints mentioned. The remaining eight interviews were with women employed in non-manual occupations e.g. clerical workers (even though I had clearly specified that I wanted to interview check out operators or general assistants). Although this material was not included in the analysis, it was useful in that it provided background data to the three companies.

Table 3.5 Age of youngest child

Age of youngest child	Number of interviewees
Pre-school (0-4)	12
Primary school (5-10)	19
Secondary school (11-18)	13
Independent	6
N	50

Table 3.6 Interviewees employed by Alldays

Name	Age	Ages of Children	Highest school leaving / vocational qualifications	Partner's job	Union membership Current	Union membership Past
Bev Atkinson	39	10	Low. (None - left before exams, but went to Grammar school).	Production operative, car manufacturer	✓	✓
Pam Bailey	61	40, 36	Low. None. Day release, Secretarial.	Company director, Commercial building firm	✗	✓
Laura Boot	39	16, 10	Intermediate. 8 O' Levels	Sales representative, mobile phones	✓	✓
Alison Hibbert	33	1	Low. CSEs	Tool fitter.	✓	✓
Claire Hoyle	35	8, 6	Low. CSEs and secretarial.	N/A	✓	✓
Carol Kennedy	41	17, 15, 12	Low. Secretarial	Machine operative, chemical plant.	✓	✓
Jo Loving	33	13	Intermediate. O'Levels, then C&G Hairdressing	Sales Representative, small company.	✓	✓
Geraldine Martin	37	14, 16	Low. CSEs and secretarial.	Tool maker	✓	✗
Eileen Mills	57	34, 32, 30, 27	Low. None.	Self-employed flat roofer	✓	✓
Maureen Oakley	37	14, 5	Low. None	Ambulance man	✓	✗
Betty Parkin	55	24	Low. None.	Clerical worker, water board	✓	✓
Greta Roberts	39	15, 7	Low. None.	Warehouseman, drinks company	✓	✗
Mary Smith	38	16, 14, 11	Low. CSEs, then O'Levels. Later - secretarial.	Bank Manager	✓	✓
Trisha Stewart	43	22, 5	Low. None.	Shop assistant, but now disabled, doesn't work.	✓	✓
Mandy Tompkins	32	6, 2	Intermediate. O' Levels and C&G catering	Area manager, stationery company.	✓	✗
Mel Turner	37	9, 5	Low. CSEs	Civil servant	✓	✓
Nicola Wilton	35	14, 10, 2	Low. CSEs. Now - access course.	Sales representative	✓	✗
Tina Wright	33	14, 5	Low. None.	Crane driver	✓	✓

Table 3.7 Interviewees employed by Bradleys

Name	Age	Ages of Children	Highest school leaving / vocational qualifications	Partner's job	Union membership Current	Union membership Past
Julie Bates	31	11, 4	Low. CSEs	Shelf filler, supermarket (works nights)	✗	✗
Pauline Booth	41	14, 11	Low. Secretarial	Warehouseman, Timber firm	✓	✓
Kathryn Bond	45	17, 15	Low. CSEs. Now doing degree (via access course).	Parts manager, car garage	✗	✗
Angie Buckley	40	21, 19, 16, 15	Low. None. Later on, business admin	N/A	✗	✓
Rachael Carter	21	1.5	Low. GCSE's less than grade C, then secretarial.	Bar man	✗	✗
Louise Heath	34	17, 14	Low. 7 CSEs. Later - office technology	Self-employed builder	✓	✗
Tracey Jones	45	18, 16	Low. CSEs. Now - secretarial	N/A	✓	✗
Monica Jordan	43	14, 12	Low. None.	Depot manager, railway	✓	✓
Felicity Marks	38	11, 9, 5	Intermediate. O' Levels.	Sales manager, medium sized knitwear firm	✗	✓
Rita Marsh	38	11, 6	Low. CSEs	Mechanical fitter	✓	✓
Liz Nish	34	7, 4	Intermediate. O'Levels. Now - doing access and then BEd	Section manager, Job Centre	✓	✓
Shelley Owen	32	3, 2	Low. 8 CSEs	Bar manager	✓	✗
Gill Pearson	32	10, 5	Low. None.	Long distance lorry driver	✓	✗
Marie Peters	37	11, 8, 1	Intermediate. O' Levels. Later - secretarial.	Gardener, Local Authority	✗	✓
Barbara Soar	43	22, 20	Low. None.	Self-employed Taxi driver	✓	✓
Linda Steele	37	11, 7	Intermediate. O' Levels. Now - parent educator's course.	Mechanic, bus depot	✗	✓
Margaret Watson	51	32, 30, 22, 15, twins age 10	Low. None. Later - GCSE English at night class.	Production operative, Car manufacturer	✓	✓

Table 3.8 Interviewees employed by Cheaper DIY

Name	Age	Ages of Children	Highest school leaving / vocational qualifications	Partner's job	Union Membership Current	Union Membership Past
Dorothy Chapman	48	27, 19	Low. None. Later - accounting, O' Level and GNVQ business studies	Store manager, small branch of high street electrical shop	✗	✓
Sue Cooper	35	11, 7, 4	Low. None, then C&G hairdressing	Farm hand	✗	✗
Kate Dobson	46	27, 10	Low. None, Later - Accounting qualification and secretarial.	Technician, Local Authority	✗	✗
Jane George	28	1	Low. CSEs	Sales assistant, DIY store	✗	✗
Bridget Grey	41	17, 14	Low. None.	Maintenance worker, Hospital	✗	✓
Fiona King	32	9, 5	Intermediate. O' Levels	Baker	✗	✗
Sharon Osman	34	16, 12, 9	Low. CSEs	Bus driver	✗	✗
Jean Paisley	37	11, 7, 1	Intermediate. O' Levels. Later - more O'Levels.	Driving instructor (off sick)	✗	✓
Sam Prince	34	9	Low. 6 CSEs	N/A	✗	✓
Pat Rice	45	25, 24, 10	Intermediate. O' Levels	Motor fitter	✗	✓
Adele Rodgers	31	11	Low. CSEs	N A	✗	✓
Kay Walsh	30	11	Low. None.	Production operative, Engineering company (works nights)	✗	✗
Jan Ward	37	18, 15, 13	Low. None.	Newspaper press operative	✗	✗
Lisa Wark	35	11, 9	Low. CSEs	Bus route manager	✗	✓
Jacqui Woods	32	10, 2	Low. Secretarial	Bar manager	✗	✓

3.4 Conducting the Interviews

Qualitative research methods (semi-structured interviews) were considered to be the most appropriate tool to explore women's attitudes and orientations to work. Although a series of well designed survey questions could be used to tap preferences (see for example, de Vaus 1985), the nature of qualitative research allows the interviewer to probe more fully around notions of 'preference' and 'choice': the researcher is able to unpack the interviewees' attitudes and preferences by tapping into the context in which employment decisions were made. Qualitative research also gives the interviewee the opportunity to express her own views in her own words, thereby providing rich data. Commentators such as Dex (1984) and Burchell and Rubery (1994) argue that work history data provide an important contribution to the understanding of women's working lives. For example, past employment patterns influence the individual's current and any future employment (Burchell and Rubery 1994:83-4). Exploring work history data gives the researcher the opportunity to understand the impact which significant events such as child birth and marriage may have on employment decisions: we are able to gain a processual, exploratory account of women's lives.

Bearing these issues in mind, an interview schedule with check points was designed around the key topics to be explored. To aid the design of the schedule, qualitative interview schedules used by other researchers were examined, to see how they had phrased their questions (see for example, Blauner 1963; Devine 1992; Goldthorpe *et al.* 1968; McRae 1986; Yeandle 1984). Additionally, two pilot interviews were conducted with female part-timers to check if the questions flowed and to identify other important issues. The interview schedule covered basic biographical information and then dealt chronologically with the women's work history and experiences of trade unions in previous jobs. The interviewees' current job and any future employment plans were discussed, before concluding with sections on relationships between management and employees, and attitudes towards trade unions.

The interviews were conducted between September 1995 and June 1996, lasting between one to three hours. The interviewees were assured of confidentiality at the beginning of the interview. All gave consent for the interviews to be taped, and the women were invited to stop the dictaphone at any time, should they wish to do so (two women did this). As indicated in section 3.3, the majority of the interviews took place in the interviewees' home. Many of the women were very hospitable, offering tea and biscuits and some of them even had these prepared for when I arrived. I was very aware on the part of the respondent, that receiving an interviewer (and stranger) into their home was not a usual occurrence. It is likely that the women were feeling apprehensive - from wondering what they were going to be asked to deciding what to wear. It was my job therefore, to make the women feel as comfortable as possible from the minute they opened the door to me[41]. Without being contrived then, I was warm and friendly towards the respondents. I made an effort to converse naturally, which involved thanking them for giving me their time, talking about how easy the house was to find, or asking the age of the cat etc. In these first few minutes then, it was possible to read the signals and be sensitive towards whether the women were shy or nervous, and to behave accordingly.

Inevitably, some women were more open than others during the interview, and it took longer to establish rapport with some women than others. Many of the interviewees couldn't see what was so interesting about their working life, making comments like '..but I've not done anything'. Others sought constant reassurance they were giving the 'right' information, with a number of these women asking if other interviewees had said similar things. As indicated by other commentators (Oakley 1979), some of the women attempted to use me as a source of information and asked my advice on various issues e.g. maternity leave, further education and training. I often stayed for a while after the interview, chatting to the women. It seemed as though a relationship of trust had been established between myself and the interviewee. Some women were very interested in the research and said that they'd

[41] Buchanan *et al.* (1988:59-60) argue that the social and interpersonal skills involved in interviewing can be learned with time, yet other factors such as the personality of the researcher (i.e. ways of thinking, feeling and behaving) are central to the progress of fieldwork. This involves being genuinely interested in the lives of others and being able to strike up an intimate relationship quickly with respondents. See Douglas (1985) for a discussion of the effect which appearance, dress, accent etc. can have on interviewees.

never thought about things like that before, going on to discuss their experiences and opinions in more detail. Other women asked me about myself and my family or talked to me about their problems.

The most relaxed interviews took place when we were alone and the interviewee didn't have to 'clock watch' in order to pick children up from school or prepare a meal for a partner's return from work. However, this ideal interview situation where the interviewer and interviewee are alone with no distractions was not always possible. One of the main reasons why women work part-time is because they have children, hence pre-school children were present at a number of interviews. Although these children were too young to understand our conversation, there were instances where it was difficult for the women to concentrate due to the child demanding attention. For example, one child held the strap of the dictaphone and continually swung it round while we were talking; another emptied out the contents of my bag; while at another house the children were so noisy I couldn't hear the woman on the tape! A potentially dangerous situation emerged during one interview when a child kept putting her mother's cigarette lighter in her mouth. Of course, there is little the researcher can do in situations like these.

On three occasions, the woman's partner was in the room at the time the interview took place (it is difficult to see how these situations could be avoided when the interviewee is giving up her own time to be interviewed in her own home). Two of these men sat on the settee, watching television and making humorous comments every now and then, while the third husband found the interview material of particular interest and frequently offered his own opinions and attitudes in response to the topics raised. I dealt with this situation diplomatically by appearing interested in what he had to say while at the same time not picking up on any of his comments. Additionally, I turned my body to the woman and maintained eye contact with her when asking questions (for strategies for dealing with respondents' husbands during interviews conducted in the home, see Glucksman 1994:162). In another case, I arrived at the interviewee's house and felt that the woman's husband had quite a hostile attitude towards me. During the interview, he sat in the living room (which

was adjacent to the kitchen where we were doing the interview) with the door open and the television turned down low. The woman kept glancing in the room and lowered her voice at some questions. When we reached the section of the interview schedule which covers how important the woman's contribution is to the household finances, the woman's husband was in the kitchen making a cup of tea, so I omitted this part of the interview schedule. Although these scenarios do not match the 'perfect' interview situation, apart from the latter scenario of the hostile husband, there was no adverse effect to the interview data (in the case of women with young children, these interviews just took longer!).

The interviews were transcribed, producing on average around 25 pages of verbatim each. I often listened to the tapes again while transcribing, analyzing and writing up the data in order to understand the context in which the interviewees made their replies. Part of the data analysis involved entering the interview transcripts into the computer assisted qualitative research package NUD.IST. While this was helpful in certain respects, I found it necessary to return to the 'paper copies' of the interview transcripts on a regular basis, to reflect on the interview as a 'whole' (see Appendix E for a discussion of this). After analysing the data, the key areas of the interviews were written up in the form of six empirical chapters, using rich quotes to illustrate key points.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter began by outlining the four reasons why the retail sector is a strategic sector for the case study. Firstly part-time work is particularly prevalent in retail. Secondly, part-time jobs in retail are largely characteristic of part-time jobs in general. Thirdly the retail sector is undergoing important restructuring: ownership has become monopolistic, new technology has been introduced and the nature of work has changed. Thirdly, the material indicators of part-time work in retail are broadly characteristic of part-time work in general. The fourth reason for choosing the retail industry is that it has very low levels of union density.

The chapter then outlined how the research took place. It noted the problems encountered in gaining access to retail organizations. The need to adopt a flexible

approach in qualitative research (as stressed by many commentators) is clearly evident in this research. Although a research plan had been devised prior to entering the field, practical problems such as whether the interviews took place in the workplace or at home meant that it became necessary to modify this plan. Practical problems such as who was present at the interview are also discussed. Nonetheless, despite these minor problems, the end result was to obtain a valuable set of interviews which provided rich data for analysis.

In total then, 50 interviews with female part-time workers employed as check-out operators or general assistants in three different retail companies are used in the analysis. The profile of the sample is largely characteristic of female part-timers in general: the majority of interviewees were married with employed partners, in low level jobs. All of the women were White and for the most part had no or low level qualifications. The following chapter (the first of six empirical chapters) begins to unravel the complex stories behind the interview data. The chapter details the women's work histories, assessing the decisions which the women made with regard to their employment and family commitments.

4 Employment Histories, Mobility over the Family Formation Stage and Patterns of Labour Force Participation

As the last chapter indicated, all of the women in the sample have children. The arrival of children had an effect on employment for the majority of interviewees in the sample. For example, although all of the interviewees were currently employed in part-time manual jobs in the retail sector, a substantial proportion of the interviewees had worked full-time in non-manual occupations at some stage during their previous employment. This supports existing research which shows that women who take part-time jobs often suffer downward occupational mobility[42] (Dex 1987; Elias 1988, 1990; Martin and Roberts 1984).

The most common pattern of female labour force participation in Britain has been for women to begin working full-time, leave their jobs on having children and then return to a part-time job when their children are a little older. This 'returner model' has resulted in the so-called M-shaped participation profile for British women. However recent research (Harrop and Moss 1995; Macran *et. al.* 1996; Walby 1997) demonstrates that changes have been occurring for younger cohorts of women, more of whom (especially those with higher education) are returning to their old jobs after maternity leave[43]. Indeed, recent figures published by the Policy Studies Institute show that in 1996, 67 per cent of women returned to work directly at the end of their maternity leave (24 per cent of full-time workers and 42 per cent of part-time workers), compared to 45 per cent in 1988 (15 per cent of full-time workers and 29 per cent of part-time workers. Calleneder *et al.* 1998). Additionally,

[42]McRae (1991) found that women in professional jobs were less likely to suffer downward occupational mobility when returning to part-time work than women employed as managers / administrators and clerical workers / secretaries.

[43]Rates of return to work differ by social class and occupation for British women, with women at the top end of the class and occupational structures being the most likely to return to work (McRae 1993).

women who take time out of the labour market to rear children are taking shorter breaks after child-birth and returning to work earlier, hence when their children are younger. Macran *et al.* (1996:289) found in their analysis of the National Child Development study that half of the mothers in the 1946 cohort had returned to employment within six years of the birth of their first child. This had reduced to two and a half years for women in the 1958 cohort.

The point of this chapter is to trace the women's working lives to discover the kinds of opportunities and constraints available to them and to build up a picture of who these women are. By profiling their employment histories we gain an understanding of the decisions which women make with regard to their employment. It is important to stress that these decisions are made within a household context and depend upon the stage which the family is at. The chapter is divided into two sections and sets the scene for the following two analytical chapters. Section one begins by detailing the women's school / college leaving qualifications and discusses the jobs which they entered on leaving school. It also provides an illustration of the jobs which the women moved between during their working lives. Section two details the different ways in which childbirth affected the interviewee's labour force participation and illustrates the complex nature of what Yeandle (1984:50) calls the women's 'employment careers'. This section shows why the women returned to work and in particular, why they opted for part-time jobs as opposed to full-time work. Section three concludes.

4.1 Education and Employment Histories Pre Motherhood

The majority of interviewees (46 women) left compulsory education at the earliest opportunity, while four women went to college full-time to gain vocational qualifications e.g. secretarial qualifications[44]. Ultimately then, these were a group of women with low levels of qualifications: on leaving school / college, 10 women had O'Levels, 21 had CSE's or vocational qualifications and the remaining 19 women had

[44] A further nine women attended college by day release in their first job, but the qualifications gained were of a low level.

no qualifications (see table 4.1). The majority of unqualified women were older, although there were a number of younger women without qualifications.

Table 4.1 School / college leaving educational / vocational qualifications

Qualification	Number of women
None	19
CSEs / Secretarial	21
O'Levels	10
N	50

Spencer and Taylor's (1994:8-11) qualitative study of women's work histories found several factors which influence women's early career choices: occupational stereotypes and notions of 'women's work'; perceptions of labour market opportunities at the time; assumptions about women's roles and responsibilities; family circumstances and expectations; experiences of school; career information and advice; peer group and personal experience of work. The women interviewed for my own research were asked what they wanted to do on leaving school and the influences on the choices made reflect the factors highlighted by Spencer and Taylor (1994). A small number of women did not know what they wanted to do on leaving school - their primary concern was to earn enough money to go out at the weekend and buy clothes. However, the majority of women did have a firm idea of the job they wanted to do and most of these women managed to get jobs in their chosen field of employment.

However, a smaller group of women did not make it to their preferred occupation. For example, Shelley Owen wanted to join the police, but her parents put pressure on her to do office work instead. Margaret Watson wanted to join the Navy but was prevented by her health and ended up taking a job as a shop assistant. Additionally, she spoke of the lack of encouragement from her Mother and the stereotyping of girls and women;

> Mother's didn't encourage you to do that. If you were a girl they told you you had to leave home, you were gonna get married. It didn't matter...

Family circumstances prevented Pam Bailey from becoming a nurse - her parents could not afford to pay for training and she became a clerical worker. Similarly, Rita Marsh wanted to be a hairdresser but took a job as a shop assistant as her father was unemployed. For some women then, it was expected that they would

take 'any sort of a job' to help with the household finances. As Barbara Soar whose father was unemployed, poignantly expresses;

> Well I don't think I had any idea at that time. I just wanted to go out to work and earn some money. I mean, I come from a big family, there's 10 of us, so it was a matter of us having to go out to work at that time, so I don't think I had any ambitions. There wasn't a time for ambitions at that time.

The occupations which these women were channelled into were typically female jobs. The bulk of interviewees (31 women) entered working class manual jobs requiring few skills or qualifications; 16 of these women became shop assistants, four became factory workers and 11 women were employed in a variety of manual jobs (see table 4.2). The remaining 19 women were employed in routine non-manual occupations, such as clerical workers, secretaries and word processors. All but two of the interviewees (Jo Loving and Louise Heath) began their working lives in full-time jobs[45] (Jo did not enter paid employment on leaving college as she was pregnant. Louise took a part-time job on leaving school at the request of her foster parents. This meant that they still received foster care allowance for her).

Table 4.2 Occupations entered on leaving school

Occupational group	Number of women
Low level non-manual:	
Bank clerk	1
Wages clerk	1
Clerk	10
Secretary word processor	6
Telephonist	1
Manual:	
Sewing machinist	2
Waitress / chambermaid	3
Chip shop worker	1
Dental nurse	1
Care assistant	1
Hairdresser	2
Shop assistant	16
Bakery worker	1
Factory operative / packer	4
N	50

During their employment careers, the interviewees had changed jobs several times, with most women having between two and six jobs after their first job on leaving school (see table 4.3). Table 4.4 shows the women's number of occupation

[45]Burchell *et al.*'s (1997:227) analysis of the 1986 SCELI data found that part-time work in the first occupation is increasing for younger cohorts of school leavers. For example, in the period between 1940 to 1975, two to three per cent of employees in blue-collar work began their working lives in part-time jobs compared to over 18 per cent between 1980 and 1985.

changes since leaving their first original occupation on leaving school. Only two interviewees had stayed in the occupation that they were in when they left school (Jo Loving and Mandy Tompkins).

Table 4.3 Number of job changes since first job

Number of job changes	Number of interviewees
None	1
1	2
2	11
3	8
4	4
5	10
6	6
7	1
8	2
9	2
10 +	3
N	50

Table 4.4 Number of occupation changes since first job

Number of occupation changes	Number of interviewees
None	2
1	16
2	17
3	11
4	2
5	2
N	50

Regarding occupational mobility, just over one third (19) of the interviewees had been upwardly mobile in the period after their first job (tables 4.6 - 4.10 summarise these job changes). Of these women, nine interviewees were employed in high / mid level non-manual occupations at some point during their previous employment: Felicity Marks, Pat Rice, Kate Dobson, Laura Boot, Mandy Tompkins, Betty Parkin, Nicola Wilton, Tina Wright and Sam Prince.

Three of these women experienced occupational mobility when they changed, while three were upwardly mobile within their respective companies. Of the women who experienced occupational mobility when changing jobs, Felicity Marks went to college full-time for two years on leaving school to gain secretarial qualifications. Her first job was as an audio typist in a bank where she worked for two years. She left this job to become a personnel assistant at a pottery factory where she worked for another two years. She then left to work at a knitwear company, doing the same job. The last job she had before leaving the labour market to have a family was as the

Personnel Officer of another medium-sized knitwear company. Pat Rice had been employed in several clerical jobs before she became the office manager over 36 people. Similarly, Kate Dobson had worked in several shops before she got the job of area manager of a regional chain of shoe shops (since leaving school she had returned to college to gain accounting and secretarial qualifications to assist her career).

Of those women who were upwardly mobile within the company, Laura Boot became a bank clerk on leaving school with eight O'Levels. She was promoted several times until she reached the scale below that of accountant. Mandy Tompkins worked as a shop assistant on leaving school. She too was promoted several times until she reached the position of a department manager. Betty Parkin was a sewing machinist when she left school. After eight years in this job she assumed responsibility for quality control (the factory where she worked employed 80 people). Thus, it was a common experience for women to gain 'supervisory' positions.

The remaining three women who were upwardly mobile into high / mid level non-manual occupations became managers of small shops: Nicola Wilton became the manager of a small video shop, Tina Wright became the manager of a high street off license and Sam Prince became the manager of a photography shop. Although the majority of these occupations are classified as managerial, characteristically they are not highly paid jobs with high levels of status attached to them (Felicity Marks' job as Personnel Officer may be an exception to this).

Another two of the women who were upwardly mobile in their employment were promoted to the position of supervisor: Alison Hibbert supervised clerical workers at the mail order firm where she worked while Jane George became a supervisor at Cheaper DIY (before taking maternity leave). The remaining eight interviewees were upwardly mobile from manual to non-manual occupations at some point in their previous employment: Angie Buckley, Monica Jordan, Liz Nish, Sharon Osman, Jean Paisley, Adele Rodgers, Gill Pearson and Mary Smith. Half of these women had spent the majority of their working lives in clerical occupations

before taking their current job - it just so happened that the first job they took on leaving school was blue-collar work. The other half had more sporadic employment histories, and could not clearly be associated with a single occupation. As with the women who were upwardly mobile into 'managerial occupations', it is questionable how far in real terms we can say that women changing occupations from manual to routine non-manual jobs are experiencing upward mobility. It is likely that there is little difference in 'job quality' between these jobs, but nonetheless, a move into a supervisory position was some improvement on their former positions.

The remaining two-thirds of women (31 interviewees) had not encountered any upward occupational mobility during their working lives. Their job changes were either between manual occupations or downward occupational moves from non-manual to manual jobs. Bev Atkinson's employment trajectory provides a good example of the women who had continuous manual employment profiles. She began her working life as a shop assistant but left this job to be a print worker in a factory as the pay was higher. After being made redundant, she took another job as a print worker and also did bar work during this time. After the birth of her first child, Bev returned to bar work before taking her current job in Allday's. Claire Hoyle's employment profile illustrates downward occupational mobility. Her first job on leaving school was as a junior secretary in a small textiles company. From here she took a job as a clerical worker at a large insurance company. After having her children she returned to the labour market in her current job as a check out operator.

A key point to note here is that all of these women are currently working in low status jobs, either as general assistants or check out operators. Broadly, two groups of women can be observed. Firstly, a group of women who had previously been employed in jobs higher up the occupational structure. These women had experienced downward mobility. For many of these women this downward mobility occurred on their return to work after child bearing, although not always (other factors were moving because of the husband's job e.g. abroad and redundancies). Secondly, a larger group of women had not experienced occupational mobility in their previous employment. These women had spent the majority of their working lives in low status jobs, low paid occupations.

Another key point is that many of the women had returned to education to enhance their labour market position. Since leaving school, one third of the interviewees (17 women) had returned to education. Six of these women had not used (and did not plan to use) their qualifications / newly acquired skills to change their jobs. The main reasons they gave for enrolling on these courses were to stimulate themselves and as a form of self-interest. For example, Margaret Watson, who previously had no qualifications did an English GCSE at night class. The remaining 11 women (nearly one fifth of the women interviewed) had used, or planned to use their qualifications as a stepping stone out of their current jobs and to be upwardly mobile. For example, Dorothy Chapman and Kate Dobson left school with no qualifications. After having their first child and spending a period of time at home, both women returned to work full-time (Dorothy as a home help and Kate as a shop assistant who was eventually promoted to the position of area manager). Dorothy explains how she was fed up with her job;

> ...I was in me 20s, and I was just working and I was getting no pleasure out of it. I was working with old people and I was only a young girl and I just decided one day that I needed something else, and I thought the only way I could make more money and have a job I wanted to do would be to get some training...

She went to college to learn how to use an accounting machine and after the course she took a full-time job as an insurance broker. Kate got divorced and was then made redundant so she took this opportunity to attend college full-time for a year to do book keeping, accounting and secretarial qualifications (she got a grant from her local authority). She returned to work full-time in the accounts department of a clothes company dealing with imports and exports (both women left these jobs when they had their second children some eight and 17 years later).

Five of these women were currently involved in education. Kathryn Bond was doing a degree in American literature, while Liz Nish and Nicola Wilton were doing access courses (Liz was due to start a teaching degree in the Autumn and Nicola had applied to do a midwifery diploma). The remaining two women (Louise Heath and Tracey Jones) were doing secretarial courses at college. Both Louise and Tracey no longer needed to provide child care and were looking for full-time jobs in clerical work (see tables 4.6-4.8 for information on the women's school / college leaving qualifications and any subsequent education). The next section examines the impact of childbearing on the women's employment.

4.2 The Effect of Children on Employment

Susan Yeandle's (1984) research collected data from a group of employed mothers (both full and part-time workers) with children of different ages. From her sample, Yeandle identified three groups of mothers in the labour force. The first group of women had one child and their return to employment was relatively straightforward, often a once-and-for-all event. The women in Yeandle's second and third groups had two or more children. While the second group (accounting for one-third of the women with two or more children) did not re-enter paid employment until they had completed their families, the third group (two-thirds of the women with two or more children) returned to work between the births of their children. Additionally, Yeandle identified what she called a 'dominant pattern' of mothers' employment, whereby the majority of women in her sample left the paid labour force for a period of time after having their child (only six of the 64 women were continuously employed demonstrating employment trajectories more like men).

Yeandle's categories were useful in helping me to understand the women's work histories in my own research. However, my sample dealt with part-time employees, not women workers in general, hence additional patterns of mothers' employment are evident (see table 4.5). Nine of the interviewees had one child while the remaining 41 women had two or more children. Of these, 14 women (34 per cent) stayed at home until their families were complete and 27 women (66 per cent) re-entered the labour market between births (either full-time or part-time or a combination of both). These figures compare favourably with the distribution of women in Yeandle's groups mentioned above (Yeandle 1984:63), however, it must be noted that this research was conducted at least 10 years later than Yeandle's study, and that (as already noted) rapid changes in women's labour force participation have occurred during this time. The length of time these women spent out of the labour market and the number of times they re-entered and withdrew from employment differ[46].

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[46] It is important here to note the cross-sectional nature of this research. All of the interviewees were asked if they wanted or planned to have any more children and only two women (Sam Prince and Jane George) said that they did (a further woman, Rachel Carter, was pregnant with her second child at the time of interview). This said, it is unknown whether the women of childbearing age will change their minds or have unplanned pregnancies in the future and in this sense the categories may not be conclusive.

Table 4.5 Patterns of employment during childbearing phase

Pattern of employment	Number of interviewees
One child only:	9
Two or more children:	
Returned to labour market when family completed	14
Return to work full-time	7
Return to work part-time	20
N	50

Research has shown that reasons for working differ slightly between female full- and part-time workers. The five most important reasons for working given by full-timers in the 1980 Women and Employment Survey are; money for basic essentials (41 per cent), to earn their own money (15 per cent), because they enjoy working (15 per cent), money for extras (13 per cent) and to follow their career (seven per cent). Meanwhile, part-timers' main reasons were money for basic essentials (28 per cent), money for extras (28 per cent), because they enjoy working (14 per cent), to earn their own money (13 per cent) and because they enjoy the company (11 per cent) (Martin and Roberts 1984:68).

More recently, Watson and Fothergill (1993:216) found that women worked part-time rather than full-time because they needed to provide child care or had older children who created domestic work, and / or elderly relatives or grandchildren to care for. When asked why they were in work as opposed to being at home, the women stressed the importance of earning money, social contact and self-esteem, supporting the conclusions of the women and employment survey some ten years earlier.

The nine interviewees with one child fall into two groups: those who remained continuously in the labour market during child bearing (four women) and those who took a break from employment (five women). Jane, Rachel, Sam and Alison did not withdraw from the labour market on the birth of their first child, citing the need to earn money as the reason for returning to work (table 4.6 provides a summary of the employment careers of the women with one child). Before getting pregnant, Jane (aged 28 with a child aged one) was employed full-time as a supervisor in Cheaper DIY. She took maternity leave and returned to work part-time on 30 hours per week. Jane continued with these hours for nearly a year, but found it difficult to combine her job, home and child. She did not have time to do her

housework and was permanently tired (her son was a poor sleeper). For a month previous to her interview, Jane had been working 16 hours per week and was finding this much more manageable. When Rachel (aged 21 with a child aged 18 months) had her daughter, she wanted to return to her job as a clerical worker on a part-time basis, but the company would not allow this[47]. Thus, when her statutory maternity leave expired, she took her current part-time job in Bradleys. Likewise, Sam (aged 34 with a child aged 9) left her full-time job as the manager of a small high street photography shop to have her daughter. Again, the company would not let her return to work part-time and although she considered her pay to be 'good for shop work', she did not earn enough to pay for a full-time childminder. After three months at home with the baby, Sam took her current part-time job on evenings in Cheaper DIY. Alison Hibbert (aged 33 with an 18 month old daughter) was due to take maternity leave from her full-time job as a supervisor of clerical workers but the company then began offering redundancy packages so she opted for this instead. Although Alison was not continuously employed according to Martin and Roberts' definition[48] (1984:125) she returned to the labour market in her current part-time job when the child was seven months old.

[47]There is no legal requirement for employers of women who return to work after maternity leave to offer their former jobs on a part-time basis.

[48]In their analysis of the 1980 WES data, Martin and Roberts (1984:125) categorised women who return to work within six months of giving birth as being continuously employed. This is regardless of whether maternity leave was official or unofficial. Meanwhile, Brannen and Moss (1991:15) used the cut off point of nine months in their study of women who returned to full-time work after the birth of their first child.

Table 4.6 Pattern of employment for women with one child

Name	Age	Age of child	School / college leaving qualifications	Subsequent qualifications / courses	Job changes
Bev Atkinson	39	10	None (left before exams, but went to Grammar school).	None.	Shop assistant → Factory work → Factory work and Bar maid → 1st child → child age 2, PT in shop → PT Bar maid → current job.
Rachel Carter	21	1.5	GCSE's (below grade C). Secretarial qualifications by day release in first job.	None.	Clerical worker, Stationery company → Clerical worker → Had child. Child aged 4 months → current job.
Jane George	28	1	CSEs.	None.	Shop assistant → Nanny → Shop assistant → Current job (promoted to supervisor) → Had 1st child, took maternity leave. Returned to work FT, now PT.
Alison Hibbert	33	1.5	CSEs.	None.	Clerical worker, mail order company (promoted to supervisor) → Had child → 1st child aged 7 months, current job.
Jo Loving	33	13	O'Levels. Then FT college to do City & Guilds.	None.	Left FT college to have child. Child aged 3, shop assistant (current job).
Betty Parkin	55	24	None.	None.	Sewing machinist (promoted to Quality Assurance controller) → Had child → child age 3, PT packer factory → At home for 6 years → current job.
Sam Prince	34	9	CSEs.	None.	Chamber maid → Factory → Shop assistant → Shop assistant → PT cleaner abroad (husband in army) → Shop assistant (promoted to manager, small high street photography shop) → Had child. child aged 3 months → Current job (Divorced).
Adele Rodgers	31	11	CSEs.	None.	Bakery → Pub → Had child & minded friend's baby (Divorced) → Child age 3, PT clerk → PT shop assistant → Current job.
Kay Walsh	30	11	None.	None.	YTS petrol station → Factory → Had child. Chil aged 2, FT 'Ring and ride' minibus driver → FT factory → FT factory → FT double glazing sales - Current job.

The remaining five women with one child followed a more conventional employment pattern of withdrawing from the labour market for a period of time after the birth. Four of these women remained in paid employment once they made their initial return to the labour market (Kay, Bev, Adele and Jo). Both Kay and Bev returned to work when their children reached the age of two and were employed in a variety of jobs (Kay worked full-time - first as a minibus driver, then in two factory jobs. She sold double glazing before taking her current job. Bev worked part-time in a shop for two days a week while her in-laws minded the child. She then did bar work

before taking her current job). Bev had not returned to work before this point as she wanted to look after the child herself;

> I didn't want to have a child, and somebody else actually go through the first 12 months of his life, and it be 'Oh well, he did such and such today'. I think in the first 12 months, they make that much progress, I would have missed it. ...I mean, my sort of working life has always revolved from when he was born, around him. I think I should spend as much time as I possibly can with him

Nonetheless, Bev did miss adult company when she was at home with her child.

Adele re-entered the labour market when her son was three, although previous to this she had minded her friend's baby for a year while she was at home with her own child. Jo's son was four when she entered the labour market (her current job was the first paid job which she had been employed in - Jo had to leave college when she fell pregnant at 19). The fifth woman, Betty Parkin, had planned to stay at home while her daughter was young but unexpectedly she had to take a job after three years (her husband went on strike and they needed the money). Betty stayed in the job for a year to build up their resources and then left to spend six years at home before taking her current job in Alldays.

As indicated in table 4.5, most (41) of the interviewees had two or more children and 14 of these women did not return to the labour market until they had completed their family. The majority of these 14 women had two children with age gaps of four years or less between their children. Most of the interviewees with two children (10 women) followed a 'traditional' path and did not take regular paid employment outside the home until their youngest child was of primary school age (although Monica Jordan had minded a friend's baby while caring for her own children and Bridget Grey had cleaned occasionally for her Aunt). The main reason given for not returning to work until their family was completed was that they wanted to care for their children themselves. For example, Barbara Soar took a part-time job in a cafe when her youngest daughter was four years old. She had not considered returning to work until her children went to school;

> I knew I'd always go back to work, but I knew I wouldn't go back while they were small... I liked to be with them while they were little, and I wouldn't have liked leaving them with anybody else. And when I did go to work, as I say, they never missed me, because I was only part-time...

The remaining four women returned to work before their youngest child went to primary school. Two of these women (Claire Hoyle and Lisa Wark) returned to work when their youngest child was six months old, as they needed the money. The other two women (Kathryn Bond and Julie Bates) mentioned that money was an important factor in their return to work, but more importantly, these women were also getting bored at home. After ten years out of the labour market, Julie Bates had a rethink about her life;

> I thought to meself, well you know, I need something more than being a Mum, something more than being just a housewife, or being in the house, so I think it was good for me to get a job...

However, Julie only wanted to work part-time, and thought it important to spend time with her child;

> It was a big step for her when Mummy went to work, at 3 and a half. I mean, even now she'll say 'Are you here in the morning Mum?' And I'll say 'Yea'. 'Oh great, I'll get up with you then Mum'. You know, so she still needs me, so I'm not ready to... I wouldn't put that on my child.

After returning to the labour market, the majority of women remained in part-time employment until taking their current job. As is clear from table 4.7, most women experienced stable employment trajectories on their re-entry to the labour market, having been employed in one or two jobs before taking their current job. In contrast, a small number of women had more 'bitty' employment histories. For example, Kathryn Bond had seven different jobs while her children were growing up. It seems to be the case that the more children a woman has, the more likely she is to work between births. For example, of the 16 women who stayed out of paid employment until they had completed their family, only two women (13 per cent) (Mary Smith and Carol Kennedy) had more than two children. In contrast, of the 27 women who returned to the labour market between births, 11 (41 per cent) had two or more children.

Table 4.7 Women who returned to the labour market when families complete

Name	Age	Ages of children	School / college leaving qualifications	Subsequent qualifications / courses	Job changes
Pam Bailey	61	40 & 36	None (secretarial qualifications, day release in first job).	None.	Clerical worker → Had children → youngest ag → seasonal work → FT clerical work → PT sl assistant → FT clerical work → PT Party plan current job.
Julie Bates	31	11 & 4	CSEs.	None.	Shop assistant (2 jobs) → cafe → Had children youngest child age 3.5, PT cleaner → current job.
Pauline Booth	41	14 & 11	Secretarial (went to college FT for 2 years).	None.	Clerical worker → Shop assistant (2 jobs) → I children, youngest child age 4, PT cleaner (2 jo → current job.
Kathryn Bond	45	17 & 15	CSEs.	Access course. Currently doing a degree.	Telephonist → Clerical work (2 jobs) → I children, youngest child age 1, PT Bingo calle cafe & bar maid → PT cleaner → PT receptionist PT bar maid → PT shop assistant → PT Bar m → current job.
Bridget Grey	41	17 & 14	None.	None.	Factory operative → Machinist → Had children youngest child age 2, PT cleaner → PT market s → current job.
Louise Heath	34	17 & 14	CSEs.	Office skills. Currently IT.	Shop assistant, small chemist.→ Had child (Divorced). Youngest child age 5, PT factory wor → PT factory worker → current job.
Claire Hoyle	35	8 & 6	CSEs (secretarial qualifications, day release in first job).	None.	Junior Secretary, small textile company → Accou clerk, National wholesaler →Had children Youngest child aged 6· months, current (Divorced).
Tracey Jones	45	18 & 16	CSEs.	Currently WP.	Clerical worker → Had children → youngest cl age 5, PT shop assistant (Divorced) → current job
Monica Jordan	43	14 & 12	None.	None.	Shop assistant → Au pair → Travel agent Clerical worker → Clerical worker → Had child → youngest child age 3, childminder → Cur job.
Carol Kennedy	41	17, 15 & 12	CSEs. Secretarial qualifications (college FT for 1 year).	None.	Clerical worker, large insurance company → I children →youngest child age 6, PT shop assist → Current job.
Geraldine Martin	37	16 & 14	CSEs. Secretarial qualifications, day release in first job.	None.	Wages clerk, Factory → Had children → young child age 4, PT cleaner → current job.
Barbara Soar	43	22 & 20	None.	None.	Assembler of car components, factory → Factory Factory → Had children, 2nd child aged 4, PT → PT shop assistant → current job.
Mary Smith	38	16, 14 & 11	CSEs (O'Levels, day release in first job).	Secretarial qualifications.	Dental nurse → Clerk → Had children, 3rd cl aged 5, PT dinner lady → Current job.
Lisa Wark	35	11 & 9	CSEs (college, day release in first job, trainee machinist).	None.	Chip shop → Shop assistant (2 jobs) → Sew machinist → Had children. 2nd child aged months, worked Saturday nights in a nursing ho → Current job.

Regarding the 27 women with two or more children who re-entered the labour market between births (see table 4.8), seven of these interviewees took maternity leave and returned to work on a full-time basis after the birth of their first child (Laura Boot, Rita Marsh, Shelley Owen, Jean Paisley, Mandy Tompkins, Nicola Wilton and Tina Wright). On their return to work, two of these women (Mandy Tompkins and Rita Marsh) found that they could not cope with a new baby, running a home and full-time work, hence they switched to part-time employment. In their study of first time mothers' return to work after maternity leave, Brannen and Moss (1991:50) found that the most common route into part-time work was by changing employer (rather than by reducing their hours in their former jobs). However, in the sample, both of these women remained with the same employer.

Rita Marsh had two children aged six and 11 and her experience highlights the difficulties women with young children face when working full-time. Rita returned to work full-time for a year after having her first child as her husband was due to be made redundant (the child was minded by relatives). When her husband found another job she began working evenings on fewer hours (she found working full-time a strain as she was often up during the night with the baby and had to travel a long way to work). Rita was made redundant while on maternity leave with her second child. She then claimed unemployment benefit before taking another part-time job in a factory.

Mandy Tompkins (two children aged two and six) is a particularly interesting case as her experience illustrates how she was willing to accept demotion in order to successfully manage work and family. Before taking maternity leave for her first child, Mandy was the assistant manager of the restaurant in Alldays. She returned to work as they needed the money to pay the mortgage, but she was also loathe to give up the independence of her wage;

> I think if I had to turn round and say to him every time I wanted a pair of tights or something, 'Can I have such and such?' I couldn't ask him. I could never say to him 'Can I have this, and can I have that?' Do you know what I mean? Whereas I don't have to. I've never had to ask.

On her return to work she continued in this post for three months. However, she missed her child and found that she could not cope with the long hours so she asked

if she could reduce them. As there were no part-time assistant manager jobs, she became a supervisor on the evening shift. Soon after, the job was reorganized to include flexible hours, which meant that Mandy worked different hours each week. Although the company tried to give her the same hours each week, these hours were unsociable.

Mandy relied on her family to provide child care, but came to feel increasingly guilty about this;

> When I was a manager, I had to be there for like seven in the mornings, and it's a bit hard when you've got two kids. So I used to be taking 'em both to me Mum's. I used to be getting 'em up at half past six (I used to be like up at half past five in a morning, to get meself ready), get 'em up at half past six, walk 'em straight down the stairs, and straight out into the car. And they was half asleep. I used to get 'em to me Mum's, pile 'em out, big bags full o' clothes, and I knew me Mam didn't like it...

Her husband worked long hours too, and was not supportive;

> He would actually pick up the kids, if I was on late night. But you could always guarantee that they'd never be changed. They'd never be ready for bed or anything. They'd never be fed! So that's another reason why I stopped doing me management job, 'cos he wasn't helping me at all... ...He's, erm, a male chauvinist really. He thinks that it's my job. Do you know what I mean? To look after the kids.

Additionally, Mandy found the job stressful as she had the same amount of work to do on her part-time contract as she had previously done in 40 hours. To keep on top of the job, this meant taking work home. Nonetheless, she continued in this job for six months after having her second child, after which she began working as a checkout operator - 'I just wanted ordinary regular hours like all the other Mums'. Nonetheless, Mandy and Rita had been continuously employed since leaving full-time education.

The remaining five women returned to work and stayed in full-time employment until they had their second child. At this point, they either withdrew from the labour market for a while (Laura, Tina, Jean and Nicola) or returned to the same job (Shelley). Laura Boot became a bank clerk on leaving school and was gradually promoted to the scale below that of accountant. She had been at work for seven years when she took maternity leave to have her first child. Why did Laura return to work?

> Well, I wanted to really. Money reasons, which everybody turns to, and it was a good job. I didn't really like leaving. I had a good relationship with all the staff there, I had friends there... money reasons really.

Laura stayed in her job for five years while her mother-in-law minded their child. When Laura was seven months pregnant with their second child, her husband's job was transferred to another part of the country. Thus, Laura left her job to move with her husband and have her second child. In some sense then, the decision of whether to return to work was taken away from her as the move meant she no longer had access to free child care;

> It was a big wrench me leaving actually. So we had to base it 'family' or the 'career'. And in the end it was... we wanted a family...

Laura re-entered the labour market when her youngest child was four in her current part-time job.

Tina, Nicola and Jean all returned to full-time work after the birth of their first child (their relatives provided child care). After their second child had been born, they withdrew from the labour market for a short period of time but took shorter breaks than Laura. For example, after two years at home Tina re-entered the labour market in her current part-time job in Alldays, while Nicola and Jean returned to work after a year. Nicola had a variety of full-time jobs before having her third child and again she spent a year at home before taking her current part-time job. By contrast, Jean took three part-time jobs but only kept one on after having her third child (her current job). Shelley Owen was the only woman to remain in continuous full-time employment throughout the births of both her children (her husband cared for the children as he was unemployed) although for five months previous to her interview, she had been working part-time (she dropped her hours as her husband had got a permanent job).

The last group of women with two or more children (20 interviewees) returned to work between the births of their children on a part-time basis. However, only two of these women remained in continuous employment after the birth of their first child (Linda Steele took maternity leave from her job as a bank clerk and Gill Pearson took a job as a receptionist for a taxi firm when her son was two months old. Both women stayed at home before starting their current part-time jobs). The majority of interviewees then (18 women), withdrew from the labour market after

having their first child and returned to work part-time at some point before completing their family. For seven of these women, re-entry to the labour market was a once-and-for-all event and they remained in continuous employment throughout the births of their second and subsequent children, usually taking maternity leave. For example, Mel Turner withdrew from the labour market on the birth of her first child. After a year at home she took a part-time job in a supermarket. On moving house she started work in her current job and took maternity leave when she had her second child. Significantly, all but one of these seven women who remained in paid employment after their initial re-entry into the labour market only had two children.

The majority of women (11 interviewees) had discontinuous employment patterns (additionally, some of these women had worked full-time at some point between births). In most cases, these women had two or more children or large age gaps between their children which explains their entry and withdrawal from the labour market. Margaret Watson, the mother of six children, provides a good example of the effect which a large family can have on a woman's working life. Margaret left the labour market after having her first child. She did not re-enter the labour market until her second child was 18 months old, at which point she took a part-time job in a factory while her neighbour minded the children. She left this job after six months to work as a butcher in a processed meat factory on the morning shift. She stayed in this job for six years, leaving when pregnant with her third child. At this stage, she did not want to return to paid employment and stayed at home for a further two years;

> I could have gone back, but I didn't want to go back. I was really made up with him. I was more settled with babies then.

She then took an evening job in a stocking factory as by this time they had a mortgage 'so there was the bother of having to have a few bob behind us'. She stayed in this job until she had her fourth child in 1980. In 1981 she took a Saturday job at a shop in town (she could not work in the week as she needed to care for her Grandmother who had moved in with them, although she received attendance allowance for this). After working there for four years, Margaret became pregnant with twins. After having the twins, she returned to her Saturday job and also she took up her old job at the stocking factory on weekday mornings. Soon after, her Grandmother died, and at this point Margaret took her current part-time job in Bradley's.

Kate Dobson's experience gives a good example of women with large age gaps between their children. Kate had her first child in 1968 when she was 18. She took a Saturday job in a clothes shop when her daughter was six. She got divorced three years later and switched to full-time work at this point. For the next eight years she worked full-time in a variety of jobs before leaving the labour market. Kate also re-married and left the labour market in 1985 to have her second child. After a year at home she took her current job. Thus, the employment histories of this latter group of women were more complex than those interviewees who remained in continuous employment after their initial re-entry to the labour market.

Table 4.8 Women who returned to the labour market between births

Name	Age	Ages of children	School / college leaving qualifications	Subsequent qualifications / courses	Job changes
Laura Boot	39	16 & 10	O' Levels.	None.	Bank clerk (promoted to one scale bel accountant). Maternity leave for 1st child, left wl had 2nd. Youngest child age 4, current job.
Angie Buckley	40	21, 19, 16, 15	None.	Business administration	Packer, factory → Clerical work (2 jobs) → Ha children, 2nd child age 1, PT shop assistant Had child 3 and 4 (Divorced). Youngest child age bus driver → Unemployed 6 years → current job.
Dorothy Chapman	48	27 & 19	None.	Accounting course, O' Level English & GNVQ business studies	Clerical worker (2 jobs) → clerical worker → cler worker → Temp → Had 1st child, 1st child age PT factory worker → FT home help → College FT insurance broker → Had 2nd child, 2nd child 3 → PT shop assistant (Divorced) → FT Purch ledger → FT shop assistant (3 different jobs) → lottery kiosk → current job.
Sue Cooper	31	1, 7 & 4	None. College, day release in first job (City and Guilds).	None.	Hairdresser → Had 1st child, 1st child age 1 → hairdresser → Worked PT at chip shop during 2 and 3rd children → Current job.
Kate Dobson	46	27 & 10	None.	Accounting and secretarial qualifications	Shop assistant (2 jobs) → Had 1st child, 1st cl age 7, PT shop assistant (Divorced) → FT sl assistant (promoted to manager then area mana → FT Clerk → Had 2nd child, 2nd child age 2 Current job.
Fiona King	32	9 & 5	O' Levels	None	Waitress → Chambermaid → Waitress → Had child → 1st child age 1, current job. Maternity le for 2nd child.
Felicity Marks	38	11, 9 & 5	O' Levels. Secretarial qualifications (went to college FT for 2 years).	Currently doing work processing, IT and maths.	Audio typist, Bank → Personnel assistant (2 jo → Personnel Officer → Had 1st child. 1st cl aged 1, PT packer, factory → Had 2nd child Party plan → Had 3rd child → Party plan Current job.

Table 4.8 Continued.

Name	Age	Ages of children	School / college leaving qualifications	Subsequent qualifications / courses	Job changes
Rita Marsh	38	11, 6	CSEs.	None.	Shop assistant → Unemployed → Factory → I 1st child, took maternity leave, returned FT fo year then went PT. Took maternity leave for 2 child but made redundant → Unemployed → Factory → Current job.
Eileen Mills	57	34, 32, 30 & 27	None	None	Shop assistant (2 jobs) → Bought a shop. Ha children during this time → PT Garage → Had child → PT Home help → PT shop assistant Current job.
Liz Nish	34	7 & 4	O'Levels.	Currently doing access course. Accepted to do a BEd.	Packer, factory → Dental nurse (2 jobs) → Cafe Child care worker (2 jobs) → shop assistant clerical worker → Had 1st child → 1st child aged months, PT shop assistant → Had 2nd child → 2 child age 1 → PT Temp → Current job.
Maureen Oakley	37	14 & 5	None.	None.	Office junior → Telephonist → Had 1st child → child age 1, current job (Divorced) → Had 2nd ch maternity leave.
Sharon Osman	34	16, 12 & 9	CSEs (secretarial qualifications by day release in first job).	None.	Sewing machinist → Clerical worker (2 jobs) Had 1st child → 1st child age 1, PT nursing ho → Had 2nd child, returned to nursing home → I 3rd child → 3rd child age 1 (Divorced) PT bar m (2 jobs) → current job.
Shelley Owen	32	3 & 2	CSEs (secretarial qualifications, day release in first job).	None.	Clerical worker (2 jobs) → Security work → Cur job → Took maternity leave and returned FT a both children. 2nd child aged 2, went PT.
Jean Paisley	37	11, 7 & 1	O' Levels.	GCSEs.	Hairdresser → Factory worker → Had 1st ch maternity leave → Returned to work FT. Had 2 child → 2nd child age 1.5, FT factory worker fo year → FT factory worker → 12 months at ho (Divorced) → took 3 PT jobs (butchers shop / p office / current job), maternity leave 3rd child.
Gill Pearson	32	10 & 5	None.	None.	Chamber maid → Shop assistant → T receptionist → Chamber maid → Drs surg receptionist → Had 1st child, 1st child age months, PT taxi receptionist → Had 2nd child, 2 child age 2 → current job.
Marie Peters	37	11, 8 & 1	O' Levels.	Secretarial qualifications.	VDU operator → Clerical worker → Had 1st ch 1st child age 2 → PT kitchen hand → PT ma stall → Had 2nd child, 2nd child age 1, telephonist → PT telebanking → Current j maternity leave 3rd child.
Greta Roberts	39	15 & 7	None.	Sign language diploma.	Shop assistant → Hotel chamber maid → Sl assistant → Had 1st child. 1st child age 5, Cur job. Maternity leave 2nd child.

Table 4.8 Continued.

Name	Age	Ages of children	School / college leaving qualifications	Subsequent qualifications / courses	Job changes
Pat Rice	45	25, 24 & 10	O' Levels.	None.	Clerical worker (2 jobs) → Moved abroad (husb in army), had 2 children, PT cleaner. Returned UK, youngest child age 7, FT Temp → Of manager → FT Clerk → Had 3rd child. PT clea → PT kitchen hand / chamber maid → Current jo
Linda Steele	37	11 & 7	O' Levels.	Currently doing parent educator's course.	Calculating clerk, surveyor's → Clerk → PT b clerk, took maternity leave for 1st child, left wl had 2nd child. 2nd child aged 4, current job.
Trisha Stewart	43	22 & 5	None.	None.	Shop assistant → Had 1st child (Divorced). 1st cl age 4, PT shop assistant → PT kitchen ha Maternity leave for 2nd child. 2nd child age months, current job.
Mandy Tompkin	32	6 & 2	O' Levels.	C&G catering (day release from Alldays).	YTS Shop assistant → Shop assistant, current (promoted to supervisor then manager). Matern leave for both children. Returned FT after 1st cl for 12 weeks, then PT. Had 2nd child. Contin with same job for 6 months. Asked to go on ch outs.
Mel Turner	37	9 & 5	CSEs.	Car maintenance evening class.	Accounts clerk, Mail order firm → Clerk → Had child. 1st child aged 1, shop assistant → Cur job. Took maternity leave for 2nd child.
Jan Ward	37	18, 15 & 13	None.	None.	Shop assistant → Cotton mill → Had 1st child. child aged 1, PT shop assistant → Had 2nd and children (fostered children) → Current job.
Margaret Watson	51	32, 30, 22, 15 & twins aged 10	None.	GCSE English.	Shop assistant → Factory → Bakery → Factory Had 2 children. 2nd child aged 1.5, PT kitchen h → PT Butcher → 3rd child, 2 years at home → Factory → 4th child. 4th child aged 1, Saturday → Twins, returned to Saturday job. Also PT fact → Current job.
Nicola Wilton	35	14, 10 & 2	CSEs.	Currently doing access course. Applied to do midwifery diploma.	Clerical worker (2 jobs) → Dental nurse → Had child, return to work at different dentist. Had child (Divorced). 2nd child age 1, shop assist (promoted to manager) → Clerk (2 jobs) → I own company → Dental nurse → Had 3rd ch 3rd child aged 1, current job.
Jacqui Woods	32	10 & 2	Secretarial.	None.	Shop assistant → Shop assistant → Factory Shop assistant → Had 1st child. 1st child aged current job. Took maternity leave for 2nd child.
Tina Wright	33	14 & 5	None.	None.	YTS Care worker → Shop assistant → Clerk Maternity leave for 1st child, returned FT for 3 y → shop assistant (promoted to assistant mana then manager). Had 2nd child. 2nd child aged current job.

Reflecting the conclusions of earlier surveys (Martin and Roberts 1984; Spencer and Taylor 1994; Watson and Fothergill 1993), the majority of interviewees in this research returned to work for financial reasons. Commonly, one wage was not enough to run the household. Hence the majority of women replied that if they lost their current job, they would have to find another. Other positive aspects of paid work outside the home include the independence which their wage gave them and the social nature of the job - 'the girls' and the customers. Several women said that they needed adult company, while others wouldn't like to be 'stuck at home all day'. Some women reported that their jobs gave them confidence and self-esteem. Other women said that they 'needed' to work in order to maintain some identity, besides that of wife and mother.

Full-time work was not an option for many women with young children (pre-school and primary school age) as they couldn't arrange suitable child care. However, even if they had the opportunity, most of these women would not have worked full-time. They told how this would mean missing out on their child growing up and of 'not knowing them properly'. The main concern for these women was that they were personally able to look after their children, and that the children were not 'fobbed off' to a child minder, or relative (see Alwin *et al.* 1992). Lack of child care in the school holidays and the problem of a sick child during term time was a constraint for many of these women. These constraints are in part due to British ideology around what is appropriate motherhood, and the limited child care facilities on offer.

Although women with older children no longer needed to provide child care, their children still created domestic work, which was a frequently cited reason for these women remaining in part-time employment - these women felt they would be unable to cope with full-time work and their existing domestic commitments;

> It's not like when we were first married, and the home stays tidy - when you walk out the door in a morning, the home's tidy, and when you come back the home's still tidy. I would go out to work, come back, and the home would be the pits when I got in, and then I'd have to start that. I'd be into the ground. I'm not one of these ones that can carry a career, do a couple of kids, and run a home as well. I'm afraid I'm not capable of that, so I stick with part-time work... (Monica Jordan).

Geraldine Martin felt that it was her duty to do most of this domestic work herself, even though her daughters were old enough to help;

> ...the girls don't do anything, but if I worked full-time, then they would have to do things, and ... I'd rather them just enjoy themselves. There's a time for doing things like housework, and things like that...isn't there?

Another (smaller) group of women considered themselves to be in the last phase of their working lives. They had previously worked full-time and were currently working part-time while they were 'winding down'.

This section has examined the interviewees' work histories, paying particular attention to the impact of motherhood on employment participation. In total, four separate groups of women are discussed: interviewees with one child, women who remain out of the labour market until their family is complete, and women who return to work after birth (part-time or full-time). Few women in the sample (eight interviewees) had been continuously employed from leaving school right through the family formation stage until taking their current job. However, a significant number of women (13 interviewees) had taken maternity leave for the birth of their youngest child. Additionally, a further five women were not eligible for maternity leave but returned to the labour market within six months of the birth. There is a clear pattern with regard to age of youngest child and return to work. Looking at women with young children (of pre-school and primary school age), generally these women took shorter breaks after the birth of their youngest child compared to women with older children (i.e. secondary school age or independent children). This supports existing research (Macran *et al.* 1996).

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter began by reporting the women's (low) educational levels on leaving school and showed how the majority of women entered low-level manual jobs. Over a third of women were upwardly mobile in their previous employment but the majority of women spent their working lives in low status, low paid jobs. The chapter then explored the impact of motherhood on the women's working lives. It is possible to identify two groups of part-timers in the sample: 'Traditional' and 'Non-traditional' part-timers. 'Traditional' part-timers (17 women) have a break from employment while their family are young and usually return to part-time work sometime when (or before) their child reaches school age. These women generally fall

into two groups. Firstly, there are a group of women who stay off work until their families are complete (women with older children were more likely to fit this pattern). Secondly, there are a group of women who return to work between the births of their children, but withdraw for a period of time after each subsequent child is born (this was more likely for women with younger children).

'Non-traditional' part-timers (33 women) are continuously employed during their child(ren)'s early years. These women either take maternity leave and return to work part-time or full-time (switching to part-time work at a later date, usually because they can't cope or because they have another child). The women with more than one child may have followed the traditional part-timer model outlined above for their first child. They may then have remained in employment after the birth of their second or subsequent children. Having set the scene, the next chapter focuses on the women in their current part-time job, and examines the women's satisfaction with the extrinsic aspects of their job.

5 Satisfaction with Hours of Work and Pay

The previous chapter detailed the women's education and work histories, noting transitions between jobs (whether full or part-time), any periods spent out of the labour market and the circumstances by which the women came to work part-time in their current job. The majority of women had spent their working lives in low status, low paid occupations, with about a third of interviewees having previously been employed in jobs higher up the occupational structure. The chapter identified two groups of women with respect to their labour market participation. The first group of women had discontinuous employment profiles - these women withdrew from the labour market on the birth of their child(ren) to spend a period of time in the home before returning to work, mostly on a part-time basis. The second group of women had more continuous employment histories, remaining in employment throughout the family formation stage. Part-time work suited most of the women with young children as it allowed them to combine child rearing with employment. Women with older children were either 'winding down' on their approach to retirement or working part-time work to cope with domestic work created by independent children living at home. Significantly though, the chapter highlighted a small number of women who were 'trapped' in their current part-time jobs.

This chapter examines the women's satisfaction with two extrinsic aspects of their current job, namely hours of work and pay (extrinsic satisfaction is defined as 'that gained from the pay, conditions and social relations at work etc.' Dex 1998:11; see also Rose 1994a:249-50). Survey research has indicated women's (and particularly part-timers') high levels of satisfaction with their jobs. Hakim (1991, 1995, 1996a, 1998a) has highlighted the paradox of female part-time workers' high levels of satisfaction with what are in the main, low status jobs, and has termed this group of women 'Grateful Slaves'. She argues that these women embark on a marriage career, rather than a labour market career. However, the questions used to assess satisfaction in survey research, and on which Hakim rests her case, are often restrictive: the standard question 'how satisfied are you with *x* aspect of your job?' is

usually used. The qualitative research reported here unpacks notions of satisfaction and preference, and illustrates how high levels of satisfaction found by surveys are misleading. Crucially, surveys such as these do not take account of respondents' preferences. For example, women may say they are *satisfied* with their hours, but when probed it may emerge they are not working the hours which they *prefer* (however, more recently survey questions have been designed to tap preferences as well as satisfaction e.g. SCELI survey questions. Rubery *et al.* 1994). This chapter shows that women take several factors into account when arriving at an assessment of satisfaction, forming their answer in the context of the constraints which operate on their labour supply. For example, when deciding how satisfied they are with their hours, women with young children take into account their child care arrangements and consider how feasible it would be for them to work different hours.

The chapter is divided into five sections. It begins by discussing the number of hours worked and work schedules of the women in the sample (any child care arrangements are examined for women with pre- / primary school children). Section two examines the women's satisfaction with their hours and finds four groups of women characterized by their satisfaction with hours worked. The first group of women were fully satisfied with their hours of work and were fortunate to be working their preferred hours. Two further groups of women initially expressed satisfaction with their hours, but were not working their preferred hours. The difference between these women is that given the opportunity, some would change their work schedules for more convenient hours, while others would not change their hours as they are constrained by domestic commitments. The last group of women desire longer hours but are constrained by their employer who will not increase their contracts. Section three compares the pay rates of the three companies and discusses the importance of the women's income, while section four examines satisfaction with regard to pay. This latter section indicates that while many women initially express satisfaction with their pay, they would like to be earning more money. They justify their low pay by 'weighing up' how much other jobs / employers in the locality pay, and how much skill is needed in order to perform their work. Section five concludes.

5.1 Hours of Work

Chapter one showed how a high proportion of employees in the retail industry are employed on marginal / short part-time hours: 42 per cent work less than 16 hours per week, 37 per cent work between 16 and 23 hours per week and the remaining 21 per cent work 24 hours and above (table 1.5). LFS data show that overall, women with pre- and primary school children work shorter hours than women with secondary school age children. For example, data from the 1991 LFS show that the average weekly hours worked by female part-timers without dependent children were 17.2 hours compared to 15.6 hours for women with a pre-school age child, 17.3 hours for women with a youngest child at primary school and 18.1 hours for women with secondary school age children (Watson 1992:550). As well as influencing the number of hours worked per week, the presence and age of children influence work schedules (see Blanchflower and Corry 1989; Dex *et al.* 1995; Fagan 1996; Horrell *et al.* 1994; Marsh 1991; Martin and Roberts 1984; Rubery 1994a; Watson 1992). Fagan (1996:90-1) uses data commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission in 1989 to show the impact of motherhood on women's work schedules in couple households. Part-timers with no children under the age of 16 have more sociable shifts than women with pre school children: 53 per cent of part-timers with no children under the age of 16 work Monday - Friday, compared to only 17 per cent of women with pre school children. By contrast, 34 per cent of part-timers with pre school children compared to 15 per cent of women with no children under the age of 16 engage in weekend work (Saturday or Sunday). Regarding evening work (after 18.00), the figures are 61 per cent and 25 per cent respectively.

Table 5.1 indicates the hours worked by women in the sample, all of whom were permanently employed and had fixed hours. A slightly lower proportion of women than at the sectoral level (30 per cent) were contracted for marginal or short part-time hours, 46 per cent worked between 16 and 23 hours and 24 per cent worked long part-time hours. Regarding hours of work by age group of child (see table 5.2), the sample did not reflect the national pattern, although the sample size may be too small to draw comparisons. Women with pre school children were

contracted for longer hours than women with older children[49] (the median hours are similar until their children get older, while the mean declines with age). The range of hours was much higher for women with young children. For example, the total weekly hours of women with a pre-school child varied from five hours to 36 hours (a range of 31 hours). By contrast, the range for women with independent children (aged 16+) was much lower at nine hours (the lowest number of hours worked being 14 and the longest 23). This indicates the difficulty encountered by some women with young children in juggling work and family. (Hereafter 'young children' are defined as of pre / primary school age and 'older children' as secondary school age / independent).

Table 5.1 Total weekly hours for women in the sample

Hours worked	Excluding overtime		Including overtime*	
	N	Per cent	*N*	Per cent
Marginal part-time (0-7)	8	16	8	16
Short part-time (8-15)	7	14	7	14
Moderate part-time (16-23)	23	46	18	36
Long part-time (24-30)	12	24	15	30
Full-time (over 30)	NA	0	2	4
Total	50	100	50	100

Note: * Regular overtime, defined as every week.

Table 5.2 Total weekly hours (including regular overtime) by age group of child

Age of youngest child	Number of women	Median	Mean	Standard deviation	Range
Pre-school	12	21.25	20.6	9.5	31.0
Primary school	19	20.0	18.2	8.4	34.0
Secondary school	13	20.0	19.4	7.0	23.5
Over 16	6	16.25	17.7	3.8	9.0
Total	50	20.0	19.0	7.8	33.0

Child care was a major concern for women with young children. Issues of who will look after the children and at what age these children can be left to look after themselves were found to influence the number of hours and schedules which women worked[50]. A reoccurring theme to emerge from the interviews was the women's

[49] One possible reason for the shorter weekly hours for the women with independent age children may be that they leave the retail industry once their children are old enough to be left and enter other (low level) occupations where they are more likely to be able to work full-time. Those women who are left behind may be older women who do not wish to work long hours. However, longitudinal data would be necessary to support this suggestion as it can not be substantiated by the research.

[50] Using British Social Attitudes survey data, Kiernan (1991:100) found that 52 per cent of British men and women said that women with a child under school age should not work at all, while 33 per cent found part-time work acceptable and five per cent approved of full-time work. The respondents were much more likely to support mothers being employed once their youngest child started school -

preference to leave their children in the care of a relative rather than a childminder when at work (only two women paid childminders[51]). The majority of women in the sample relied heavily on their family to care for their children while they were at work (partner, mother, in-laws or sister) and the family member who provided this care often differed according to the women's work schedule. For example, women working school hours generally relied on mothers or sisters to care for their children, while women working weekends and evenings often left their children in the care of their partner.

Regarding the age at which it is acceptable to leave children on their own, the majority of women in the sample thought this to be at some stage while the child was of secondary school age, although this age was viewed differently by different women. For example, for seven years Monica Jordan had worked three evening shifts, a total of 9.5 hours per week while her husband minded the children (now aged 12 and 14). Three months prior to the interview she had been working her new contracted hours of 7.25 hours per week on a Sunday[52], as she wanted to be at home during the evenings. She was currently trying to secure a contract for day time hours during the week as she felt that her two sons were old enough to be responsible for themselves during school holidays. However, other interviewees did not plan to leave their children alone until they were 16 years of age.

It is clear in the sample how women's work schedules differ according to the age of youngest child. For example, of the 12 women with pre-school age children, four worked evenings and / or weekends with child care provided by their husbands. The remaining eight women worked a combination of day time hours, evenings and

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only six per cent said that women should not work. Sixty three per cent approved of part-time work, with 21 per cent approving of full-time work (for earlier surveys see Alwin *et al.* 1992; Martin and Roberts 1984:176).

[51] Professional child care is defined as one of the following: childminder, live-in nanny, other nanny, nursery/crèche, nursery school/play group or after school/holiday play scheme. Women working full-time are more likely to pay for child care than part-time workers, and lone mothers are more likely to pay for child care than couples. The numbers of working women paying for child care are increasing. In 1994, 25 per cent of working mothers paid for professional child care, compared to 23 per cent in 1991 (Finlayson *et al.* 1996:297-8).

[52] She earned more money on the Sunday than she had previously on evenings (£40.96 compared to £34.87). The companies paid an hourly rate of either time-and-a-half or double time on Sundays.

weekends. These women were unable to work more sociable hours e.g. school hours, as they could not arrange child care. Instead, these women had to fit their shifts around the care they could arrange, and as a consequence of this, several of these women worked a combination of different shifts. For example, Rachel Carter (one child aged 18 months) worked 21.5 hours per week: Thursday 12.00-20.30, Friday 12.00-18.00 and Saturday 11.30-20.00. It seemed that this variety in working time allowed the women to use different sources of child care on different days: Rachel relied on her mother, sister and boyfriend for child care on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays respectively.

Reflecting previous research, the women with primary school age children worked more sociable shifts than women with pre school children. Thus, it is the case that as women progress through the family life cycle, they reorganize their work schedules to obtain more sociable shifts. Only four of these women worked evenings and / or weekends and their husbands provided child care. A further three women worked tea-time shifts, spanning the afternoon and evening, and relied on their husband / mother or older children for child care. The majority of women (11 interviewees) worked school hours. These women were all able to take and fetch their children from school, and hence found their shifts convenient. During school holidays most of these women relied on mothers or husbands with flexible hours for child care. However, not all of the women had convenient arrangements and child care was more of a problem for those women who did not have extended family living close by. These women had less convenient arrangements. For example if Claire Hoyle (a lone parent with two sons aged six and eight) couldn't arrange child care with her sister or boyfriend she had to send her children to her Mother's house who lived 30 miles away. This arrangement was far from ideal as it meant that Claire did not see her sons for the whole week. Maureen Oakley and her husband shared the child care between them, but this meant taking separate holidays;

> I get nearly six weeks holiday a year, and then Alan gets quite a lot, so we keep two when we go on holiday, and the rest we just split up between school holidays, and work it between us. It's just that we find that we're not home together, you know. You know, like if he's on nights I go out when he comes in, and when we're on holiday, I have one holiday, and he has the other (laughs). But it has to be done, I mean, there's a lot of people do that do it that way, isn't there?

Eight of the 13 women with children of secondary school age worked daytime hours. However, four of these women had early starts (at eight o'clock in the morning, rather than between nine and ten o'clock). Their children either got themselves to school or were given breakfast and escorted by a family member (e.g. their grandparent, father or older sibling), or taken to a friend's house either by their mother or father when travelling to work. Three women worked tea time shifts, but only one of these women (Kay Walsh, one child aged 11) needed to arrange child care as the other women considered their children (both at age 14) old enough to be by themselves. The remaining two women worked Sundays and husbands provided child care. Finally, of the six women with children of independent age, five worked day time hours (the other woman worked evenings). It was easier for women with older children to work school hours as they did not have to arrange child care during school holidays or when their children were ill. Nonetheless, as the previous chapter indicated, considerable amounts of domestic work was created for these women by independent children living at home.

Overtime was used by some women with young children to achieve flexible work schedules - it provided these women with the opportunity to work longer hours and thereby earn extra money (indeed, several women were working or approaching full-time hours with their weekly overtime). Importantly though, these women were not obliged to work these hours and did not sign up for overtime when their children were ill and / or if they could not arrange child care. For example, Claire Hoyle (a lone parent with two children aged six and nine) was contracted for 16 hours: Wednesday and Friday 9.00-13.00, Saturday 7.00-17.00. During term time and in the holidays if she could arrange child care, Claire worked up to 18 hours per week overtime. She did not want to be permanently contracted to work these hours as child care was difficult to arrange in the school holidays (at weekends the children went to their Father's house);

> I'm fine contracted to 16 hours, because you can work overtime more or less when you want. I mean, not all the time, but most of the time... ...because if anything's wrong with the children, I don't have to start worrying on what to do with them, with me being on me own. So, it fits in well just having the two [week] days.

Although working overtime suited the majority of interviewees with young children, in several cases this flexibility was used to the company's advantage (this will be discussed in section 5.2).

The remaining interviewees worked overtime less regularly, although most were willing to 'help out' during busy periods or if cover was needed for holidays and sickness. In two cases husbands objected to their wives working longer hours. Pam Bailey mentioned her husband's opposition. She worked afternoon shifts (Tuesday - Friday, 13.45-17.30) and occasionally worked overtime until eight o'clock;

> Me husband didn't like it. He didn't like it at all.

Similarly, Margaret Watson (six children: twins aged 10, one daughter aged 15 and three independent children) was contracted for 17.5 hours per week, 8.30-12.00, Tuesday to Saturday. Most weeks she worked six hours over time, staying until 15.00 on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Margaret was asked if she would like to add these hours to her contract but she declined. Although she herself did not want to be permanently contracted for longer hours, her husband's influence was also clear;

> He said he would have gone mad. If I'd have took it he'd have gone mad... You know, even when I work over, I'm tired, 'cos I'm not coming home to no family. I've still got little ones, you know, and he said to me; 'You shouldn't work over if you're tired like that'. He'd rather me just work me 17 hours, and do no overtime, 'cos he knows if I just work me 'till 12, I have a rest in the afternoon. I come in, I watch Neighbours, I'll tidy up, and when he comes in I'm quite happy. If I've worked 'till three, I get in at half three, the kids are on top of me, and he'll tell the difference...

Thus, these couples women have clearly defined gender roles. Although these women work part-time and make a contribution to the household earnings pot, they are primarily responsible for domestic work.

This section has indicated the hours worked and work schedules of the women in the sample. The section showed how family members were the most common providers of child care and the section showed how different relatives were utilised according to schedules worked. Regarding overtime, the majority of women working regular overtime had young children. Overtime provided these women with the flexibility to combine work and family without being permanently contracted for these hours. Other women with young children worked overtime less often as they

found child care more difficult to arrange. The chapter now turns to explore issues of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with hours of work.

5.2 Satisfaction with Hours of Work

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, part-timers express high levels of satisfaction with most extrinsic aspects of their job. Using British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) data from 1991 Warren (Forthcoming) shows that 79 per cent of female part-time manual workers are satisfied with their hours of work. However, when a separate question asking whether they would prefer to continue with their current hours or work longer / shorter hours, it emerges that only 70 per cent of these women would continue with the same hours, while 20 per cent wanted longer hours and eight per cent would reduce their hours[53]. Clearly then, there is a discrepancy of nine per cent between the 79 per cent of part-timers who say they are satisfied with their hours and the 70 per cent who would continue with the same hours even if they had the opportunity to change them[54]. In her analysis of the 1980 Women and Employment Survey, Dex (1988:129) categorises female part-timers into voluntary and involuntary part-timers, according to satisfaction with hours worked. Voluntary part-time workers (89 per cent) are women who are satisfied with their hours or want to work shorter hours, while involuntary part-timers (11 per cent) want to work longer hours. Dex suggests that these women work part-time because of certain constraints e.g. lack of suitable jobs, lack of child care, which if removed would free them to work longer. By comparing WES data from 1980 and BHPS data from 1991, we see that the proportions of involuntary workers have risen sharply over the decade. In 1980, 11 per cent of part-timers wanted longer hours compared to 20 per cent in 1991.

Another indicator of satisfaction with hours worked is how convenient women find their work schedules. The 1989 Equal Opportunities Commission

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[53] The figures do not total 100 per cent due to rounding.

[54] Regarding all part-time workers (manual and non-manual) 80 per cent are satisfied with their hours of work (17 per cent wanted to work longer hours while 11 per cent wanted to work shorter hours). When asked if they would continue with the same hours, 72 per cent said yes (Warren, Forthcoming).

survey found that around three quarters of all female part-timers in couple households were satisfied with the convenience of their work schedules (78 per cent of women working less than 16 hours per week and 72 per cent of women working between 16 and 30 hours per week. Fagan 1996:96). Crucially then, both the BHPS and EOC data sets show that a substantial minority of women are not satisfied with their hours of work, would prefer different hours and do not find their hours convenient. Thus, while women may say that they are *satisfied* with their hours this does not necessarily mean they are actually 'happy' with their hours and are working the hours which they *prefer*. It is clear that women assess satisfaction with their hours with reference to the constraints which operate on their working lives, such as child care and pay. For example, when Marie Peters (three children aged one, eight and eleven) was asked if she was satisfied with her hours of work she replied;

> Yea, they just fit in with the baby and my husband being home on the Sunday, and the money's just what we need, *we don't need any more than that.*

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, it appears on the surface that most of the women in the sample are satisfied with their hours of work. Some 42 interviewees (84 per cent) initially expressed satisfaction with their hours, while eight women wanted to increase their hours. This section illustrates that satisfaction with hours is a complex issue and categorises the women into four groups according to their satisfaction. The first group of women were genuinely satisfied with their hours and were working their preferred hours. For these women, working part-time meant that they could successfully fit their hours of work around their lives and domestic commitments;

> My hours are great. They just fit in with everything else (Jan Ward, three children aged 13, 15 and 18).

> It's good for me, it fits in with the family (Laura Boot, two children aged 10 and 16).

> They [hours of work] just suit me down to the ground. I mean, I like getting up in the mornings, do you know what I mean? I like to be up and out, and then I'm still early enough to get home, and get me things done - go and pick me son up from school (Jo Loving, one child aged 13).

The second and third groups of women initially expressed satisfaction with their hours but were not working the hours of their preference - these women preferred more convenient work schedules. They generally wanted to change unsociable hours e.g. Saturdays, evenings or late afternoons for more convenient

hours e.g. school hours. For example, Mandy Tompkins (youngest child aged two) worked 24 hours per week (two full days: 9.00-18.00 and two half days: 9.00-13.00);

> I prefer the four hour shifts... I'd like to change them to something like nine 'till three, or ten 'till three, Monday through 'till Friday, do you know what I mean? But, I've never really asked, plus you have to wait for people to leave to get their hours.

This undermines the notion of satisfaction - these women initially said they were satisfied with their hours but when probed expressed a preference for different work schedules. The difference between these groups of women were that while women in the second group would change their work schedules given the opportunity, the third group of women were unable to change their hours of work as they were constrained by their domestic commitments;

> I mean I know Jane's 14, but I mean they still need us here in a morning... 'cos they'd go with nothing to eat if I wasn't (laughs)... ...I do prefer, if I could do it (I can't obviously, because of the children) but I prefer the early shifts. I like to get up early in the morning, and get out, get the shift done and get home. I don't like the late shifts, and I don't like the evening shifts. *I mean I'm lucky enough that the hours that I do have are school hours, but I do prefer the early ones...* (Maureen Oakley, youngest child at primary school).

Thus, these women were not working the hours of their choice and were unable to seek a change in hours. In a sense then, these women were resigned to working these hours and were therefore satisfied with them. For example, Tina Wright (two children aged five and 14) was not working her preferred hours, but when asked if she was satisfied she replied;

> Yea, at the moment I am. I'm sort of like stuck in these hours for the next six years until me little one starts senior school, so yea, at the moment I am.

Notably, mothers of independent age children were the only group of women who did not express a desire to change their work schedules. Presumably this is because these women are no longer constrained by child care commitments and can work the hours of their choice within the constraints of the hours offered by the company.

Finally, the fourth group of women (eight interviewees) were dissatisfied with their hours and wanted to increase them. Three of these women worked regular overtime. This flexibility suited their employers, who were unwilling to increase their contracted hours. For example, Jacqui Woods was contracted for 20 hours per week but for the last two years had worked an extra ten hours every week;

> He [Store Manager] just says he's not allowed to at the moment. But he's been taking other staff on. He's also let other staff go to other stores, so he's had the hours there to let me go up, but he won't do it...

The consequences of not being contracted for these additional hours were well understood;

> I lose out on everything. I lose out with more holiday pay, more time off, because he won't actually put me up (Jacqui Woods).

Satisfaction with hours worked varied according to the number of hours worked. Table 5.3 shows that all but one of the eight women contracted for less than eight hours per week were satisfied with the number of hours worked, saying they would not change them even if they had the opportunity (Monica Jordan wanted longer hours). Similarly, the majority of women working between eight and 16 hours per week were satisfied with their hours and would continue working these hours even if they had the opportunity to change them. Only two of these wanted to increase their hours. Like Monica Jordan, both of these women had older children and felt they were now 'free' to work longer hours. Thus, of the 15 interviewees working less than 16 hours per week, 12 were satisfied with their hours of work and would continue with the same hours even if they had the opportunity to change them, while three women wanted longer hours. Notably, none of these women indicated a desire to change work schedules.

Of the 23 women working between 16 and 23 hours per week, 19 said they were satisfied with their hours of work, while four women wanted to work longer hours as they needed a higher income. Of the 12 women working 24-30 hours, all were satisfied with the number of hours worked. However, table 5.3 shows that all of the 11 women who expressed a preference to change their work schedules worked longer than 16 hours per week. This suggests that these women found it more difficult to juggle their work and family than women working shorter hours.

Table 5.3 Satisfaction with hours by number of hours worked (excluding overtime)

Number of hours	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Total	Change work schedule
Marginal part-time (0-7)	7	1	8	0
Short part-time (8-15)	5	2	7	0
Moderate part-time (16-23)	19	4	23	6
Long part-time (24-30)	12	0	12	5
Total	43	7	50	11

Satisfaction with hours worked also varied by company worked for: women working for Alldays were more likely to be satisfied with their hours of work than women working for Bradleys or Cheaper DIY (only one woman in Alldays wanted to increase her hours compared to four women in Bradleys and two women in Cheaper DIY). For example, Sharon Osmon (who worked afternoon shifts) had been employed by Cheaper DIY for five months. The store advertised for staff to work on the morning shift so Sharon asked if she could work these hours as they would be more convenient. Her manager said there was 'no chance' of this, as the company found it difficult to recruit afternoon staff and would therefore be unwilling to allow an existing afternoon worker to transfer to morning shifts. Other women were made to feel indebted to the company, especially if the manager had given them extra hours or had been flexible with them over child care issues. For example, Jean Paisley said;

> When I signed the contract, he [Store Manager] said 'You do realise how busy it is on a Sunday?' (I'd already been doing it, you see, six months), and I said 'Yea I know that', and he said 'You're going to have to try and snatch your dinner when you can', and so I said 'Oh, do we get time in lieu?' ('Cos I knew we didn't get paid for it), and he said 'No, can't do that'. He said 'I'm doing you a favour giving you this contract, so you've gotta expect to give us favours back'. This was his attitude.

Additionally, several employees in Bradleys and Cheaper DIY felt they were taken for granted. Julie Bates told how she temporarily agreed to work longer hours while the company found cover for a fellow employee's maternity leave, however, it took four months to set someone else on.

This section has indicated that the majority of the part-timers were satisfied with the number of hours worked, with only eight women wanting longer hours. However, the complexity surrounding issues of satisfaction is illustrated by the substantial minority of women who initially stated they were satisfied with their hours, but when probed, were not working the schedules of their preference. Some of these women would have changed their hours if they had the opportunity, while others were unable to work their preferred hours as they were constrained by domestic commitments. Generally, the shorter their working weeks, the more the women in the case-study tended to say that they were satisfied with their hours. So, for example, most of the women working marginal or short part-time hours were satisfied with the number of hours worked and the days / times of work while women working moderate / long hours would have preferred different, more convenient

shifts. It becomes clear that the proportions of women who are satisfied with their hours are not as high as Hakim (1991, 1995, 1996a, 1998a) has argued. Having examined satisfaction with hours of work, the chapter now outlines the different rates of pay across the three companies, and includes a discussion of the financial importance of the women's income.

5.3 Pay

Chapter one showed how low paid sales occupations are: of the nine standard occupational groups, sales occupations were the second lowest paid (table 1.7). In 1995, part-timers in sales occupations earned £4.03 per hour on average (Osborne 1996:227-331). Table 5.4 shows the hourly pay rates for employees in the sample for this period (after an initial starting rate). Rates of pay differ between the three companies with Alldays paying the highest hourly rate. Employees in Cheaper DIY were paid due to performance. In order to appear objective, store managers annually rated employees on their punctuality, time keeping, attendance, appearance and attitude. These scores were entered into a grid which was used to calculate if there was to be an award and how much this would be. Hence, two check out operators working alongside each other could be earning quite different hourly rates: Jean Paisley earned £4.10 per hour while Sue Cooper earned £3.60 per hour. Many interviewees were dissatisfied with this method. They felt it was not objective and disliked the tension it created between employees. Indeed, interviewees did not know each others rates of pay and several asked me not to disclose this information to other interviewees (this dissatisfaction will be discussed in section 5.4).

Table 5.4 Hourly pay rates by company and job, 1995 (employees over age 18)

Job Grade	Alldays	Bradleys	Cheaper DIY*
General Assistant	£4.06	£3.67	£3.59
Check out operator	£4.27	£3.67	£3.59

Note: *Minimum pay rate.

A common assumption made about women who work part-time is that they work for 'pin-money'[55]. However, only a small proportion of women in the sample (five interviewees) fitted this description and said they could manage without their wages. All five of these women were married to men in well paid jobs. For example, Felicity Marks' husband was the sales manager of a medium sized knitwear company. When asked how important her wage was she replied;

> It's additional. It's for me to buy things that I want if I want them... It's not imperative that I work, it's just a little bit extra.

The remaining women were split roughly into two groups - those who used their wages for 'extras' such as Christmas presents, a holiday or occasional days out, or 'essentials' defined by Martin and Roberts (1984:68) as 'food and rent / mortgage'. Of the women who used their income for 'extras', we see how this term is misleading - these women made an important contribution to the household finances. Their 'additional' income paid for 'normal' family activities which their husband's inadequate 'family wage' could not meet (see Barrett and Mackintosh 1980; Land 1980);

> The other Saturday, we went bowling, and then we went to McDonald's, so it' was like 50 pound, just for a day out... (Sue Cooper).

Many of these women replied that they would be able to 'manage' if they lost their job, but their standard of living would fall;

> If I cocked up, and made a dreadful mistake, and Bradleys said 'Right, that's it, we've got to sack you', then so be it. I don't depend on Bradleys for my bread and butter. But I would miss it, because then we wouldn't be able to have a holiday. *A* holiday. Forget Florida we wouldn't be able to go anywhere, because my husband's money does not go that far (Monica Jordan).

Despite making a substantial contribution to the household pot, the ideology of the 'male breadwinner' was strong in some households (for a historical perspective of the transition to the male-breadwinner family see Horrell and Humphries 1995). For example, Carol Kennedy who used her income to pay for the family holiday said;

> My husband looks at my wage slip and he thinks it's funny that his tax is more than what I would pick up.

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[55] For 90 per cent of wives who work part-time, the husband is the dominant partner economically (Arber and Ginn 1995:35). However, this is not to suggest that women's contribution is not important. Their contribution as we shall see, keeps many families above the poverty line (Phillips 1994:111).

Two men described their wives' income as 'Mickey Mouse money' and 'the kids' toffee money'.

The majority of women in the sample depended on their income for essentials. These women were married to men in low paid, insecure jobs. Several of these men had experienced redundancy. Pauline Booth's husband had recently lost his job as a stores manager and was currently working in a timber warehouse;

> The rate me husband's on at the moment isn't very good. He used to work at [names company] up to two, three years ago, and he was on more or less double there, to what he's getting now. So you just get used to your cost of living, you know, managing, when all of a sudden 'Pow!', you're cut in half. So it's just a case of me having to work to, you know, to make ends meet. You like your luxuries. *Well it's not so much luxuries now that you work for, you just work to keep your home.*

Three of these women had self-employed husbands. Here the women's income was essential as it was the only regular wage. All of the women who depended on their wage said they would need to get another job if they lost their current job, and several revealed they were in a considerable amount of financial debt. Indeed, two women had second jobs[56].

In sum, it is clear from this section that an overwhelming majority of women either depended on their income to meet essential expenses, or to boost their husband's inadequate 'family wage'. The next section explores the women's satisfaction with their pay.

5.4 Satisfaction with Pay

BHPS data from 1991 (Warren, Forthcoming) shows that 58 per cent of female part-time manual employees were satisfied with their pay compared to 46 per cent of female full-time manual workers[57]. White and Gallie suggest that part-timers' high satisfaction with their mainly (low) pay must be due to lower expectations;

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[56] Sam Prince, a lone parent of one child aged nine, worked in Cheaper DIY during the week and in a newsagents at weekends for 'cash in hand'. Fiona King had two daughters aged nine and five and was married to a baker. She worked in Cheaper DIY during the evening and as a registered childminder during the day.

[57] White and Gallie (1994:287) found that part-timers in large establishments are less satisfied with their pay than those in smaller establishments. This may be due to the fact that smaller establishments with fewer part-timers pay higher wages than larger establishments with more part-timers.

> If a part-time worker seeks short working hours as a priority, and if low wages are seen as inseparable from part-time employment, then a lowering of wage expectations will result, and this will lead, other things being equal, to a raising of pay satisfaction (White and Gallie 1994:285).

White and Gallie argue that the differential between part-time and full-time workers' satisfaction with pay may in part be due to part-timers replying with regard to their net hourly pay, rather than with gross pay (part-timers are less likely to pay income tax on their earnings).

Just over half of the women in the sample (29 interviewees) expressed satisfaction with their pay, although many of these women stated they'd like to be paid more (several mentioned how a national minimum wage of £4 would increase their earnings). When probing around the issue of satisfaction with pay, several issues emerge as to why the interviewees are satisfied or dissatisfied. These centre around how much other jobs / employers in the locality pay and how much responsibility and skill are involved in the work. For example, four women (all of whom were employed by Alldays) said they were satisfied with their pay as their company paid the highest hourly rate of all the national food retailers. As well as comparing their pay to other retailers, the women made comparisons with what they could earn in other types of jobs. Thus, the interviewees were very aware of the opportunities available to them in their local labour market. This is indicated by Bridget Grey's reply to whether she was satisfied with her pay;

> Yea, yea. After looking in the job centre and seeing what the jobs pay, yea.

Similarly, another woman told how her pay was low in comparison to some of her previous jobs but went on to say that in spite of this she was prepared to stay in Cheaper DIY until she retired;

> ...I have worked for more, in various places, but that's another story isn't it... (Dorothy Chapman).

Dorothy explained that she needed job security and the stability of a regular wage (previous to taking her job in Cheaper DIY, she had spent a two year spell in and out of employment). For some women then, these jobs may not have been as highly paid as jobs held in the past, but for the most part their employment was assumed to be secure;

> The other place I worked in for 10 years, the sewing factory, is a poxey little place. I mean, we got laid off at one point where we were doing just one day a week 'cos there was no work. At least in this place, you're guaranteed to go to work, and there's always gonna be customers there (Lisa Wark).

Several women were satisfied with their pay as they saw that in general, shop work was low paid;

> For shop work it's good (Tracey Jones).
>
> Everybody'd like more wouldn't they, but no, I think it's pretty average isn't it, for what shops pay (Kate Dobson).

and did not require a high level of skill (see Horrell *et al.* 1990[58]);

> Oh, I'd like more. I think everybody'd like more money. But at the end of the day, for what you do... I mean, I've not been to college, or got degrees and you know (to earn more money), or I've not done like an apprenticeship, so... *I think for what I do, it's all right* (Geraldine Martin).
>
> I'm satisfied with what I get, but when you hear of other places, where you know, they seem to get more, then you think... You hear like, there should be a Minimum Wage, and they talk about a Minimum Wage of four pounds, four pounds fifty whatever it is now, then you think, well, you know... So it's times like that, you think as you should get more, *but I think, for what I do, I'm happy with it* (Jan Ward).

Those interviewees (21 women) who were dissatisfied with their pay, expressed reasons for their dissatisfaction which were similar to the women who were satisfied with their pay. For example, women compared their rates of pay to those which could be gained elsewhere. Seven women (all employed by Bradleys) were dissatisfied with their pay, recognising that that other retailers, such as Alldays, paid a higher hourly rate. When asked if she was satisfied with her pay, Margaret Watson replied;

> No, well you're never satisfied, are you? We get paid less than Alldays. We get paid less than [names companies], but they have to pay their own stamps and things like that, and they're not guaranteed their hours. If they're not doing well (the shop), they can get sent home. At least we're in all the time.

A second theme to emerge was that of responsibility. Several check out operators thought they should be on a higher rate of pay;

> I think for the responsibilities we've got, you know, the money, and making sure everything's done right, I think you should get more money. 'Cos like I say, at first I thought 'Check out operator, what a bum job that is', but it's not. There's a lot more responsibility than what you'd think (Mel Turner).

Two women employed by Bradleys had volunteered to supervise the check outs and thought they should be paid a higher hourly rate for this. Similarly, several women

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[58] Only 44 per cent of women in part-time jobs considered themselves to be skilled compared to 72 per cent of women and 84 per cent of men in full-time jobs. Interestingly, Horrell *et al.* (1990) found that men and women view skill differently. Men working in low skilled jobs were more likely than women to consider their jobs to be skilled, while a significant proportion of female part-timers in skilled jobs stated their jobs were not skilled.

had volunteered to be trained on other departments and were 'multi-skilled'. These women also thought that they should be paid more as they often did these jobs when the company required them to.

Finally, four of the 15 women employed by Cheaper DIY were dissatisfied with their pay. As mentioned in section 5.2, several women objected to employees doing the same job being paid different hourly rates while others resented the system of pay rise by manager's discretion;

> It's stupid, it really is... You might have garden staff, one on £3.25, one on £3.65, and they're doing exactly the same job... The pay rise, that's another farce as well... But this manger's only been here three months. So how can he say what people can do and what they can't do? And if the manager doesn't like you, which it happened with one lad who worked at Cheaper DIY, for two years on the running, he's not had any pay rise at all (Kay Walsh).

In sum, this section has assessed women's satisfaction with their pay. Just over half of the interviewees were satisfied, while the remaining women were dissatisfied. On the whole, satisfactions and dissatisfactions revolved around notions of how much other employers / jobs paid and how much responsibility / skill was needed to perform the work. It is likely to be the case then that these women 'trade off' pay for convenient hours etc., although none of the interviewees explicitly stated this.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined women's satisfaction with their hours of work and pay. It began by detailing the number of hours and schedules worked, with reference to the age of youngest child. The section illustrated how the age of youngest child influenced work schedules and overtime. Regarding satisfaction with hours worked, although the majority of women were satisfied with their hours, when probed it emerged that a substantial minority of women were not working the hours of their preference. For these women, hours of work were not as convenient as may be expected and often a complicated set of child care arrangements existed. This has led Fagan (1996:95) to argue;

> Asking part-timers about their hours of work is likely to elicit a positive evaluation if they already have had to work hard to sort out a daily regime that synchronises domestic and employment schedules and if the perceived alternative is either nonemployment or a complete reorganization of their daily regimes (1996:95).

The chapter then discussed the different rates of pay across the three companies and the importance of the women's wages, showing that an overwhelming majority of women depended on their income to meet essential expenses or to boost their husband's inadequate 'family wage'. Over half of the interviewees expressed satisfaction with their pay, and legitimised their (low) pay by saying their work was 'only part-time' and did not require skill, although equally, women who were dissatisfied with their pay argued they should be paid more as their jobs involved skill and responsibility. Nonetheless, while many women would have liked to earn a higher wage, they pointed out that they earned comparable rates to other part-timers or women workers in their area.

This chapter has demonstrated that while surveys usefully uncover whether women are satisfied with their hours and pay, qualitative research is especially beneficial to explore and probe around issues of satisfaction and to establish any preferences as a way of interpreting satisfaction. Following on from this, chapter six examines the women's level of satisfaction with intrinsic aspects of their jobs. It becomes clear that the jobs which these women were currently doing were often not what the women would have chosen to do, had a realistic alternative been on offer.

6 Job Satisfaction, Employment Commitment and Orientations to Work

Chapter five examined women's satisfaction with two extrinsic aspects of their job (namely hours of work and pay). It showed how the high levels of satisfaction recorded by female part-timers in survey research is somewhat superficial. When probed qualitatively about these issues, it emerged that many women were not as satisfied as first thought. For example, in the case of hours worked, it was clear that although the majority of women said they were satisfied with their hours of work, they were not working their preferred hours. The key finding to emerge was that in assessing their satisfaction with these aspects of their job, women take into account the constraints on their working lives. A similar picture emerges in this chapter with regard to job satisfaction.

Hakim (1991:101, 1997:35) has highlighted the paradox of female part-time workers' high levels of satisfaction when they occupy such disadvantaged positions within the labour market. She argues that such women are 'Grateful Slaves', and henceforth her views have sparked a heated debate about women's orientations to work (see chapter two). Hakim sees that these are two groups of women in the labour force, differentiated by their work orientations. The first group, 'Self-made Women', have a strong career orientation to work and invest in training and qualifications to ensure that they are able to obtain a secure, well paid job with good promotion opportunities. These women have high levels of work commitment on the same scale as men and are employed full-time. Meanwhile the second group, 'Grateful Slaves', select themselves into part-time jobs and embark on a marriage, rather than a labour market career. These women have a clear preference for the 'home-maker' role, and lack a long-term commitment to their jobs drifting in and out of employment. Due to their part-time employment status, Hakim would argue that the women in my sample are 'Grateful Slaves'. However, as will be seen, only half of the women possess orientations to work which she accords these women with.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section examines the women's satisfaction with the work itself and their jobs overall. As with hours worked and pay in chapter five, the women in the sample do not appear to be as satisfied with their jobs as survey research suggests. Three groups of women are found to exist. The first group of women are fully satisfied as their jobs fit in with domestic commitments. Importantly, these women also enjoy the work which they do. The second group of women are less enthusiastic about the work itself, but express satisfaction with their overall employment stating that their jobs are 'OK for now'. Many of these women stated a preference to be employed in different and more meaningful jobs, but went on to say this was not possible as they did not posses the necessary qualifications and / or were constrained by their childcare commitments. The third group of women also disliked their work. However, while the women in the second group were prepared to 'trade off' boring jobs for convenience, the third group of women were not. These women felt they were trapped in their current jobs and were currently looking for alternative employment. It becomes clear from the chapter that there is a crucial difference between part-timers' satisfaction with their job (i.e. the actual work) and their satisfaction with their employment (i.e. the fact that they are in paid employment, their jobs are close to home and fit in with their domestic commitments).

The second part of the chapter discusses the women's orientations to work. How do the women view their employment? Are the majority of women 'modern-homemakers' with instrumental orientations to work? The chapter argues that Hakim's thesis is simplistic, showing that in this sample of female manual part-timers, there were three different types of work orientation. Firstly, there were a group of involuntary workers who worked for financial reasons and would give up work if they could afford to. Secondly, a group of women who resemble Hakim's 'Modern Homemakers'. Thus, her assertion that there are a group of women who have purely instrumental orientations to work is not incorrect. But her thesis is incomplete. There also exist another group of women in the sample. This latter group of women held long-term goals for their future employment, planning to get promoted or gain more qualifications in the future. For these women then, their part-time jobs were 'just for now'. Finally, section three concludes.

6.1 Overall Job Satisfaction

The paradox has been highlighted that although female part-timers are concentrated in the lowest paid, least skilled occupations, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs than male or female full-time workers in better paid, higher status jobs (Hakim 1991:101, 1997:35). For example, in the 1986 SCELI survey, respondents were asked to give a score out of 10 to indicate their overall satisfaction with their job: female part-timers gave the highest score (8.6) compared to 8.3 for female full-timers and 7.4 for male full-timers (Rubery *et al.* 1994:227). Similarly, data from the 1991 BHPS show that 85 per cent of female part-timers express overall satisfaction with their jobs compared to 79 per cent of female full-timers (Warren, Forthcoming). The explanations which have been offered for part-timers' high satisfaction with their jobs have generated much interest and debate.

Hakim (1991:104-8) offers three possible reasons for the paradox of women's high satisfaction with their low level jobs. Firstly, she suggests that women may adapt to their low level jobs and lower their aspirations and expectations accordingly;

> It may be that a forced choice is intolerable in the long term, so that preferences must be modified to achieve a more comfortable congruence (Hakim 1991:104).

Secondly, she suggests that women in low level jobs may use other 'women's jobs' (rather than better paid 'men's jobs') as a frame of reference by which to compare their own jobs. However, Hakim dismisses both of these explanations and instead argues that women's high levels of satisfaction are due to their work orientations and life priorities. She sees that women accord more importance to their domestic activities and family life than to their paid work. The key contributory factors to part-time workers' high satisfaction are an easy journey to work, convenient hours and the friendly people they work with.

Other commentators have argued that overall job satisfaction cannot be adequately measured by asking employees to grade their level of satisfaction on a scale of one to ten or by asking the simplistic question 'how satisfied are you with your job?' Rubery *et al.* (1994:227) note how high satisfaction scores for part-time workers have led researchers to address issues of satisfaction in a more complex way. Rather than using a single measure of job satisfaction, the SCELI survey employed a

more sophisticated analysis, which involved asking several indirect questions in order to uncover job satisfaction. These questions differ from previous surveys in that they tap preferences as a way of interpreting job satisfaction. Questions such as these provide a more complex picture of respondents' job satisfaction and go some way towards providing an understanding of the reasons for part-timers' high levels of satisfaction with their (mostly low level) jobs. One example of such a question is to ask the respondent if s(he) would change jobs if there were plenty available: only 32 per cent of female part-time workers said they would change their job if there were plenty available, compared to 40 per cent of male and female full-timers[59] (Rubery *et al.* 1994:228). Burchell *et al.* (1994:321) do not use this as further evidence of part-timers' high satisfaction with their jobs. Rather, they conclude the greater commitment of part-timers to their current job may be due to their awareness of the few opportunities to improve their job position and the importance of their domestic commitments in determining their labour market behaviour.

Rubery *et al.* (1994) argue that female part-time workers express high levels of satisfaction with their jobs as they are aware of the constraints placed upon them. They know what jobs are available to them and that employers have preconceived ideas about their femininity etc. which influences the jobs they are likely to be considered for. These ideas are reinforced by state policies and ideology (Burchell and Rubery 1994). As these women are primarily housewives and mothers, they have no option but to pursue jobs which fit in with their domestic commitments;

> High scores of satisfaction may reflect nothing more than relief that they are not confined to the home and cannot be taken as evidence of unconcern about their down-graded job position (Rubery *et al.* 1994:228).

Nonetheless, Rubery *et al.* (1994:228) demonstrate that in spite of this, a 'potentially significant level of discontent' exists among the part-time labour force: only 36 per cent of part-timers said their current job was their best job so far, compared to 50 per cent of male and female full-time workers.

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[59] The respondents who said they would change their job were asked whether they would seek a change of employer, occupation or both. Nearly all (91 per cent) of the part-timers who wished to change their jobs said they would change their occupation compared to under two-thirds of full-time workers. By contrast, full-time workers were more likely than part-timers to want to change their employer - over four-fifths compared to under two-thirds (Burchell *et al.* 1994:321). This underlines the downward occupational mobility many women suffer when taking part-time jobs.

The women in the sample were asked a whole range of questions about their jobs covering both extrinsic aspects (such as hours, pay and social relations at work - see chapter five) and intrinsic aspects of the job[60] (e.g. the nature of the work). After a lengthy discussion of these issues, the women were asked if they were satisfied with their job (it is important to ask questions on satisfaction in sequence thereby getting the respondent to reflect at length over aspects of his/her job before asking if s(he) is satisfied. Fagan 1997:226-7). The women in the sample were employed as checkout operators or general assistants, consequently the work content was similar across the three case study companies. The work offered little by way of autonomy, stimulation, expressivity and prestige, but nonetheless, some women enjoyed their jobs as they found them interesting and varied, and gained satisfaction from helping customers. Only six women expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs, with the majority of interviewees initially replying they were satisfied. However, of the satisfied women, less than a third (13 interviewees) were fully satisfied with the nature of their work while over two-thirds (31 women) were critical of the nature of the work. These women did not enjoy the work they did and would prefer other jobs but were unable to change jobs at present as they were constrained by domestic commitments.

The 13 women who were fully satisfied with their jobs expressed both job satisfaction (satisfaction with the work[61]) and employment satisfaction (satisfaction with being in paid employment). These women enjoyed their work for several reasons. Most of these women found their work interesting. For example, one checkout operator said she enjoyed learning about all the different products. The only time these women found their jobs boring was when it wasn't busy. Some of these women mentioned that they enjoyed the varied nature of their jobs (these women felt

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[60] As noted in the previous chapter, Dex (1988:11) defines intrinsic satisfaction as being 'gained from the context of the work and from a degree of self-fulfilment in it'. See also Martin and Roberts (1984:72).

[61] Regarding the actual work itself, data from the 1991 BHPS (Warren, Forthcoming) show that 82 per cent of female part-time workers are satisfied with the work they do compared to 80 per cent of female full-timers. However, as may be expected, there is a striking difference between part-time professional and part-time manual employees' satisfaction with work itself: 92 per cent of part-time professional workers were satisfied with their work compared to 79 per cent of part-time manual workers. The figures for full-time professional and manual part-timers are 86 and 78 per cent respectively.

fortunate in that they were 'multi-skilled' and had been trained to work on departments other than their own). For others, responsibility was a key factor in their satisfaction with their work, while other women mentioned that they were familiar with all aspects of their job. For example, when asked if she was satisfied with her job, Jacqui Woods (a general assistant) replied;

> Yes... Knowing that I don't have to go asking anybody all the time what to do, and no-one's on my back telling me to do this, do that. I can just get on with it and I'm left alone to do it.

Clearly, although some women enjoyed the responsibility offered by the job while they were in work, one woman was satisfied with her job as she did not need to 'take work home';

> ...I don't come home with any pressures, and I'm not thinking of what I'm going to do at work tomorrow... It's something what I do, and I come home, and I've got another life. But a lot of people take things different, don't they? They bring it home with 'em. Like we.. we don't talk about work when we're at home, so, I think that's sort of one good thing (Geraldine Martin).

Satisfaction was also gained from the appreciation shown by customers, for example, when ordering stock or packing groceries;

> I get a kick out of customers saying to me 'Thank you for being helpful', you. know? And 'We'll come back to you next week' and 'Thank you for helping us with the children', or the packing of the stuff, 'cos I pack bags the way I like my stuff packed, and not just thrown in... (Pam Bailey).

Several women told how customers used the same till every week, thus building up relationships. Indeed, one woman had received a Christmas present from a regular customer! These women put a great deal of care and effort into their work, which resulted in a return on job satisfaction;

> Me personally, I know that I do my job to the full. I do it well. That gives me satisfaction... (Julie Bates).

As would be expected, this group of women were the least likely of the three groups of women to say that they would change their job if there were plenty available. Various extrinsic reasons were given for this,

> No, not now I've got the children. It fits in fine for what I want, to be with these (Jacqui Woods).

> No, 'cos it suits - I sound like an old woman don't I?! Stuck in her ways! (laughs). It suits everything, it's near. I don't have to catch buses... Yea, yea it's near and everything fits so, you know, I can't fault it really (Geraldine Martin).

> I'd probably stick to what I was doing because of my age, because an awful lot of companies won't take you on at my age [61], where as Alldays don't mind.

> So long as you can do the job at Alldays you can go on and on and on (Pam Bailey).

> No, I'd sooner stay at Cheaper DIY, 'cos you get more perks. A lot of places you go to work, you don't get the same perks as you do at Cheaper DIY, with your [store] card (Lisa Wark).

However, although highly satisfied with their current job, three women said they would like to be promoted if they had the opportunity (this will be discussed in section 6.2).

An important method by which interviewees assess whether they are satisfied with their current situation is to compare this with their previous employment experiences. After reflecting on their previous jobs, most of these women (10 interviewees), said their current job was the best job they had ever had. For the most part, this group of women had never been employed in jobs higher up the occupational structure. As Jean Paisley said;

> ...the factory jobs were very very tiring, they were really hard work. You were working like in temperatures of 98 degrees constantly... ...It's a firm that'll look after you better, I think, pension wise, so you do feel a little bit more settled there, and it's a permanent job hopefully, you know, so yea, I think so, I think Cheaper DIY's about the best one I've had up to now.

Also, we see how the women locate their satisfaction in domestic constraints. For example, in arriving at a decision of which was the best job she had ever had, Geraldine Martin's response highlights the importance which 'fitting in' with the family has on job satisfaction. She begins by discussing her first job on leaving school as a wages clerk;

> When I was doing wages, I thought that was the best one because I worked full-time and it fitted in with my life and everything about it [Geraldine withdrew from the labour market to have children and then re-entered as a pub cleaner]. Then when I started to do the cleaning at the pub, that fitted in, 'cos of the girls at school (in the holidays they could just come with me so that was all right). Then when I started at Alldays, that fitted in, and now I've like extended me hours, it fits in with, like me situation as it is now. So they've all been good, depending on whatever, whatever's come up really, and as the girls have got older, this one's, you know, the best, I think...

Thus, as well as enjoying the nature of the work, these women also expressed employment satisfaction. Additionally, the women spoke about the convenience of their jobs, as they were close to home and fitted in well with domestic commitments.

The majority of women (31 interviewees), initially said they were satisfied with their jobs, but on probing it emerged that these women expressed reservations

about their jobs. These women differed from the previous group of women who were totally satisfied with their jobs, as they did not enjoy the work itself. For the most part, this group of women found the routine nature of the jobs boring and unstimulating;

> With the computerised scanners, it's so boring. If you didn't have the customers, you know, to talk to, I'd just commit suicide I think. Because all you're doing is scanning. You can do it with your eyes closed as long as you hear that bleeper going... It's not that I'm particularly intelligent, it's just that if you think you're doing eight hours on that job, just doing that, you know, it'd make anybody insane (Laura Boot).

These women dislike the lack of responsibility. For example, in her previous employment, Pat Rice had been an office manager, supervising 36 people. She enjoyed the demanding nature of this job and complained about the lack of responsibility in her current job. Pat expressed a preference to be responsible for a small section of the department she worked on;

> ...if I could concentrate on that part, and do my job on that part of hardware, like I say, cleaning, facing up, yes, fair enough. But on *my* section. I'd love to do that - keeping all the stock up to date, yes, doing the ordering... If I could be 100 per cent responsible for that section and nobody else touch it, I would know then, that it was done to my satisfaction, then yes, I would be happy with it. I can leave work today and everything on that part is nice. I can come in. tomorrow and it's a complete mess and I've got to start again. I don't seem to be getting anywhere with it. *It's just doing the same thing every day.*

Many women felt they were capable of doing a more challenging job. For example, Gill Pearson worked on the pizza section in Bradleys. Previous to this, she had worked on the customer service desk, but changed jobs to obtain more suitable hours (her childcare arrangements changed). When asked if she was satisfied with her job she replied;

> It's all right, but I prefer Customer Service. It's a bit boring, making pizzas up.. It's not a strain on me in any way and I achieve more if I'm pushed to the limit, and that's what I like. It's just like a brain dead job really (sic) ...I'd like more responsibility...

Several women were dissatisfied with their jobs as they felt their work did not achieve anything. These women commented that there was no 'end product' from their work, and nothing to show for their effort;

> I'm not sort of in a classroom teaching children, and looking at those children at the end of five years or so, walking out the school with their qualifications in their hand, and thinking 'I played a part in that'. But I don't have that job satisfaction, no. Putting out the same bloody teapot every week, no, I don't have that job satisfaction... (Monica Jordan).

Other women expressed dissatisfaction with poor relationships between management and employees, saying there was a 'bad atmosphere' in their workplace (this will be explored further in chapter eight).

The key point to note about this group of women is that they illustrate how women are often prepared to 'trade off' intrinsic satisfaction (i.e. satisfaction with the work itself) for extrinsic aspects of the job (i.e. the 'convenience' of the job). On the one hand then, these women were dissatisfied with the work they performed, yet on the other hand they were satisfied with their jobs as they were close to home and meant they were able to combine raising a family with earning money. For example when asked if she was satisfied with her job, Marie Peters replied;

> In the extent that it pays for what I need, yea, but not as a job, no. I'd like to go back to VDU operating.

Similarly, Nicola Wilton said;

> Well I wouldn't say I hate it, but I don't particularly enjoy it. I wouldn't use the word enjoy. I just do it because I need to, because it's money. But I wouldn't say I love the job, and I can't say I'm gonna be here for the rest of me life.

The importance of these jobs then, were that they 'fit in' with the family;

> At the moment I'm quite happy with the job, because it fits in round me. You know, I'm not really putting myself out for the job, the job's doing it for me... I suppose really if the jobs were better, and I could fit the hours round the children, I would have probably gone somewhere else. I would never have dreamt of going to a shop... (Linda Steele).

Thus, although these women do not enjoy their work, they express satisfaction with their overall employment stating their jobs are 'OK for now'.

Many of these women said they would prefer to be employed in different and more meaningful jobs if these were available, but went on to say this was not possible as they did not posses the necessary qualifications and / or were constrained by their childcare commitments. Where as the majority of women who were fully satisfied with their jobs felt their current job was the best job they had ever had, only four of these women agreed with this. Many of the women in this group had previously been employed in low level non-manual occupations. For these women, their current job was 'only for the time being' - they were either currently looking for a 'better' job, or planned to change jobs when they no longer had childcare constraints. However, several women found it difficult to say which was the best job

they had ever had and the quote from Monica Jordan brings home the reality that some of these women had spent their whole lives in low-level jobs; 'I haven't had a best job... They're just everyday, ordinary jobs, you know?'

The third group of women (six interviewees) also disliked their work, mentioning similar reasons as the women discussed above. However, while the women in the second group were prepared to 'trade off' boring jobs for convenience, the third group of women were not. These women did not see their current jobs as 'OK for now'. Rather, they were deeply unhappy with the types of jobs they were doing and were currently looking for alternative work. Several of these women mentioned they felt trapped in their current jobs. Three of these women had children whom they considered old enough to be responsible for themselves, hence their employment no longer suited their domestic commitments. In light of this, it seemed to be the case that these women *could no longer bear* their current jobs. Two of the women had updated their clerical skills at night school and were currently looking for full-time jobs as clerical workers, but had so far been unsuccessful in finding work. Three of the women did not have in mind a particular job, but regularly scanned the newspapers in the hope of finding more challenging work (either full- or part-time);

> Me intention wasn't to stay at Bradleys, me intention was to tide me over until I found something else, but there's just nothing else to do. There's nowhere else to go. Well, there hasn't been. Now that the girls are older I'm thinking of going into shift work, so... I'll see how it goes. But having said that like, I've been looking for two and a half years and there's nothing (Adele Rodgers).

However, Adele Rodgers describes the problems which she faced;

> I think a lot of the time what stops me applying for these jobs is, well, it could be that they're too far away and I've got to travel (travelling time and travel expenses). It could be that it's full-time hours and I don't particularly want full-time hours unless the job was absolutely fantastic. It could be that the wages are slightly lower than what I'm getting - I don't want to take a drop in wages. And then another time I'll look at one [a job] and basically those three things are all right, but I'll look at it and it'll say 'Word for Windows' and I haven't got it.

The remaining woman had been accepted to start a teacher training degree and planned to leave her job when she got her grant.

The research reported here builds upon the quantitative data reported from the SCELI surveys (Burchell *et al.* 1994; Rubery *et al.* 1994). This section has shown that the majority of female part-time manual workers are not completely satisfied with their jobs. Indeed, very few women were fully satisfied with their work and

found it interesting and stimulating. For the majority of women who initially expressed satisfaction with their jobs, these jobs were mundane and did not challenge them, but provided them with the opportunity to combine work and family life. These women then, were 'making the best of a bad job'. Although they would have preferred alternative employment, they were either trapped by their low levels of qualifications or were unable to switch jobs until their children were older. It has become clear that it is necessary that when talking about 'job satisfaction' interviewees take into account all aspects of their job, and accept that it is necessary to forgo challenging work for 'convenience'. Thus, the research has highlighted that there are different dimensions to job satisfaction and it is necessary to distinguish between the satisfaction of being employed and the satisfaction of a particular job.

6.2 Employment Commitment and Orientations to Work

Various commentators have made the distinction between employment commitment and organizational commitment. For example, Tam (1997:173) defines employment commitment as a normative attitude towards wage work; 'A person who is strongly committed to wage work would regard his or her work role as central to his or her sense of self and a primary source of personal identity'. Organizational commitment is 'dependent on the actual work conditions in a specific employing organization' (see also Gallie and White 1993). Employment commitment is usually measured in surveys by assessing the respondent's preference for paid work if financial necessity was removed. For example, the data from the SCELI survey and the more recent *Employment in Britain* survey are based on whether or not interviewees would wish to work if they had enough money to live as comfortably as they would like for the rest of their life (the question designed to tap employment commitment in the British Social Attitudes Surveys differs slightly. This asks whether respondents would prefer to have a paid job even if they had 'a reasonable income' and elicits higher proportions of employment commitment[62]. Gallie *et al.* 1998:189).

Table 6.1 shows non-financial employment commitment over the period 1981-1992. The data indicate that employment commitment has remained stable for

[62] For British Social Attitudes survey data see Hedges (1994).

men over the last decade (in 1981, 69 per cent of men were committed to work compared to 68 per cent in 1992) and increased for female full-time workers (from 65 per cent to 69 per cent). However, the employment commitment of female part-time workers' has seen by far the greatest increase, from 51 per cent in 1981 to 64 per cent in 1992. Therefore, levels of employment commitment between full- and part-time workers are now roughly equal. Fagan (1997:231) argues that the increase in female part-timers' commitment to work is due to material and ideological changes which have 'normalised' maternal (part-time) employment:

> These forces for change include the post-war expansion of education, service sector employment opportunities for women and rising consumption aspirations; improved contraception; the political and normative influence of second-wave feminism and other equality movements in the 1960s and 1970s; and the pressures of meeting consumption standards in light of the decline in men's real wage levels with the onset of high unemployment from the 1970s.

Table 6.1 Non-financial employment commitment, 1981-1992 (cell %)

	1981 (SAPU)	1986 (SCELI)	1992 (Employment in Britain)
Men	69	67	68
Women	60	62	67
Women full-time	65	63	69
Women part-time	54	59	64

Source: Gallie *et al.* (1998:189).

Hakim bases her work orientations thesis on non-financial employment commitment, using the 'lottery' question as a proxy for the work ethic (see Rose 1988, for a detailed discussion of the work ethic). Even though full- and part-time employees now have similar levels of employment commitment, Hakim (1997:43) argues that women who work full-time have qualitatively different work orientations to women who work part-time. While full-timers are committed to their career, part-timers are committed to their jobs. Hakim sees that women choose to work part-time because they have primarily home-centred orientations and low commitment to work. Part-timers then are more interested in 'convenience factors' associated with their job such as their ability to socialise at work, their hours, and journey to work (Hakim 1991:108). Thus, their families and domestic commitments are more important to them than their jobs, and they have a clear preference for the 'home-maker' role. These women lack a long-term commitment to their jobs and drift in and out of employment.

Rose (1994b:290) has questioned the usefulness of the 'lottery question' as an indicator of work commitment and criticises Hakim for using the 'lottery question' as a proxy for the work ethic as a whole, arguing that it does not necessarily indicate work commitment: people who do not need a job may work for other reasons such as ambition, habit or boredom. Thus, Rose uses the 'lottery' question in conjunction with two other measures, thereby creating a total summary score for measuring the work ethic (questions which tap self-esteem and if the respondent thinks of his/her current job as a career). Other commentators have criticised Hakim for using working-time status as an indicator of employment commitment (Fagan 1997:235; Warren and Walters 1998). Fagan (1997:235) suggests that employment commitment is produced by a complex range of experiences, so a single proxy is simplistic[63].

In order to provide a qualitative analysis of orientations to work I incorporate women's non-financial employment commitment and their desire for promotion / a career. It is also useful to take past employment experiences into account and assess how these experiences relate to the women's future plans and preferences. A small group of involuntary workers who worked for financial reasons were found to exist. The remaining women were divided into two categories, according to their work orientation. These consist of a group of women who are similar to Hakim's 'Modern Homemakers' and a group of women who have more ambitious orientations to work. As well as possessing non-financial employment commitment, these women had long-term employment plans and/or a desire for promotion.

There were eight involuntary workers in the sample who worked purely from economic necessity. These women made a vital contribution to the household finances. For example, Marie Peters had three children aged between one and 11. Her husband was a gardener employed by the local authority and her wage paid their loan repayments. Another woman needed to work to ensure a regular income came into the household as her husband was self-employed. These women did not identify with paid employment as a source of identity. Given the opportunity they all expressed a

[63] Fagan (1997:235) argues that working-time status is not an adequate indicator of employment commitment, and suggests that occupational status may be more useful. Her analysis of EOC data showed that female part-timers in managerial and professional jobs have higher levels of employment commitment than part-timers and full-timers in lower status jobs.

preference to be full-time home-makers (however, this was not to say that these women did not express organizational commitment). Two of these women had children of independent age and were both approaching retirement age. It can therefore be argued that their reasons for desiring a full-time home-maker role are self-explanatory (for a discussion of the decline in employment commitment in later life see Gallie 1998:192-3; Fagan 1997:235). The case of the remaining six younger women is more interesting. These women had dependant children and expressed a preference to spend more time with their family;

> If I didn't need to work, I wouldn't work at all. I'd just 'wanna be with the children all of the time. It wouldn't bother me (Marie Peters, aged 37).

> I always wanted to get married and have kids and that really is the most important bit to me. You know, jobs are... I mean, the money's nice, but I'm not... As long as I've got me family, I just don't like work. I mean, I like the job, I just don't like working. (Says to child -) 'We don't think Mummy should have to, do we?' No, I'd rather be at home with the kids (Jacqui Woods, aged 32).

As the question whether interviewees would prefer to give up paid employment is hypothetical, it is interesting to examine the women's desire for promotion and future employment plans as a way of understanding orientations to work. The six younger women did not desire promotion in their current jobs saying that all they wanted to do was go into work, serve the customers and go home[64]. Regarding future plans, the women either planned to stay in their current jobs, or move into different (and sometimes full-time) occupations e.g. clerical work. Clearly then, these women had low commitment to paid employment at this stage in their lives. However, it is possible that the work orientations of some of these women may change over the life cycle, as they move away from the family formation period. For example, one of these women said that she would stay out of paid work until her youngest child went to secondary school.

The second group of women (24 interviewees) match Hakim's 'Modern Home-makers'. Where as the involuntary women discussed above preferred not to be in paid work, this group of women would still go to work even if they didn't need to. These women worked because they enjoyed the social nature of their jobs;

> I like going to work. I don't think I'd like to stay at home all day on me own (Betty Parkin).

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[64] The 1980 Women and Employment Survey showed that 34 per cent of female part-time workers desired promotion compared to 60 per cent of female full-timers (Martin and Roberts 1984:53).

> I think I'd go cuckoo in here [at home]. I really would. I love being with the girls though, I just think it's brilliant. We have such a good time (Greta Roberts).

Nonetheless, a substantial number of women said they would change the type of job they did for more meaningful employment if they were not constrained by the need to earn money (several women expressed a preference for voluntary work);

> If there was another job available, I would [change]. If there was any jobs connected with children, I'd have a go.. Any jobs connected with the kids, or the welfare, or if there was fostering or to do with the human side of anything, you know something like that, or something just like talking to people, talking to people that maybe can't read or, you know, or can't do something... ...if I ever won any money I'd work voluntary. If I had the money, that's what I'd do... *I'd do something that I wanted to do...* (Margaret Watson).

Thus, although Hakim has painted a picture of 'Modern-Homemakers' as a highly satisfied segment of the labour force, this was not the case with the interviewees in the sample. There was no clear pattern between women who were highly satisfied with their jobs and employment commitment.

What distinguishes this group of women from the third category is that while the women with more ambitious orientations plan to seek demanding jobs and/or promotion once their children are older, modern home-makers do not;

> There's a lot of people are very ambitious in their life, and they want a goal, and they strive on and they strive on. I'm not that ambitious. I'm quite happy. If I'm bringing home a wage at the end of the month, that I can buy my daughter a pair of shoes that she wants or say for Christmas, they've made their Christmas list out, you know like, if I can buy the things they want that's fine for me, you know? I'm happy doing that... (Julie Bates).

Thus, these women do not have long-terms goals with regard to their employment, yet this is not to say they do not have employment plans (some women hoped to work full-time when their children were old enough to be responsible for themselves). These women said they would not like to be promoted, with the most commonly mentioned reason for this being that the women wouldn't like to take on the responsibility;

> I'm quite happy the way I am. The more promotion you get, the more responsibility you get, and the more hassle you get. I know you get the pay, but I don't think the pay gives you as much happiness, as what you'd be if you were left... *At least you can go home and forget about it* - higher up you can't (Rita Marsh).

Several of the women in their forties and above mentioned that they had experienced jobs with high levels of responsibility over the course of their working lives, but no longer wanted this pressure. For example, Kate Dobson (age 46 with

two children aged 10 and 27) who had previously been employed as an area manager for a chain of shoe shops said;

> I'm quite happy doing what I do. Basically because of what I've done in the past, you know? It's nice not to have all that... I mean, it was a nice job when I did it, and I did enjoy it, but sometimes you're working like seven days, you know? And the pressure's always there... To think back now... No, I don't want to go back to that pressure...

Similarly, Betty Parkin (aged 55 with one daughter aged 24) who had previously been responsible for Quality Assurance in a clothing firm which employed 80 people said;

> To me, I've had my day - I had my promotion. I was ambitious and I got what I wanted, and I'm quite happy now to let someone else have their ambition and get promoted. I'm easy and quiet as I am now. I like me job and I like me times and I like me wage and I'm quite happy...

According to Hakim then, all women who work part-time possess a 'purely instrumental' orientation to work. This is certainly the case with the 'Modern-Homemakers' discussed above, but there are a third group of women in the sample (18 interviewees) who fall into another category. This third group of women have more ambitious work orientations. These women gain a certain amount of satisfaction from employment (though not necessarily from their current job) and would not like to give it up. They talk about work as a source of personal achievement and as an opportunity to prove themselves, with several women mentioning how they miss the responsibility experienced in their former jobs. These women desire promotion or a switch to a different occupation (either now or in the future) which would provide them with a challenge. Other women planned to return to education to gain qualifications to enable them to get a 'better' job;

> I'd like to further me education, and train for something and get some qualifications. At the moment I haven't got any. It's just really, I suppose, just after Rosie was born (I got caught with Rosie when Richard'd just started school), then I wanted to train to be social worker. ...I think I would like to have done that, and I think in a way, I'd still like to do something on the grounds like that. I just want more qualifications. *I think I've wasted me life really, to what I could have done* (Gill Pearson).

Indeed, a small number of these women would rather have been working full-time but were constrained by their children. These women planned to change jobs or occupations once their children are of an age to look after themselves, however they are constrained by their current stage in the family life cycle. Most notably then, many of these women state that their jobs are OK for now, as they allow them to combine motherhood and employment. For example, Mandy Tompkins had two children aged two and six. She had previously been employed as a department

manager in the supermarket where she worked, but asked to be demoted when she felt unable to continue juggling her childcare arrangements. She planned to become a part-time manager again when her youngest child reached primary school age to switch to full-time work when her children get a bit older.

This section has discussed the use of the 'lottery' question as a proxy for employment commitment. Where this method fails is that it does not differentiate between different types of commitment. The qualitative research reported here has gone some way towards tapping the women's *level* of employment commitment. At least three types of work orientations were found to exist. Firstly the involuntary workers, secondly the 'home-makers' who would continue working because they value the social aspect of work, and thirdly another group of women who had more ambitious orientations to work. These women would remain in paid employment because they want to 'achieve' something at work. Apart from personal preferences then, orientations to work depend on age and stage in the family life cycle.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter began by addressing the paradox of part-time workers' high levels of satisfaction with their low-level jobs. It emerged that when probing qualitatively, part-timers are not as satisfied as the survey data suggest. Few women were fully satisfied with their jobs, with the majority of women stating that their jobs were 'OK for now'. Most of these women would have preferred to be employed in different and more meaningful jobs if they had the choice and/or necessary qualifications. Thus, when (and if) these women express satisfaction with their jobs, it may be because the job fits in well with the family and is allowing them to get through what is a difficult period in their working lives. The key point to emerge from the analysis is that women take into account a number of constraints on their working lives when arriving at an expression of job satisfaction. Thus, the research highlights the processes behind women's assessment of their job satisfaction, and it becomes clear that the women are 'satisficing' — to use Crompton and Harris's term (1998a) - rather than truly satisfied with their jobs.

The chapter also examined the part-timers' orientations to work, and showed how there is no clear relationship between job satisfaction and work orientation - it is not the case that all of the 'Modern Home-makers' were satisfied with their work. From this small sample of women in low-level jobs we see that female part-timers are not a homogeneous group with the same attitudes and orientations to work. In addition to this group of women, it would be interesting to study the work orientations of female full-timers, women in higher level jobs and women without children so that we may begin to gain a more complete understanding of women's work orientations.

7 Past and Current Trade Union Biographies

The previous chapter examined the women's level of satisfaction with their jobs and their orientations to employment. The findings contribute to the existing research in this area by showing that this group of female part-timers in low level jobs are not as highly satisfied with their jobs as survey data have suggested. Rather, they are more likely to express their satisfaction in terms of the constraints which operate on their working lives. With regard to orientations to work, the chapter showed that female part-time workers are not a homogeneous group. At least three groups of women were found to exist. A small number of women were involuntary workers, who would prefer not to be in paid employment, another group resembled Hakim's 'homemakers' (Hakim 1991, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1997, 1998a, 1998b), while a third group of women had more ambitious orientations to work. These women differ from the latter group of women in that they have long-term goals for their future employment and plan to get promoted or gain more qualifications in the future. The key finding of the chapter was that female part-time workers do not have low commitment to work. Having outlined the women's work histories in chapter four and their orientations and attitudes to work in chapters five and six, I am now able to begin to explore their attitudes towards trade unions.

Recent survey data show that female part-time workers are less likely than female full-time workers to be trade union members even when they have the opportunity to join a union (for 1986 SCELI data see Sinclair 1995; for 1991 BHPS data see Warren, Forthcoming). Various explanations can be used to account for this which are outlined in chapter two. This chapter focuses on female part-time workers' past and current trade union membership in order to understand their attitudes towards trade unions. Several commentators have used quantitative work history data to identify patterns and trends in union membership (see Disney *et al.* 1998; Elias 1996). However, in order to understand attitudes towards trade unions more fully, it is useful to explore past experiences of trade unionism using work history data. This

allows us to uncover the influence which these experiences may have on attitudes towards trade unions.

The chapter is organised in three sections. It begins by discussing the women's past trade union membership and the types of jobs they were employed in during their time as union members. The majority of interviewees had some experience of trade unions from their previous employment, as either union member or a non-member in an organized workplace. A substantial number of interviewees recounted experiences of industrial action and a small number of women had been trade union representatives in their previous jobs. The second part of the chapter examines the women's current union membership status. Reasons for membership and non-membership are explored in the two organized companies, while the unorganized case study provides useful data on favourability to unionise. Section three concludes.

7.1 Past Experience of Trade Unions

Just over half (30 out of 50) of the women had belonged to a trade union in one or more of their previous jobs. They had generally been in permanent employment in industries and sectors traditionally associated with high union density rates e.g. the public sector utilities or local authority (as home-helps, 'dinner ladies' and cleaners) or in private sector banks, insurance companies and factories. Unsurprisingly then, the likelihood of having been a trade union member depends on the types of jobs which these women had been employed in previously. Aside from the importance of industrial group, unionization also depended on whether this employment was in the public / private sector, on the size of the company or workplace and on factors such as whether the employee was temporary or permanent (this links to the structural explanations for trade union membership discussed in chapter two).

Around one-third of these interviewees who had experienced trade union membership in their previous employment had belonged to a trade union in the majority of their jobs for the majority of their working life. For example, Margaret Watson had been a union member for most of her working life. Her first job on

leaving school was in a small shop where there was no trade union yet she went on to be a trade union member in all of her subsequent jobs: printing factory, bakery, engineering factory, two food processing plants, stocking factory and large department store. Similarly, Mary Smith did not belong to a trade union in her first job as a dental nurse, but was a union member in both of her subsequent jobs (as a clerk at the Gas board and as a 'dinner lady'). The remaining two-thirds of those with past trade union membership had more discontinuous trade union histories, moving in and out of union membership as they changed jobs. These women were less likely to have spent the majority of their working lives in highly unionised occupations and industries. For example, Marie Peters' first job on leaving school was in the offices of a large department store (which did not recognise a trade union). She then worked at a catalogue firm where she was a trade union representative after which she left the labour market to have children. Marie re-entered employment as a part-time kitchen hand in a private hospital, then worked Saturdays on a market stall. She then worked in tele-sales for a bank before taking her current job in Bradleys. Apart from her union membership at the catalogue firm, Marie did not re-start her union membership until she entered her current job.

A smaller number of interviewees (seven women) had been employed in an organized workplace in the past but had not been trade union members. It was not the case that these women had negative attitudes towards trade unions but rather, they had not been approached by the union in their respective workplaces. Four of these women were clerical workers in factories (the trade union was for shop floor staff and hence the women were not asked to join). Two were temporary workers and one women was employed on a youth training scheme. Nonetheless, despite the fact that none of these women had belonged to a union, some were knowledgeable of the issues surrounding trade unionism as the shop floor workers had been on strike or suffered redundancies.

The remaining interviewees (13 women) had no experience of trade unions in their previous jobs. For the most part, these women had been employed in a variety of jobs in the service sector e.g. in shop work, hotels and restaurants, which have especially low levels of unionisation. For example, Gill Pearson's first job on leaving

school was as a chamber maid. She then worked in a small grocery shop before taking another job as a chamber maid. She worked as a receptionist in her next two jobs (for a taxi firm and a doctor's surgery).

Age (or perhaps more accurately, generation) appears to be a significant factor with regard to whether the interviewees had belonged to a trade union in their previous jobs, with the older interviewees being more likely to have past trade union membership than the younger women[65]. For example, of the women aged 35 or over, 72 per cent had been a union member in a previous job compared to 39 per cent of women under 35. This is because on the whole, the two groups of women took different jobs due to structural changes in the labour market. Although the distinction is not clear, there seems to be a pattern whereby a substantial proportion of the younger interviewees had been employed in jobs with typically low levels of union density such as sales and personal service work, while the older women were more likely to have worked in traditionally unionized industries such as manufacturing and the public sector.

Over one in four of the interviewees who had been employed in organized workplaces had first hand experience of disputes or industrial action. For example, the clerical workers who had not belonged to a trade union had witnessed the (mainly) male shopfloor workers take industrial action;

> When there was the strikes and things like that, we just went through. They just let us through - all the women, everybody went in, you know? And the men didn't sort of say... they didn't give you names and things like that, it was just something that we weren't in, so we went through (Geraldine Martin).

A small number of the interviewees who were union members had been actively involved, for example by taking (successful) strike action;

> We came out on strike in [hospital]. It was over short staff and things like that. Yea, we all came out on strike and the management had to do all the meals and things. We had picket lines and things... (Trisha Stewart, former kitchen hand in a hospital).

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[65] Disney *et al.* (1998:i-ii) analysed retrospective longitudinal data from the Family and Working Lives Survey[65] (FWLS) since the mid-1970s and found that the probability of union membership decreased for respondents in younger cohorts. They examined the work and trade union histories of men born between 1950 and 1954 and found that approximately 55 per cent of these became union members on entering the labour market compared to 35 per cent of men born between 1965-1969. Disney *et al.* point out that this is a cohort, not age effect i.e. union participation would not increase with age.

> We did actually do a few stops. We did walk outs. I think it was like three months... We did one a month and we wouldn't do overtime on a Saturday and things like that (Linda Steele, former bank clerk).

> There was a strike in Dunlop when I was there. I think it was only like a three day strike and then things got sorted through the union and they got what they wanted so we went back to work (Barbara Soar, former factory worker).

Some women had experienced more confrontational action than others. Jean Paisley told how she was on maternity leave while her fellow colleagues took strike action;

> There was flying pickets and everything outside, it was horrendous... Not many went in, because there was hundreds there, stopping 'em, and spitting on 'em. They were coming in coaches. It were terrible, they reckon (Jean Paisley, former mill worker).

The majority of women who had belonged to a trade union in a previous job had positive recollections of their experiences. They spoke of union gains and triumphs, and how the union 'got things done';

> They got the rises... They also got our time... Like I say, I used to start at half seven but then they fetched the time forward and by the time I left I was starting at eight o'clock. So, things like that... And then we only had half an hour for our lunch and they got us an hour for lunch... (Betty Parkin, former machinist).

> ...Once, the girls felt a bit of a chill and that was it, they [the union] shut the factory down... Gave us all hot cups of tea in the canteen for an hour, got hot blowers to warm up the factory and then let us all back in again (Liz Nish,. former factory worker).

Nonetheless, some women were critical of the unions in their former workplace(s). For example, Linda Steele, who had previously been employed as a part-time bank clerk told how new terms and conditions were introduced in detriment to the part-time workforce. Her complaint was that the union did more for the full-time workers;

> ...they didn't really back us up at all. ...They seemed to be beneficial to the people who were there full-time, but the part-timers they didn't really seem to have much to do with us, you know?

In reaction to this, Linda and several of her colleagues opted out of the union. Another woman, Pat Rice, told how she was asked to join the union while working on a temporary contract at a manufacturing company. Although she had been a union member in her previous job, Pat did not wish to sign up to the union as she was only contracted to work for four months (and she did not plan to obtain a permanent contract). Additionally, she was paid less than the permanent employees whom she worked alongside. Consequently, she was 'sent to Coventry'.

Most of the women who had belonged to a trade union in their previous job were what Bradley (1994:44-47) calls 'passive members' i.e. although they participated in some workplace-based activities e.g. by attending on site meetings or voting, they were unwilling to participate in union activities outside working hours[66]. The majority of these women only attended union meetings to discuss issues which directly related to them;

> The only time you went was when it was like pay rises and things like that was discussed. That was only time we ever went to any. ...I was only young when we were there so all's we was interested in was how many weeks holidays you got and how much pay you got. I mean, once we'd heard that, we wasn't interested in anything else... (Claire Hoyle).

These women were not interested in becoming more involved in the union;

> ...by the time I'd finished work, I'd had enough. I wanted to come home, and that was it. And most of these union meetings was always after work (or, you know, sometimes they were in work) but I felt as though once I'd done me work I'd had enough, I just wanted to go home (Claire Hoyle).

> I was just quite content to go and do the job... I just wanted to go and do the job that I was being paid for (Bridget Grey).

However, a smaller number of women had been more interested in the union at their former workplace(s), and regularly attended workplace meetings, sometimes after work. Five of these activists became trade union representatives in their former jobs, gaining satisfaction and enjoyment from their union work;

> I loved it, I loved it. I mean it was a bit of a hassle, but (sighs) I found it so interesting, to see, the way things actually worked...

> When I got to these meetings everybody was like... they treated you exactly the same whether you was male or female, and it was really nice that. You weren't made to feel second best... (Laura Boot).

In their case study of female trade unionists, Ledwith *et al.* (1990:117) found that female activists fall into three age groups: over the age of 40 with children of

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[66] Bradley's (1994:44-47) research revealed four types of passive members: 'Sleepers', 'Consumers', 'Grumblers' and 'Underminers'. 'Sleepers' are the most supportive of the ideals of trade unionism (indeed, some are ex-trade union representatives) and a potential group for trade unions to mobilise. They give reasons such as lack of time, lack of experience and lack of necessity for being inactive. By contrast, the remaining three groups are unlikely to ever become more involved in the union. 'Consumers' view the union as providing a service and have economistic and individualistic views, although they do value the 'backing' and services which the union provides. 'Grumblers' complain that the union is ineffective and tell of incidents of being let down by the union. Likewise, these discontents can be forgotten if the union does them a 'good turn'. The complaints of the final group of passive members, 'Underminers' cannot be appeased. These members are ideologically opposed to unions and do not value their union membership. Bradley sees this group are 'highly individualistic and are opposed to the collectivist stance of unionism: often they support the ideals of the New Right and the enterprise culture'. These members joined under the closed shop because of informal pressure from colleagues.

independent age (73 per cent), under 30 with few family commitments (19 per cent) and a smaller group of women who juggle motherhood with trade union activism[67]. They found three triggers to women's activism: as a result of an injustice (usually management action), a change (e.g. the introduction of new technology or a change in shift patterns) or encouragement from a union official. Ledwith *et al.* categorise female activists into three groups: 'traditional women' who come from a labour movement background, 'Welfarists' - these women are not from strong trade union back-grounds, but had 'usually volunteered themselves for union activism in response to an injustice...', and 'Politically aware women', who 'had often become politicised during their post-school education'... (Ledwith 1990:117).

The reasons why the women in this sample became involved reflect those identified by Ledwith *et al.* (1990). An additional reason to emerge why these women became shop stewards was that 'nobody else wanted to do it'. Eileen Mills became a union representative as a response to 'management's injustice'. When she started her job as a part-time home help, none of the women where she worked belonged to a union. After working there for several years, Eileen and her work mate grew tired of the way their managers dismissed workplace problems;

> ...You'd go down and say that you'd had a very bad case [client], and they'd say 'Well if you don't like it, well, leave,' you know? 'We can always get somebody else to do it'. Their attitude was dreadful...

It was this attitude which prompted Eileen and her colleague to ring the NUPE regional office to enquire how they could join the union;

> ...another woman and I said 'Oh this is silly, we haven't got a leg to stand on'. So we got in touch with the union and we started one there, you know.

Eileen and her work mate then became the union representatives for their group of home helps, effectively sharing the job between them: Eileen went to meetings while the other steward attended the courses. This enabled them to successfully juggle work, union and family (of the five women who had been union representatives in

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[67] See also Cunnison (1987) and Martin and Roberts (1984:56). Family ties then, seem to be an obstacle to women's involvement in unions. Women with dependent children usually wait until their children have grown up before becoming involved in the union; thus, most female activists are over the age of 40 (Stageman, 1980:101). For women then, having a partner and children restricted their participation in the union, while it boosted men's participation (Roby and Uttal, cited in Rees 1990:201). Marital status is also a factor in women's activity in the union - women activists are more likely to be single or divorced than the female membership as a whole (Rees 1990:198).

their former jobs, Eileen was the only woman with children. Hence the remaining four women did not have the same constraints on their time).

Bev Atkinson, a print worker, joined the union when she started her job as the factory was a closed shop[68]. She became a union representative as a response to workplace changes: after working there for five years, redundancies were threatened. Although there was a male shop steward on the section where Bev worked, both herself and her female colleagues felt it important they had a woman to represent their interests (this supports previous research by Pollert 1981: 172-198 and Westwood 1984:73);

> One of the main reasons I took it on, they'd had some sort of redundancy scares leading up to when the actual redundancy came, and that was when we decided we needed a rep and we didn't have one (we had a male rep for our department, and we didn't have a female). A lot of men were older men, and they weren't, you know... 'You're coming to work for pin money' type of thing, you know? 'We're not interested, it's our jobs', you know? So we decided we needed somebody, and nobody wanted to do it, so I said 'Yea, OK, I'll have a go'.

Laura Boot (a bank clerk) became a union representative after being encouraged by the full-time official. Like Bev, Laura was also concerned about women's issues in the workplace and after discussing the lack of promotion opportunities in the bank for women with the trade union officer, she decided to become involved;

> We was talking about promotion and we noticed how many girl managers there was (which there wasn't a lot of) and accountants. In fact in the [bank] I don't think I know any that's gone up there... We got talking how many young lads I'd trained, done my job for say three months, and then [whistles] they were off for three months. Got transferred. And we didn't think it was fair. And that's how we got interested in it, 'cos I'm all one for these... I don't think it's very fair for women...

Another women, Lisa Wark (a sewing machinist) told how she 'got roped into' being the union representative in her former workplace, as nobody else wanted to do it.

While the four women discussed above can all be described as 'Welfarists' (Ledwith *et al.* 1990:117), the fifth woman Marie Peters was more politically aware. She became a trade union representative for over 200 employees while working as a

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[68] The closed shop was weakened by legislation during the early 1980s and finally made unlawful by the 1988 Employment Act (Kessler and Bayliss 1992:257. See also Labour Research 1997:19).

VDU operator at a catalogue firm. When asked why she became a representative, she replied;

> I was interested in things like that then. You had to have a big mouth, you had to be pushy and I was that way. So I thought well, I'll have a go.

Marie, a union representative for over four years, was by far the most experienced of the five women. She attended conferences and courses and had very little time left for the job for which she had been originally been employed;

> My union job took up most of the day, you know? If I sat down to work, there'd always be somebody coming over with a problem...

Union membership was high where Marie worked, and therefore influential;

> I'd say [firm] was practically run by the union, it was so strong. It was a very militant union and if I stood up and said 'Everybody stop what they're doing', they'd stop what they were doing. They would listen to us before they would listen to the boss.

So, why did the women stop being union representatives? It was not the case that these women became less interested in their role, just that circumstances prevented them from continuing with it. Two of the women (Bev and Marie) were made redundant, while Eileen Mills left her job as she was 'fed up with the work'. Laura and Lisa both stayed in their jobs but gave up the role of union representative. Laura gave up her union work on her return to full-time work after taking maternity leave. She felt unable to give the necessary time to her union work, mentioning she would be unable to attend weekend courses now she had a child (this illustrates the point that children and unions do not sit easily alongside each other, and hence why there are few female trade union activists with young children. See Ledwith *et al.* 1990:117). Lisa stopped being the union representative when the union members began to drop out as their employer would not recognise the union;

> Nobody was bothered. I mean they paid their money, but they weren't bothered with anything that was going on. ... I went on holiday and come back and they'd all quit the union...

Interestingly, none of these women became union representatives in their subsequent or current jobs. Indeed, only one of these women (Bev Atkinson) worked in an organized workplace before taking her current job. Bev explained that after experiencing redundancy once, she did not want to jeopardise her employment by becoming a union representative in her new job;

> In Taylor's there was probably some things that happened that I thought 'We shouldn't be doing this' or 'We should complain about this' or things like that, but I think I was off put because of circumstances at the place. It was something

> that - they've never sort of had a strong union type of thing, and things have just drifted along for years, and you didn't feel that you could make a fuss and you were like rocking the boat type of thing and you didn't wanna come across in a small firm as being too militant... I felt that I couldn't make waves. You couldn't be as out spoken as you would have liked to. I mean there was little things, where I thought 'No, sorry, I'm not doing this', but if there was a fuss over... if they wanted you to work late, and it was something that you weren't happy with I just used to say no, rather than confront them... I suppose I shouldn't really do that, but that's the way you felt. *...I think it was because you'd been out of work, and realised that, within the trade, the trade was really deteriorating.*

The remaining women were employed in jobs typically associated with low levels of union membership before taking their current jobs: Eileen worked in a small bakery / cafe, Lisa worked in two nursing homes and Marie did a variety of jobs including working on a market stall. Though four of the women were currently employed in either Alldays or Bradleys and therefore had the opportunity to be a union representative if they so wished, the women gave varied reasons for their non-involvement. These ranged from the store being too big and there being too many members to deal with to the problems of juggling home, work and union.

Apart from the women who were union representatives, two women who regularly attended union meetings in their former jobs were asked to be shop stewards. Although both of these women would have liked to have taken on this role, they worked full-time and had young families: Jean Paisley had two young children and her Grandfather to care for as well as working full-time in a carpet mill. Her husband also worked there, and they managed the child care between them;

> I never had the time really... I just couldn't fit it in. I mean, me husband was doing opposite shifts and I'd got the children, so he was working, and I had me Grandad you see and all this, so I just hadn't got the time.

Angie Buckley, a lone parent with four dependent children, was employed as a full-time bus driver. Although she would have liked to be a union representative, she would have been unable to do this;

> I was already thinking that I was gonna have to leave the job anyway so, I couldn't take it on anyway [Would you have liked to have done that?] Yea, if things would have been different at home, I would have done it, yea, I would have gone for it.

This section has shown that the majority of interviewees with experiences of trade unions had positive evaluations of these experiences. In the main, these women had been union members at a time when unions were strong and able to bargain successfully for their members' claims. Although the majority of women were

'passive members', a small group of women had been active, experienced trade unionists. Having explored the women's past trade union membership, I shall now discuss the women's union status in their current job. What lies behind the women's decision to join or not to join the union in their current workplace?

7.2 Reasons for Union Membership in Current Job

Extensive survey data exists on individuals' reasons for joining / remaining in a trade union (see Gallie 1996; Goldthorpe *et al.* 1968; Guest and Dewe 1988; Hudson *et al.* 1996; Millward 1990). The most recent data collected is that from the 1986 SCELI (Gallie 1996:145). In his analysis of the SCELI data, Gallie explored why people join and remain union members, while others leave. Reasons for initial membership were overwhelmingly due to the closed-shop or informal pressures to join - 41 per cent of employees said this was the reason they initially joined the trade union at their workplace. These same union members were then asked the reasons for their current union membership: only 17 per cent of the sample reported they were members as it was a condition of the job. The remaining respondents remained in union membership for 'protection if problems came up in the future' (41 per cent), 'higher pay and better conditions' (21 per cent), because they believed it was a 'way of creating a more just society' (16 per cent) and because 'everyone else is a member' (three per cent).

Regarding why employees leave a trade union, the majority of respondents (45 per cent) in the SCELI sample said the main reason was due to a change of job to one where there was no trade union at the workplace. Twenty seven per cent of non-members see no benefit in being a trade union member (Gallie points out that these employees could be employed in a workplace where there is an ineffective trade union or in an unorganized workplace and see no point in being a union member), 14 per cent disagree with unions in principle, four per cent said the management were against union membership or that it would jeopardise their job prospects and the remaining 10 per cent gave other reasons (Gallie 1996:171).

Half of the women in the sample (27 interviewees) belonged to a trade union in their current job. These women were employed by Alldays or Bradleys, the two organized workplaces. The other half were non-members, of whom 15 were employed in the unorganized workplace (Cheaper DIY), while the remaining nine women were employed in the organized workplaces. Table 7.1 summarises the earlier and current union membership of the women in the sample. It shows that the majority of women had some experience of trade unions either in their current and / or previous employment. This experience was either as union member or non-union member in an organized workplace. Only six women in the sample had no experience of working in an organized workplace, having been employed in unorganized workplaces in their previous and current employment.

Table 7.1 Current and Past Union Membership

Current union status	Past union membership: Member in organized workplace	Non-member in organized workplace	Unorganized workplace	Total
Member in organized workplace	18	5	4	27
Non-member in organized workplace	5	1	2	8
Unorganized workplace	8	1	6	15
Total	31	7	12	50

Why join the trade union?

Most of the women who currently belonged to a trade union had been members in a previous job, or had worked in an organized workplace. The reasons given by the union members in the sample for joining their workplace union echo those found in the SCELI research (Gallie 1996:145). The main reason was that the union was seen as 'back up';

> ...I just thought, if they've got one, for what you pay, I might as well be in it, and then if something does happen, you've always got the backing of the union (Geraldine Martin).
>
> Well, I just thought of me rights, if anything ever happened to me where you needed the union... (Alison Hibbert).
>
> It was up to you whether you joined or not, but like I've always been in a union so I just joined. But I find like, if you get into trouble or you need help, they're there to go to. It's no use fending for yourself, 'cos they know all the legal stuff, where as if you're on your own, you've had it (laughs) (Rita Marsh).

Although a substantial number of union members in the sample had long service records and had joined the union under the closed shop, they retained their

membership even though they could now opt out of the union. Indeed, as one woman said;

> Even though they've got no power I think it's a good thing to be in the union. Lots of people are dissatisfied and they've opted out. Well then the company's won haven't they, 'cos they've got their way, you know? They want people to come out of the union, that's what they want... (Liz Nish).

Interestingly, none of the women mentioned higher pay / better conditions or 'as a way of creating a more just society' as their reason for union membership. However, a small proportion of women said they joined the union because the majority of the employees were members;

> You know, majority counts, I think. I mean, I don't think you've got a cat in hells' chance of when you're in a minority in such a big place like that, because it's such a big store and there's so many (Jo Loving).

Regular union meetings did not take place in Alldays and Bradleys, thus making it difficult for any potential union activists to become involved in the union[69]. However, the majority of members said they would be willing to attend union meetings held at their workplace[70]. *Other women said they would not attend union* meetings, or would only attend a union meeting if it was to discuss an issue which directly concerned them;

> Basically I'm not interested. If it was something that I needed, then I'd go, but apart from that, there's nothing that... It doesn't interest me at all. [OK. Why doesn't it interest you?] Erm, probably because nothing what I've done'd probably be brought up in a meeting, because I'm quite happy. I think it's only if you've got a grievance that you'd, you know, I'd go, and hopefully try and resolve it (Geraldine Martin).

Although most of the members were willing to attend meetings, becoming a trade union representative did not appeal to the majority of the interviewees. The most common reason for this was that they didn't have the time due to family commitments. Several interviewees in Alldays told how one of the union representatives had given up her union role as she found it difficult to fit her union work round family life;

> ...One of the girls who I work with was a union rep for a while, but she's give it up now... I think it's because you have to go to a lot of the out of hours

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[69] Recent TUC research (TUC 1996:19) found that the key to encouraging part-timers' participation in the union was by creating self sustaining branch organisation (TUC 1996:19).

[70] Arranging meetings at the workplace for part-timers is problematic due to the different shifts and days worked. Unions have dealt with this in a variety of ways. One example is by holding 'rolling meetings' in the workplace. A union officer is on hand all day and members are free to come and go as they start and finish their shifts, raising any issues or obtaining advice and guidance (TUC 1996:20).

> meetings, don't you? And she's got young children herself, so she gave it up (Maureen Oakley).

Other reasons given were that being a representative would create too much work and 'hassle';

> I know people that did do it, like Marie. She got mithered all the time. That was one of the reasons she gave up. She said 'I've just got no peace and quiet', she said, 'Even when I come on me break, there's always somebody wants to ask me something, or me dinner'. She said 'I'm being rung up all the time, and they expect you to go to these meetings all the time, and I've got a family, I can't go'. So I don't think I would like to put meself under that pressure (Laura Boot).

> Me husband done it and like he was a rep for their place for the fitters, and even he'd had enough. He said it was a thankless task, doing it, and I thought well if he's saying it ('cos he's quite... he likes a challenge, you know, to have a go) and I thought if he's packed it in, there'd be no chance for me. I've never fancied it to be honest... (Rita Marsh).

Or simply that they were just not interested in 'things like that';

> [When you say you've never fancied it, why do you think like that?] Erm... there's a lot of petty... Like I know a lot are serious things, but a lot goes petty things, and like if it doesn't go their way [the members], you know, you get the full aggro... It just doesn't appeal to me (Rita Marsh).

> ...It's all politics. And to be honest with you, I'm not really interested in politics, you know? That's it. It's all political (Jo Loving).

> I'm not really a union person and all that. Extremists really I think they are. I mean it's nice to have a body that is working for the workers but I wouldn't like to sort of get involved in it to the extreme. I'm happy with what they offer and that's it (Nicola Wilton).

However, three woman did express an interest in becoming involved in the union, but felt they could not consider becoming a union representative at the moment as they had 'too much on' with their family commitments;

> ...It's having the time, you know? Which when you've got a family you just can't go to sort of like... I know [union representative's] been like sometimes to a couple of days conferences, which she's alright, 'cos she's got old family, but when you've got a younger family, you know, it's just something that you can't do (Pauline Booth).

> People said to me, will you be the union rep? And I really thought about it, and I thought, no. Not because I wouldn't want to do it, but because I think it would involve me family, because maybe you'd have to go... I know [union rep] has to go on courses, and things like that, and I wouldn't wanna do that and be away, 'cos me husband works nights, me son... he's on the same shift. If it run to nights, what would happen to me children? I've got children you know? Me Mum's not in very good health, and I don't think it's fair to them. I think your Mum, a Mum should be at home (Margaret Watson).

She said she would like to be involved in the union if she didn't have to go away;

> ...If there was meetings, and I was asked to represent our girls at a meeting, I'd do that, but I wouldn't go on courses and things like that. But if [union rep] ever came up and said 'Look, will you find out what grievances your girls have got on the morning shift, the girls that you see?', I'd definitely do that.

This type of 'contact point' representative is used by some unions. The individual does not perform all the duties of a workplace representative, but is able to pass members concerns to the union (TUC 1996:19). Indeed, a system such as this may have meant that both Greta Roberts and Shelley Owen (who had been trade union representatives in their current job) could have continued with their role. Both of these women had young children and gave up their union work as it became 'too much'. This supports Ledwith *et al.*'s research (1990:117), mentioned above, that women with young children find it difficult to be union representatives;

> Well when I went back the second time, after having James, I felt like I'd had enough. I felt like I wanted to give the job to somebody else, and you know, I thought I'll step down (Shelley Owen).

> I think I've got enough in me life at the moment, you know? I don't want to... To me, to be able to do all and everything, something else would have to go. Do you know what I mean? First and foremost, my family come first, you know? (Greta Roberts).

Why not join the union?

The eight non-union members who were interviewed in the organized workplaces gave three reasons for their non-membership. The first group of women perceived the workplace union to be ineffective, the second group of women had not been asked to join and the third group were opposed to unions. Of the (four) women who perceived the union to be ineffective, three women had belonged to the union in their current workplace at one time but had opted out as it was 'a waste of time' while the fourth woman had never been a union member in her current job. Significantly, all but one of these women had also been trade union members in their previous jobs and therefore knew what trade union membership involved. The women told how the union had no bargaining power within the company;

> I wouldn't say that they [the union] were badly intentioned... They just didn't have the capability to... They had a better relationship with Bradleys when we started. You know, they would consult the union and they would do the toing and froing with the union before they came with the pay offer to us, and the union would, you know, would have a quite a big part in it. But now, they just totally disregard them, like they're not there (Kathryn Bond).

Additionally, one woman, Linda Steele complained that the union did not support part-time workers. She told how the Sunday workers in Bradleys had made a complaint to the union and had not been supported. Just after the incident the union subscriptions were raised. Linda was critical that the Sunday workers (who were only contracted for between three to six hours per week) paid the same rate as those

part-timers who worked up to 20 hours. The lack of support which the union gave over this incident led to several of the part-timers opting out of the union;

> ...you'd get people saying 'Oh, you know, you wanna be careful, Sunday only, and you should really, you know make sure that you're in a union while you're Sunday only'. And I thought 'To pay £3.40 and they're not doing anything for us', so I just pulled out of it, you know. I felt that they weren't doing anything for us. ...If they asked me to join now, I don't think I would.

It was not the case that these women were against unions in general. They all said they would join if it was a different union;

> ...I think if it was a different union and we knew they were gonna treat all the staff equally, so it wouldn't be different whether you were full-time, management, part-time, Sunday's, whatever, I would. If it was treated all across the board, I would, yea. I think I'd rather have the backing of somebody, but somebody who is gonna back you (Linda Steele).

Or if everyone at the workplace joined;

> If everybody else joined, as I say I'd join. But if nobody's interested, you know? And you've gotta have interest in the union for it to work, you know... (Marie Peters).

The second group of non-members (two women) had not been asked to join their workplace union. Both of these women were employed by Bradleys and had less than two years service. Thus, when they started work in Bradleys the closed shop was no longer in operation. As will be outlined in chapter eight, Bradleys was an anti-union company and no longer permitted the union to recruit new employees as part of the induction programme. Neither of these women had ever belonged to a trade union during their working lives and when asked if they would like to join the union in their current workplace, one of the women said she was unsure of what a trade union could do for her, while the other woman said she would not join the union as it was ineffective;

> ...if they're not gonna come to me and ask me, well I think to meself, well, obviously it can't be, in my personal opinion it can't be that good... I think, as I say, if I really wanted to join it, I could chase it up, but in the long run, at the end of the day, I think it's only money coming out of my wages. I've always fought me own battles in the past, so me personally, I don't think I need them (Julie Bates).

The third group of non-members (two women) were opposed to trade unions in principle (even though they had both been trade union members in previous jobs);

> ...I've never been fussed on the union. I don't see what they can gain. I don't see what they can do for you except bring you out on strike. I can't see the point of coming out on strike (Pam Bailey).

When asked if they would like to join the union, the women refused, citing financial implications;

> How I would see it, being a member of the union, it would be unnecessary expense... I would imagine I'd have to pay some money out of my wages and it's not enough money. You've not got many rights as a three hour employee. Maybe if you were an employee who did 40 hours, I think you probably would need some rights then - you'd come across a few problems. But for somebody who does three hours... (Felicity Marks).

Similarly, Pam put the money which she would have used for her union subscription towards her pension (in fact, Pam had opted out of the union for this reason).

For the most part then, it was not the case that these women were non-members because they were opposed to unions in principle or because they had negative experiences of trade unions in their former jobs. Rather, they thought their current workplace union was ineffective or had not been asked to join.

Favourability to unionise in an unorganized workplace

The 15 non-members who were interviewed in the unorganized workplace can be divided into four groups. The first group consisted of just under half of the women interviewed in Cheaper DIY (six interviewees). These women said they would definitely join if there was a trade union at their workplace, giving the same reasons for desiring membership as the union members mentioned above i.e. union membership as a form of 'backing'. Indeed, some women felt vulnerable that they did not have trade union representation at their workplace;

> Well I think if you've got a grievance, you can actually go up to your union representative. You're not intimidated. You're not frightened of saying what you want to say. And they'll get an answer 'Yes' or 'No' for you. I am frightened or intimidated of going into the manager's office and saying 'Look, we're working every single Saturday. Nobody else does it'. I can't go into me manager and say that. He'll just tell me to sod off. If there was a representative and they know the rules and regulations... I mean if he [the representative] said 'Yes you have to work 'em', I'd feel better knowing that I have to do, and not that I'm doing it out of pressure... It's like this finishing at eight o'clock. If you was in a union, you'd finish at eight o'clock... If we had a union, the pay rise wouldn't be as it is... I mean why give somebody nothing, and somebody else four per cent? You can't do that, it's wrong. ...I think a union'd be a bloody good idea. I think that's why Cheaper DIY don't have one (Kay Walsh).

> Well it clears the air doesn't it, they talk to 'em. You get meetings with managers, and half of 'em'll sit there and not say anything, but yet they will when they're away from 'em. But I think if they had a union rep they would talk it through with the union rep and sort it out that way. Without one, they don't seem to get to the bottom of it unless it really goes over the top (Jean Paisley).

All but one of the women who said they would definitely join a union had been union members in their previous employment and several women mentioned this as part of the reason for desiring union membership at their current workplace. For example,

when asked if she would like to join a union in her current workplace, Jean Paisley replied;

> I would, yea. I think with being in one before, and knowing what they can do for you...

The women in the second and third groups had less experience of trade unionism. The second group of women (three interviewees) were less enthusiastic about joining a union, saying they would join a union if everyone else in the workplace did;

> It wouldn't bother me either way. I think if the majority wanted it, and that's the way it was going to go then yes, but if everybody else said no, it wouldn't bother me either way if I didn't join (Jacqui Woods),

The third group of women (four interviewees) said they didn't know whether they would join a union or not. Interestingly, two of these women made reference to their status as a part-time worker;

> At the end of the day I don't work that many hours for it to affect me (Sue Cooper).

> ...'cos I'm only there part-time, I don't really know if it could do anything anyway really (Fiona King).

Neither of these women had belonged to a trade union before and it is likely that their lack of experience contributed to their attitude. Finally, the remaining woman in Cheaper DIY (Lisa Wark) said she would not join a union in her workplace, even though she had been a union representative at her previous workplace and her husband had also been a union branch secretary. Lisa now had anti-union views (this will be discussed in chapter nine).

On the whole then, this section has shown that union membership was regarded as valuable and necessary by the majority of women in the sample. Those women who were union members did not wish to opt out of the union, and for the most part, the women who were non-members would join a union if they were asked / had the opportunity. Very few of the women objected to trade union membership in principle or thought it pointless to invest in union membership as they worked part-time.

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter began by detailing the women's past trade union membership. The majority of women had either been a trade union member or worked in an organized workplace at some point during their working lives. On the whole, the women recounted positive experiences of the trade unions in their former workplaces and a small number of women had been actively involved as trade union representatives. The chapter then examined the women's current trade union membership status. The women who were union members spoke of the benefits of union membership. This reflects Gallie's findings;

> Our evidence suggests a trajectory in which the experiences of those who are currently trade union members had led them to an increasing awareness of the advantages of union membership (Gallie 1996:145).

Additionally, the women who did not belong to a trade union in the organized workplace were also largely supportive of trade unions although some were critical of the unions ineffectiveness in their workplace. Similarly, the majority of those women employed in the unorganized workplace, especially those with previous experience of trade union membership felt they would benefit from union membership.

The key finding documented in this chapter is that the part-timers did not see trade unions as irrelevant to them. There is little evidence to suggest that part-time workers see their work as unimportant hence leading them to dismiss trade unionism as irrelevant to them. Indeed, of the 23 non-members in the sample, only three women (13 per cent) mentioned that it may not be worth investing in trade union membership as they worked part-time. The women's attitudes seemed to be influenced by their experience of trade unions in their current workplace, which the next chapter will now explore.

8 Industrial Relations in the Case Study Companies

Chapter seven explored the women's experiences of trade union membership in their previous jobs. The majority of women had some experience of trade unions by either having been a member or by working in an organized workplace. The women's level of involvement in the trade union in their previous job(s) was generally limited to attending meetings held in the workplace although a substantial minority had participated in industrial action and five women had been trade union representatives. On the whole, the interviewees were found to have positive recollections of the trade unions in their previous jobs. The chapter then examined the women's trade union membership in their current job. Most of the trade union members joined their workplace union as they saw it as a form of insurance or 'backing' but did not want to become more involved with their workplace trade union. For the women who were non-union members in the organized workplaces, there were varying reasons for this non-membership: these women either perceived the union to be ineffective, had not been asked to join while a minority were opposed to trade unions in principle. The majority of part-timers in the unorganized company felt they would benefit from trade union membership while a minority (who generally had no experience of trade union membership) were unsure whether they would like to be a trade union member. An important finding reported in chapter seven was that only three of the 23 non-union members in the sample (in the organized and unorganized workplaces) mentioned their employment status as part-time worker as a reason for their non-membership.

This chapter examines the current interviewees' attitudes towards management / employee relations in the three case study companies. It also examines (where appropriate) the women's attitudes towards the effectiveness of their workplace trade union. Do the women feel their workplace union is effective and represents their interests or that the union has no power? Have the trade unions in the two organized case studies been marginalised? How satisfied are the women in the unorganized company with management / employee relations? Does the consultative

committee provide an adequate opportunity for them to air their grievances and concerns or do they feel the need for independent representation, in the form of a trade union? Over the last two decades or so it has been the pattern for companies to apply Human Resource Management (HRM) techniques to their workforce. The majority of commentators are agreed that for the most part, the onset of HRM techniques have not been accompanied by the dismantling of existing collective bargaining arrangements (Guest 1992:131; Rose 1996). However, one of the consequences has been to bypass and marginalise trade unions (Fairbrother 1994). This has occurred by promoting quality circles, team briefings, newsletters, videos and non-union based joint consultation as a means of communication with the workforce, thus replacing the more traditional method of communication via the union (Hartley and Stephenson 1992). It also explores the interviewees' attitudes towards management / employee relations in their workplace.

The chapter is organised into three sections. Section one outlines the literature on management / employee relations in the retail industry. It becomes clear that trade unions have limited influence in this industry. The second section examines industrial relations in the three case study companies. Beginning with Alldays, the pro-union company, the chapter demonstrates how employees were generally favourable towards management / employee relations in the company. These employees spoke of the (positive) changes in the way management approached the workforce. Industrial relations are then examined in the second company, Bradleys, which had recently become hostile to trade union organization. Management / employee relations were poor in this company. Reflecting previous research, we see how the two organized companies now place more emphasis on management / employee communication, effectively sidelining the trade union. While this was done aggressively in Bradleys, in Alldays the union was seen to play an important role, yet the union had recently signed an agreement with the company which reduced the union's influence still further. Employees in the third company, Cheaper DIY were equally split as to whether management / employee relations were good or poor. The anti-union nature of the company is clear: the company continues to resist attempts to organize within the company and makes employees aware of its anti-union stance. Conclusions are drawn in the third section. The key point to note is that even if

women are critical of the trade union in their workplace, an overwhelming majority of women remain supportive of the ideals and principles of trade unionism in the wider society.

8.1 Existing Research on Relationships between Management and Employees in the Retail Industry

Recent research demonstrates that employers in the retail industry are no exception to the general trend of trade union marginalisation identified above. Penn (1995) uses data from a 1988 telephone survey of 72 retailing establishments in the UK, half of which recognised a trade union (in the absence of a trade union it was likely that a joint consultative committee or a works council existed). The influence which these trade unions had on decision making within the company appeared to be minimal. For example, only 17 per cent of unionized companies discussed rates of pay locally with employees or representatives while the remaining companies decided on pay rates at company level. Nonetheless, despite these low levels of influence, Penn found little evidence that trade union influence had waned over the last five years. Neathy and Hurstfield (1995), in their case studies of 15 retail companies, found that only three had full union recognition i.e. formal negotiating rights regarding the pay and conditions of employees, while another five employers recognised trade unions but only for the individual representation of union members and the purposes of recruitment within the company.

Representative participation (where employees meet with managers), usually in the form of consultative committees or works councils, are now a feature of many workplaces (Fairbrother 1994; Strauss 1992). Figures from the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) show that 28 per cent of all establishments have some form of joint consultation committee (Cully *et al.* 1998:10). However, these committees usually have no power and are rarely a success: management and employees often accord different levels of importance to different issues. Typically employees want to discuss grievances and staff relations while management are more concerned with productivity and safety issues (Strauss 1992). Turnbull and Wass (1998) found this to be the case with the employees in the non-union retail company

they studied. Employees were highly critical of the 'sophisticated human relations' techniques espoused by the company. Certainly as Terry (1999) points out;

> ... 'pure' co-operation or consultation processes, ultimately at managerial discretion, with no access to the 'power-based' resources that characterise the bargaining component of collective relations between employers and employees, are fragile and, especially in the face of adversity, ineffective means of representing employee interests (Terry 1999:28).

However, this is not to say that employers on the whole are trying to sideline unions. There is little evidence in the case studies of the SCELI research to show that employers had taken advantage of the anti-union legislation introduced by the conservative government to marginalise trade unions (Gallie *et al.* 1996:6). Though weakened, institutions and arrangements remained. Only five per cent of managers in the SCELI sample claimed that their establishments actively discouraged union membership, 44 per cent accepted membership but were neither strongly positive or negative, 28 per cent encouraged union membership, and the remaining 23 per cent had no policy as union membership was not an issue in their company. Furthermore, there had been little change in policy towards trade unions over the last five years (Gallie and Rose 1996:35). Indeed, the sample of employers in the SCELI survey generally felt the influence of the workplace union should be maintained, with the main reason being that the union ensured effective communication with the workforce. They conclude;

> In short, whatever the appearance of radical change in industrial relations that might be given by the repeated legislative changes of the period, there is no evidence that this was having a major influence on managerial policies (Gallie and Rose 1996:37).

However, Gallie and Rose suggest that the introduction of procedures for direct communication may reduce the influence of the union, and in turn, may have the effect of weakening employees' loyalty to the union as they increasingly identify with the company and reduce employees' dependence on the union for representation and bargaining.

8.2 Industrial relations in the three case study companies

Alldays

In Alldays, the pro-union company[71], I interviewed one union representative[72] and the Regional Secretary of USDAW (the trade union which organizes in the company). I also attended an industrial relations seminar at which the Human Resource Director of Alldays was guest speaker. The company has a 20-25 year history with USDAW and were very supportive of the union's role within the company. The Human Resource Director said that USDAW were a 'very realistic and business focused' union and gave an example how the union had supported the company's move towards Sunday trading by amending union policy at the Annual Delegate Meeting which previously discouraged Sunday working. Relationships between store managers and full-time union officers were good, and organizers were permitted access onto the premises at any time to chat to staff in the canteen, recruit new members and raise the profile of the union.

Union membership was encouraged by the company and exceeded 80 per cent in the three stores where interviews were conducted. Indeed, the application form includes a direct debit agreement to join the union;

> They [new employees] are told, even by the management - 'We advise you to join the union - it's to protect yourself' (Sheila Mellor, union representative in Alldays).

At the induction for new employees, a union representative shows a video and explains the union's role within Alldays. This gives the representative the opportunity to meet new members and encourage any employees who did not sign up to join the union. In order to aid the recruitment of new members, the company supply the union with a list of employees who subscribe to the union via check-off[73]. This enables representatives to identify non-members (as they obtain details of

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[71] Alldays is the biggest private sector employer of union members. Additionally, Alldays' members account for 25 per cent of USDAW's membership.

[72] It was not possible to interview union representatives at the other two stores where Alldays employees were interviewed.

[73] Check-off (where the company deducts union subscriptions from the employee's wage on behalf of the union) was introduced by the Conservative Government and replaced the more traditional method of collecting union dues in the workplace. Employers had to get employees to re-sign every three years to confirm their wish to continue paying union subscriptions direct from their salary. The

employees who pay by direct debit from the union) and recruit accordingly. Representatives are allowed time off work to attend union meetings and to see union members during working hours. They are provided with facilities to carry out their union work: they have the use of a private office and can use the telephone at any time. However, despite these favourable relations between the union and the company, Sheila Mellor (a union representative in the Alldays store in Liverpool) said the union did not have much influence in the workplace;

> On a graph of one to ten, I'd say the union rates about three. It hasn't got as much pull as it did have.

The reduction in the union's influence may partly be associated with considerable changes in management policy in the 1980s. This included extensive restructuring and a new mission statement, one of the aims being to nurture loyal and committed staff. Over two thirds of the interviewees felt that relationships between management and employees were good. This change in management style had been noticed by those employees who had worked for the company for some time. Many women mentioned they were now encouraged to converse with the management on first name terms. Managers now treated their staff differently: they wished them good morning, held doors open for them and encouraged them to discuss any problems, give feedback and make recommendations. Managers were much more approachable, providing the employees with a better working environment. Several women compared these changes with management / employee relations in the past;

> There's been a lot of changes... The attitude of a lot of people have changed since I first started there because, like the management... There used to be management when I first started there and what they said was said and they were God and you did as you were told. Where now, a lot of that's changed. Even up to the general manager, the store manager, you call him by his first name. There's none of this 'Mr Such-a-body', or... And if you've got a problem, or you're not happy with one of the controllers or management, you can take it to somebody else, and it's a bit more laid back a bit now, than it used to be (Maureen Oakley).

> It's such a nicer place to work now than it used to be. I mean at one time, they never used to say 'Please' and 'Thank you'. Now it's part of their training to say 'Please' and 'Thank you' for doing a job, and to actually tell somebody if they've done a job well done. Whereas before it never used to be like that... (Mandy Tompkins).

Labour Government abolished the need to re-sign every three years on 23.6.98 (Department of Trade and Industry 1998) Most unions now prefer direct debit.

All of the women who recognised the effort being made by management saw this new ethos as an improvement. The women welcomed the way in which they were valued by the company, indicating that the change in company culture had stimulated greater organizational commitment among the workforce;

> I think there was no involvement with people [in the past]. People were just doing their jobs without any interest, without any care... Most people would just clock on and clock off, you know? And that'd be it. Not really a job, but a means to an end i.e. wages. It's not like that now (Greta Roberts).

> ...I feel as though I'm not used, and 'You go and get on that job and we'll forget about you'. It's not like that. ...All the managers and all us, we're one. It's like a big team, and there's no 'us and them'. Everything's... you just feel like you can go and talk to 'em, and not, you know, 'He's got a suit on' (Mel Turner).

By contrast, however, a third of women employed by Alldays said relationships between management and employees at their workplace were poor, thus creating a tense work environment. These women found managers unapproachable and criticised them for not communicating with staff, creating a 'them and us' situation. These women did not feel they were valued or treated as an individual. Indeed, in some cases, women told of feeling like school children and being reduced to tears;

> Sometimes I feel like it's like being in a school. They sit on various tables [in the canteen], and the other staff sit on other tables. To me, that's wrong. It should be all integrated... (Mary Smith).

> They'll come, if there's a problem anywhere and something's nothing to do with you, or you just happen to be in the area, they'll come, and they'll shout at people, which it isn't right when customers are there. And I mean I have been on my till crying, tears pouring down me face, and I've stayed there, and the customers... It's not right for the customers to see you like that. And you're embarrassed. You're a grown woman, they treat you like you're a child (Laura Boot).

As documented in chapter seven, employees at one of the Alldays stores had been so dissatisfied with the store manager's approach and attitude to the staff they threatened industrial action unless he was replaced (this indicates then, that the union did have the ability to mobilise the workforce and threaten to take action when necessary).

All but one of the 18 women interviewed in Alldays were union members (see table 8.1). These women were equally split as to whether they were favourable towards the union in their workplace: half of the interviewees thought their workplace union represented their interests while the other half were more critical of

the union. Those women who were favourable towards their workplace union perceived it to be effective. For example, the women who had been involved in the dispute over the store manager told how the union representatives and officers had successfully negotiated the manager's replacement. For other members, the union was seen to perform a useful role by negotiating the pay deal, winning claims and dealing with problems at work;

> Well, I think so far each time we've been with a grievance, they've sorted it out. Pay - they've sorted all that. ...They've been pretty good (Trisha Stewart).

> One of the women I know, she fell off a stool and damaged her wrist, and she couldn't work. I mean, it was them [the union] that suggested 'Yea, right, we'll put a claim in for this', and they do pay all the expenses, USDAW pay all the expenses, so you're not actually... It's not actually coming out of your pocket (Jo Loving).

Table 8.1 Union status of companies and number of interviews conducted

Company	Union members	Non-members	Total
Allday's (Organized, 'pro-union')	17	1	18
Bradley's (Organized, 'anti-union')	10	7	17
Cheaper DIY (Unorganized)	N/A	15	15
Total	27	23	50

The remaining interviewees in Alldays were more critical of their workplace union. Some of these women felt that the union representatives failed to act on their complaints and that the union didn't adequately represent the members or 'fight' their case;

> I complained about these chairs that we sit on to the union rep and nothing has been done. All she said to me was 'Well, the chairs have been on order for months now, they should be coming in soon', but that's not good enough is it? I mean, one of our girls went to sit on one, and the back gave way, and she fell... I think they should take up things when you go... There's a lot of things that the union could do, and they don't (Eileen Mills).

> The only thing I've ever seen when the union get involved is when there's a pay rise. And whether we agree to it or not, the union always seem to accept it, and that's it. Like a lot of other members of the staff at our shop, we always think that the union are more for the management side than they are for the workers, and I think they should sit back and think. I mean, they're there to represent us, not the management. 'Cos I said before, I mean you vote on 'em, you know damn well what the outcome's going to be, whether you voted or not, and the unions shouldn't be like that... ...You know, they don't say 'Well we'll fight it for you'. They just say 'Well, you're going to take, accept it, 'cos that's all you're gonna get'. I mean, any other one'd fight it for you, wouldn't they? They'd say 'Well, you don't want that'... (Maureen Oakley)

Meanwhile others did not blame the union representatives but pointed out instead that the union had little influence within the company and as a consequence was

unable to 'fight' for the members. Interestingly, some of these women compared the union in their current workplace to unions they had experienced in their previous employment;

> The union is pathetic, Alldays union, it really is. I mean, from what I was used to at the bank... ...I mean when I was at the bank they really did, they helped a lot (Laura Boot).

> Well, it's completely different to where I used to work, where the union was very very strong and the union and [company] were always dealing with queries (Alison Hibbert).

In 1998, a new partnership deal (voted for by the union members and given a high profile launch at the TUC Headquarters) was signed between the company and the union. As part of the deal, a 'staff forum' was to be introduced to all stores by March 1999. These were to include both union members and non-members with one reserved seat in each store for a union representative. The forums were designed to give shopfloor workers a voice to discuss pay, conditions and changes in technology etc. The staff forum feeds into a regional forum (made up only of union representatives) which then feeds into a national forum. The national forum negotiates over pay and conditions, which then have to be re-endorsed by the regional forum. Part of the agreement secured the right for the union to hold quarterly branch meetings in store. However, the main concession by the union was that individual union members would no longer be eligible to vote on the pay review. This was to be negotiated by union representatives / officers at the regional and national staff forums. It is difficult to speculate on the long-term effects which this new agreement will have on the union but the partnership is due to be jointly reviewed by both parties to see if it is working.

Bradleys

Interviews were conducted with the GMB full-time regional officer responsible for members in Bradleys and three trade union representatives. I also attended a number of quarterly regional shop stewards meetings. Like the union which organizes in Alldays, Bradleys also had a long history of trade union organization in the company and union membership in the three stores where interviews were conducted varied from 50 to nearly 80 per cent. When the interviews took place in 1995-6, a new Chairman had recently been appointed who was unsympathetic towards the union.

His arrival prompted negotiations between the union's national officer and the company's board of directors regarding the relationship between the union and the company. A new agreement *'A Partnership for Change'* was introduced by the company and signed by the union. This agreement continued to recognise the union, but the union was no longer to be involved in pay bargaining. Relationships between the company and the union became strained and the union were even threatened with derecognition. Two of the union representatives interviewed in Bradleys heard the Chairman speak when he was invited to the union's annual conference;

> He implied that unless they [the company and union] started getting on, then they [Bradleys] will just derecognise the union altogether. He said that Bradleys can do without the union, they will survive without the union... It was a statement of 'This is what you get, or we don't get anything' (Jennifer Ludlam, trade union representative).

> They recognise the union, but I think they only recognise the bit that they 'wanna recognise. They want us to be nice and tidy if you like and sit down and be reasonable and say yes to everything they say. I think... I mean, that's my idea of what's gone on the last couple of years... I mean, the *Partnership for Change* was either you accept that or we derecognise you, so I mean they didn't really have much choice but to accept it (Susan Chapman, trade union representative).

From this point onwards, steps were taken to discredit the union. Unlike the union reps in Alldays, the shop stewards in Bradleys were no longer invited to participate in the induction for new employees (previously they were given a half hour slot in which to promote the benefits of union membership and sign up new members). The Chairman said new employees had 'enough to contend with on their first day at work' without being introduced to the union. Instead, union representatives had to approach new employees 'when they had settled in' (Jennifer Ludlum, union representative). This made things extremely difficult for the stewards as they lost track of who the new starters were. Representatives were not allocated any time to recruit and consequently had to catch potential members whenever they could (usually in the toilets). This process of individual recruitment was extremely time consuming. The company refused to co-operate with the union by providing details of employees who paid their union dues by check-off. Hence, union representatives could not identify which employees were union members unless they paid their union dues by direct debit.

Regarding time off to attend meetings, the company refused to allow union representatives time off to attend quarterly shop stewards meetings for a period of six months. This policy has since been revised but only one representative per store was entitled to attend the meeting. Other ways in which the company tried to make the reps' job more difficult included taking down union notice boards and making them ask for permission to use the phone;

> I mean, if you make a phone call you're supposed to ask the [Store manager]. I mean we don't, but you are supposed to ask. ...I used to have like two big boards, one in the canteen and one in the corridor, the main corridor, which we haven't got now. We've only got like a quarter of a board mixed with a load of other jumble, so nobody actually looks at these boards, they just walk past them because there's so many things on them... (Susan Chapman, union representative).

The company had also derecognised the union representative's right to inspect the scene of an accident and would not allow the full-time officer on to the site (although she attended all disciplinary appeals as it gave her the chance to get in the canteen and raise the profile of the union).

In addition to the *Partnership for Change* agreement, 'Listening groups' and a 'Law club' had been introduced by the company. The 'Listening groups' had a similar aim to the staff forum in Alldays: to encourage employees to discuss work-related problems and make suggestions for improvements. Meanwhile the 'Law club' provided employees with legal services and advice for a similar fee to the union membership rate payable by part-timers (£3.25 per month in 1995/6). According to the trade union representatives, the company had 'plastered' the stores with posters advertising the Law club, which was marketed as an alternative to the union. Both the 'Listening groups' and the 'Law club' were providing a role which had traditionally been the remit of the union and it seemed these measures had an indirect effect on the popularity of the union in the stores. The three union representatives interviewed all felt that the GMB's influence in Bradleys had declined. They told how the union had been sidelined;

> I'd say on the union side of it now, the only part I think we're still pretty strong on is the likes of disciplinary. We still get involvement in them, but there's a lot of things that go on in the store that you're no longer involved in... In my eyes [in the past], there was a lot more respect for the union. It was a lot more of 'You gotta tell the union, otherwise there'll be a stink. You'll have to sort this out'. There was a lot more respect there. There doesn't seem to be any now. [In the past] it was a bit more, you know - 'It's a joint decision by both of us' and now it's like 'We've decided and you say yea'. That's the kind of agreement they've got now. It's not like 'You decide and put it to a vote'. It's

> 'We've decided, you say yea and you're not getting no vote. Whether you like it or whether you dislike it, we're not bothered.' ...It seems to me we're a dog with no teeth (Susan Chapman, union representative).

The union representatives' main concern then was that members (and potential members) may begin to question what the union could do for them, especially since the union no longer bargained for the pay deal;

> '...at least one thing you could always say to people is 'Well, you know, we negotiate your rise every year' (Rose O'Dea, union representative).

Bradleys did not appear to be as 'good' an employer as Alldays. The women who worked in Bradleys were much more critical of the relationships between management and employees than the women who worked for Alldays. Over two thirds of Alldays employees thought relationships between management and employees were good compared to less than a quarter of women in Bradleys. Whereas the style of management in Alldays had undergone a change in recent years which had resulted in more favourable relations between management and employees, such changes did not appear to have occurred in Bradleys. The style of management in this company seemed to be much less developed than in Alldays although there was some evidence that the company had tried to implement changes in the way they managed staff, for example, by introducing the 'Listening Groups'.

The reasons given for the poor relations between management and staff in Bradleys were similar to the reasons given by women who were critical of relationships in Alldays. The interviews criticised the managerial staff for assuming a superior air about them and 'talking down' to the shop floor workers. Some women even reported that customers had remarked on the bad atmosphere in the store;

> All the till girls, when you go in the toilets, at least once or twice a week, you find one of the girls in there crying. ...She [supervisor] just shows 'em up something rotten. She makes 'em feel like... But you can be made show of, and then you have to [pulls a sarcastic smile] at customer, you know?... (Tracey Jones).

> ...he [store manager] hasn't got a way with staff at all... ...a lot of the new managers are all right, but he didn't want them to be, he wanted them to be like him... (Margaret Watson).

> Even customers have commented. It's not the same. It's slowly going down the swan (Louise Heath).

Where managers in Alldays tried (and in some cases succeeded) to stimulate organizational commitment in the workforce, this did not appear to have occurred in Bradleys;

> ...to get the best of people, you know, if you work with somebody, and you 'wanna get the best out of 'em, you don't get their backs up. You know, you've gotta work with 'em, and explain things, and you know, if there's any worries 'Come to me', and whatever, and people are better for it. They work better for you. But if you get their backs up, they say I'm not 'gonna do anything for him, you know? (Shelley Owen).

In some sense then, the women in Bradleys saw the company's attempt at a new way of working as false;

> It's all this 'Colleagues' business. But in reality it's not like that. I think they'd like it to be, when you have all these seminars when we all go in the training room and we have these videos and everything. It's all very Americanised and all 'us' orientated. We're 'colleagues', and we're this and we're that. And 'This is what the aims are' and 'Our customers are happy, and you're happy, and we aim to work for a happier environment'. And you come out and you think what a load of baloney... Some people sit in an office writing all these things - 'Oh that sounds good, we'll do that', and I thought, you know 'Get real' like, 'Get on the shop floor, and meet people'. They're not all 'Oh hi, colleague...' (Louise Heath).

One woman told how managers walk past the shopfloor staff everyday without acknowledging them, but pretend they are 'all together' when senior management visit the store.

Of the 17 women interviewed in Bradleys, nine were union members while the remaining eight were non-members (see table 8.1). On the whole, the interviewees were favourable towards their workplace union saying it was effective. These women felt the union representatives took up their cases and represented the members;

> ...somebody went and told [union representative] the other day there was no heating on, and she went and saw the personnel and got it fixed, so, whatever grievance you've got, anything... you can just go to them, and she'll sort it out for you (Tracey Jones).

> Well from what problems I've had, they've been all right, yea, you know? They've tried to solve it for me, so I'd say they're OK, yea (Pauline Booth)

The women who did not value the workplace union gave the same reasons as the women who were negative towards the workplace union in Alldays - that the union did not 'fight' for the members;

> I've never had to have any dealings with them meself personally since I've been at Bradleys, but a couple of girls that have, I always feel that... It's always come across that they've had to do all the fighting themselves (Louise Heath).

Julie Bates (a non-member who had not been asked to join the union) told of two instances of employees being dismissed and the union not 'fighting' for them. In both cases, Julie felt these dismissals were unfair;

> ...Maybe if, in that example with Jimmy, if they'd really thought all the way, and gone right through, and said 'Look, we're all gonna all come out on a strike if you don't give this person his job back'. You know what I mean? If they'd done something more assertive, yea, well then maybe you'd think 'Oh, they're good people, them, they're gonna back you up'. Yea, maybe more people would be staying in, or saying 'Oh I'll join the union'. I don't think they do enough.

The only clear pattern to emerge between the union members and non-members in Bradleys with regard to their attitudes towards the workplace union was that while on the whole the union members were favourable towards the workplace trade union, half of the non-members had either opted out of the union or not joined as they felt the union was ineffective (see chapter seven). Unlike Louise Heath and Julie Bates cited above, these women did not blame the union representatives but pointed out that the union had no influence within the company. For example, Marie Peters who had been a trade union representative in a previous job said;

> There's no resources there, not for the union. ...I've never seen anything. We had our own office and everything in [company], but I've never seen anything in Bradleys (Marie Peters).

An interesting point to note here with regard to the women who were employed by the two organized companies is that while several women criticised the union representatives for not 'fighting' for them or the union for being ineffective, a small number of women (mainly those who had at some point been activists themselves) pointed out that union members are often quick to criticise the union, but in some sense these women are responsible for the union's ineffectiveness by not 'standing together';

> It's easy for them to gob off about the union. It's only when you're in it [i.e. as a representative] and you find that you're limited anyway. You know? There's not a lot you can do. But they don't see it as that. They see it as the old ways. 'Everybody out' kind of thing. I wish (Greta Roberts, ex-representative in Alldays).

> It's the workers that are the union, and if the workers aren't strong together, there's no union there. ...OK, your union might not do a lot for you, but that's your own fault, you know? If you don't stand together, you know, there's no strength there is there? (Shelley Owen, ex-representative in Bradleys).

> People think the union in Bradleys are rubbish and they say it's not worth being in it, they don't do anything for you. So any disputes just come and go because there's no union strength there. ...People now, in that shop, only think of number one. They only think about their selves... ...they couldn't have a dispute in Bradleys over anything, 'cos people are all for the more... (Margaret Watson).

While the union role in Alldays was limited, the role of the union in Bradleys was even more limited. Relationships between the company and the union got progressively worse between the time the interviews were conducted (1996) and the time of writing (1999). Union representatives were still excluded from the induction for new employees, but a new development in the company's anti-union stance was to refuse to recognise union representatives in some stores. In these particular stores, Bradleys argued there were too few members to warrant a union representative (although the company did not state what this membership level must be and were not consistent between stores). The implications of this are that union members are left without a representative. However, previous research Sinclair's (1995) has highlighted the importance which the presence of a union representative has for part-time employees. This new approach taken by the company may have the knock on effect of reducing part-timers' membership rates even further. If a union member in a store without a recognised shop steward has a problem, the company bring in a union representative from another store. This may deter women who are interesting in becoming representatives if they know they may have to visit other stores to defend members and resolve grievances. The GMB are hoping that the *Employment Relations Bill 1999* may impact on these policies.

Cheaper DIY

It was more difficult to obtain information on relations between management and employees in Cheaper DIY than in the two organized companies where trade union representatives and officers were a useful source (for a discussion of the difficulties of researching management / employee relations in a non-union retail company see Turnbull and Wass 1998). However, it seems clear that the company is opposed to trade union membership: when the GMB general union attempted to recruit employees in Cheaper DIY, injunctions were served on the union officers to prevent them from entering the premises[74]. Several interviewees spoke of the company's opposition to trade unions. Indeed, two women were asked at their interview if they were union members;

> They do ask you at interviews, if you're in the union. I've never had that before and I did ask why they wanted to know that, and he just turned round and said

[74] Full-time officers and other union activists 'shopped' in the store wearing GMB t-shirts to draw attention to their campaign. They also approached employees in the car park at the beginning and end of their shifts.

> (he said this was off the record) - they didn't really like you to be in the union because that's why you got good bonuses and good rates of pay, and they thought it would cause too much problems. And that's the answer I got. He said it wouldn't have mattered if I'd have told him 'No' and then they found out that I did... I was in a union. He said it wouldn't have bothered them then, but they'd tread very carefully if I was. That was it. I mean, everyone sort of knows that Cheaper DIY don't like unions, but they don't actually come out and tell you you can't join or they don't want you to join. But that's the general impression that you get. It's just sort of talking about it between ourselves (Jacqui Woods).

> You know before you go and work there, it's pointed out to you that there is no union... (Lisa Wark).

Jacqui told how an employee who was a union member was pressurised by the store manager to give up his membership;

> We know one lad used to be in the union, and he's actually come out of it now 'cos he felt so uncomfy. ...It was either leave Cheaper DIY or leave the union, and that's what he was told. But nobody's ever heard any one say that to him, so nobody could prove it (Jacqui Woods).

Unlike managers in the two companies discussed above, managers in Cheaper DIY usually spend less than two years in a store before being moved on to another area. For example, the manager of one of the Cheaper DIY stores in the research had managed 14 stores in the last 12 years. As a consequence of this, rapport was difficult to establish between the management and workforce, hence relationships were unstable. Additionally, Cheaper DIY stores employed fewer staff than the other two companies meaning that employees in Cheaper DIY were much more likely than women in the other two companies to personally know the store manager due to the size of the store and the fact that Cheaper DIY employed fewer staff. The women employed by Cheaper DIY were evenly split as to whether they thought management / employee relations were good or poor in the company. Those women who thought relationships were good generally got on with the store manager and said there was a good atmosphere in the store;

> Within the store, relationships are good. We are really one big happy family. We have our fall outs... Once the initial upset has gone you're back together again. You know that you can rely on them (Pat Rice).

However, the remaining women thought relationships were poor. Several staff had experienced problems with their managers and two women said there was a lot of friction in the store. Like the women who were critical of management / employee relations in the other two companies, this group of women felt unappreciated by their managers;

> I think they should give you credit if you're doing a job properly. If you're not doing a job they're quite ready for tell you sort of thing (Jean Pailsey).

In terms of employee representation, the company have a 'consultative committee'. This performs much the same function as the 'Staff forum' in Alldays and the 'Listening group' in Bradleys. However, unlike the latter companies which held meetings in each store, the 'Consultative committee' in Cheaper DIY meet at regional level (each store has a representative). On the whole the women were critical of the consultative committee as they felt it did not represent their interests;

> We have this communications thing... but basically, reading through the lines, nothing gets done anyway. I'm not sure that anything ever gets raised at these meetings (Dorothy Chapman).

The committee representative at one of the stores where interviews took place was an ex-store manager who now combined raising her young family with her part-time job as an administrator (incidentally she was also married to the store manager of the Cheaper DIY in the next town). It was generally felt that this woman was more likely to 'tow the company line' than raise issues of concern to the workforce. In addition to the consultative committee, out-of-hours staff meetings were occasionally held, usually in a pub. All employees were invited to attend, although they did not get paid for doing so. The interviewees were dissatisfied with the way these meetings were organized: several women who attended the last meeting told how the store manager and department managers did presentations. A discussion session for employees was time tabled to take place after these presentations, but time ran out before this started. These women then felt aggrieved that they had not 'had their say';

> He'll have meetings with his dept. managers, and his supervisors, but he won't have them with his staff... which is not right (Jacqui Woods).

Communication channels between employees and management in this company were ineffective. The women felt that 'small' problems (but which were of importance to them) like staff uniforms etc. were neglected. This created hard feelings for some of the employees as they felt they had no opportunity to air their grievances. Seemingly then, this highlights the need for a trade union in these workplaces. As indicated in chapter seven, more than half of the interviewees in Cheaper DIY said they would join a union given the opportunity or if everyone else at their workplace did (only one woman said she would not join a union as she did

not agree with them while the remaining women did not know whether they would like to join a union or not as they had no experience of union membership).

8.3 Conclusion

This chapter began by summarising the research findings on industrial relations in the retail industry. The research highlighted in section 8.1 supports the findings from my own case studies: that trade unions within retail (as well as unions within other industries) are becoming increasingly marginalised by management practices. It seemed to be the case in the two organized companies that neither union had much influence: in Bradleys the union was all but obstructed from operating while in Alldays the union had been marginalised. The trade unions in both of the organized companies had signed 'Partnership' deals with their respective companies. These new agreements significantly weakened the union's position within the companies, but more so in Bradleys than in Alldays. In reality then, these agreements were not really partnerships at all but a desperate bid to avoid total derecognition and a way to retain a 'foot in the door' of these companies. The chapter demonstrates how new consultation channels between management and employees may potentially undermine the union's role within the workplace (in Alldays this may be less intentional than in Bradleys).

The chapter also examined relationships between management and employees in the three companies. Relationships were generally good in Alldays, interviewees in Cheaper DIY were equally split with half of the women saying relationships were good while the other half said relationships were poor. In Bradleys, the majority of employees were critical of the management's treatment of the staff. It was no doubt the case then, that although these companies had for the most part tried to introduce policies which follow the HRM style of valuing employees, employee relations were set by managers in individual stores. Regarding attitudes towards the trade unions in the workplace, in each of the two organized companies a group of employees criticised the union representatives for not 'fighting' their cases, while another (smaller) group of women argued how these representatives were constrained by the union's lack of power within the company. Another group of women said the members themselves were to blame for not 'standing together'. An important

distinction to make here then is that the majority of the women who were critical of their workplace unions in the two organized workplaces were not opposed to trade unionism in principle. Far from it - some of these women were very supportive of the ideals of the trade union movement. These issues are now explored in the following chapter.

9 Attitudes Towards Trade Unionism in a Wider Context

The previous chapter examined industrial relations and the interviewees' attitudes towards management / employee relations in the three case study companies. Where appropriate, the chapter also examined women's perceptions of their workplace union. In the unorganized company, the women's interests were represented by the consultative committee. However, the interviewees were largely critical of this, and their dissatisfaction is partly reflected in their desire for trade union membership (more than half said they would join a trade union in their workplace if they had the opportunity). One of the main points to emerge from the chapter was the way in which trade unions are becoming increasingly marginalised in the 1990s workplace. Both of the organized companies had taken steps and / or implemented new policies (whether explicitly or implicitly) which reduced the power of the union. A substantial number of interviewees in both of the organized companies (18 out of 35 women) were critical of their workplace trade union: while most of these women either criticised the union for being ineffective or the union representatives for not 'fighting' for the members, a small number of women pointed out that the members themselves were partly responsible for the union's lack of influence. The chapter concluded by emphasising that although half of the interviewees in the organized workplaces were critical of their workplace union, this did not mean that they were opposed to trade unionism in principle. On the contrary, an overwhelming majority demonstrate favourable attitudes towards trade unions.

Moving away from attitudes towards industrial relations in the workplace, this chapter examines the women's attitudes towards trade unionism more generally, by exploring their support for and criticisms of trade unions in a wider context. There is some disagreement in the literature with regard to men and women's favourability to trade unions. On the one hand Gallie's analysis of the SCELI (1996:157) data shows that female trade union members are less attached to their union than male members: 46 per cent of the female members were favourable towards trade unions

compared to 59 per cent of male members. However, when asked if they thought the importance of trade union membership had increased over the past five years, the women in the sample were more likely to state that it had than the men (42 per cent compared to 37 per cent respectively). A plausible explanation may be that women recognise a need for trade unions, but are less likely to have favourable experiences of trade unions (Sinclair 1995). In contrast to the SCELI findings, Bradley's (1999:167) sample of 198 male and female workers in the North East (86 per cent of the sample were union members) found that men and women's attitudes towards trade unions were very similar: 38 per cent of women said they were very / quite committed towards trade unions compared to 34 per cent of men (the majority of interviewees expressed 'neutral' attitudes, while a minority of respondents were quite / very hostile towards trade unions). Of course, the qualitative research reported below can not shed light on the differences between men and women's attitudes towards trade unions, but it is able to provide some insight into women's attitudes to unions in general and female part-time workers in particular. What do women like about unions and what are they critical of? Are trade unions still relevant to workers in the 1990s?

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses interviewees who were favourable towards trade unions and the possible influences on their attitudes. These women (41 interviewees), considered trade unions to be useful and membership to be important. The first group of these women (over two thirds of the women who had favourable attitudes towards trade unions) had no criticisms to make of the union movement and many expressed regret at the unions' loss of power over the last two decades, while the remaining third of women who were favourable towards trade unions were more critical of trade unions. This latter group of women had experienced trade unions being ineffective and / or witnessed union militancy over what they considered to be trivial issues. Regarding influences on the women's attitudes, the women referred to their own experiences of trade unions in their past or current employment and / or to their husband's (or other family members') attitudes and experiences[75]. It was the case then, that the women

[75] Of the 45 women in the sample who were married / cohabiting, approximately half (20 interviewees) lived with men who belonged to a trade union. The remaining 25 men were non-members, although many of these had been trade union members in the past. A substantial number of

with favourable attitudes towards trade unions had largely favourable experiences of trade unions, and their husbands / other family members were also likely to have favourable experiences / attitudes towards unions. On the other hand, women who were more critical of trade unions referred to their own or husband's / other family members' experiences of union ineffectiveness or union militancy when discussing their attitudes towards trade unions. This first section concludes with a short discussion of a small group of women (four interviewees) who felt they did know enough about trade unions in order to be able to decide whether or not they had favourable attitudes. The implications of this are discussed, and it is argued that the size of this group may increase in the future. Section two discusses the attitudes of the 'anti-union' women who accounted for a small proportion of the sample (five interviewees). These women felt that unions were useless and unimportant. These women who were opposed to trade unionism had husbands (or other family members) who had negative experiences / attitudes of trade unions. Finally, section three concludes that although a substantial proportion of interviewees were critical of union militancy over trivial reasons, on the whole, this sample of female part-time workers are overwhelmingly favourable towards trade unions, even in the non-unionized workplace. These women value the protection which union membership offers and demonstrate strong support for the ideals of trade unionism. This is in spite of the fact that female part-time workers are argued by some commentators to be one of the least committed groups in the labour force and therefore may be less interested in trade unionism. The findings provide strong evidence then, that trade unions are still highly relevant and desirable to the majority of employees.

9.1 Favourable Attitudes Towards Trade Unions

An overwhelming majority of the sample (41 out of 50 interviewees) had favourable attitudes towards trade unions. These favourable attitudes were not confined to the union members in the sample: as demonstrated in chapters seven and eight, many of the non-members in the sample also had favourable attitudes towards trade unions[76].

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men had experienced industrial action and six men had been trade union representatives at some time in their previous employment.

[76] In the unorganized workplace this was demonstrated by a desire for trade union membership. In the organised workplaces, the majority of the non-members were not opposed to unions *per se*. Rather,

This group of women then, regarded trade unions as important, useful and necessary in order to protect employees. Many of the reasons given by these interviewees for their positive attitudes towards trade unions were similar to the reasons given in chapter seven by the union members: unions are a back up or a form of insurance, with the expertise to resolve any legal problems and were seen to be particularly necessary in large companies. Interestingly, one woman compared her own experience of trade union membership with that of her friend, who works in an unorganized workplace;

> My friend works at [company] and they've got no union, and it's a family run firm and they do what they want. I mean, they don't get double pay for Sundays now, they've stopped it. And things like that, so yea, you do need a union for the likes of... to make sure everything's above board. I mean, [friend's employer] have changed so many things when they want, you know (Tina Wright, union member in Alldays, past union membership).

In addition to this, several interviewees expressed the importance of 'solidarity' between union members, and spoke of the need to 'stick together';

> I think they're very useful. If you're all in it, they're very very useful, 'cos you can wield the power if you're all in it (Margaret Watson, union member in Bradleys, past union membership).

> I think everybody should belong to the union, because I'd say that the workers then have got a voice, they've got a voice against the bosses (Liz Nish, union member in Bradleys, past union membership).

> ...if people was in 'em, if everyone was in it, then they're gonna be able to do more, because they'll have more people, you know, they'll be the majority... (Pauline Booth, union member in Bradleys, past union membership).

While another woman spoke of her belief in trade unions;

> I was always in a trade union. I believe in those. I believe in those (Betty Parkin, union member in Alldays, past union membership).

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the 41 women who were favourable towards trade unions can be divided into two groups. The first group of women (28 interviewees) had no criticisms to make of the union movement. These women commented on the decline of trade union power during their time in the labour market and felt that trade unions should have more power (figures from the British Social Attitudes Survey show that in 1996 only 15 per cent of employees believed that unions have 'too much power' compared to 54 per cent of workers in 1985. Bryson and McKay 1997:35);

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they had not joined because they had not been asked or because of the union's ineffectiveness in their workplace. Similarly, other women had opted out of the union due to this latter reason.

> ...the only other union that I'd been in had been at the beginning of me working life and I didn't realise the unions have lost so many powers really over the last ten years. They can't do anything. They really can't do anything now ...It's not the union, it's the laws, isn't it? It's the laws that are wrong (Liz Nish, union member in Bradleys, past union membership).

> ... I think unions should have power, because they are supposed to be for the people, aren't they? They're supposed to be for the workers, so I think they should have as much power as they need (Kay Walsh, unorganized workplace, no past union membership).

These women recalled positive experiences of unions in their current and / or previous jobs (see chapter seven). Indeed, one woman told how her initial experiences of trade unionism were very different to what she had expected;

> ...I was surprised because it's not all militant and rebels, and it was literally just tryin' a find out better working conditions for everybody, and they wasn't always wanting to... I always thought that the unions was people who always wanted an argument with the management, and they were always on the management's back, and trying to alter their ways, and I found they wasn't, they were just literally ordinary people like me who each had their own problem, and you get to hear about different stories, and they wanted to try and make things better. All they wanted was a fair day's pay for a fair day's wages (Laura Boot, union member in Alldays, past union membership and union representative).

Another influence on the women's attitudes towards trade unions was the favourable experiences or attitudes of their husband's / other family members. Several women recounted their husband's participation in successful industrial action;

> ...Stuart has always been in a union ...and like when they had been out on strike, they'd always, the union had always resolved it (Geraldine Martin, union member in Alldays, no past union membership).

Other women learned about the benefits of trade unions via their husbands experiences and in some cases, this led interviewees to compare their own experiences with those at their husband's workplace;

> At Martin's place you just go to your shop steward: 'We're not happy with this. We should be having double time - sort it out'. It saves you getting upset. I mean I'm always getting upset at work, lately I am. You know, getting really really wound up (Kay Walsh, unorganized workplace, no past union membership).

> He's never been a union official, but he would... he thoroughly agrees with the union, and you know Fords is very very union minded, and it's only through him that I've got any... [pauses] You know, he says to me 'Well, they wouldn't get away with that in Fords'. I said 'Yea, you're right' (Margaret Watson, union member in Bradleys, past union membership).

The second group of women who were favourable towards trade unions (13 interviewees) had some criticisms to make of trade unions. The main criticism these women made was over union militancy, with many women recalling examples of this from their previous employment. It was not the case then, that they were opposed to

trade unions or to industrial action. What these women did object to was union action over trivial, 'petty' matters;

> From past experience, like when I worked at Central Station, the engineers I worked for (the company) said they would never come to Liverpool again, because the unions were so militant. I remember they went on strike because they got the wrong work tops on the tables in the canteen... They were really really militant. I mean you're talking... I mean, it was unbelievable, some of the things that they, you know, came out for. And things like, you know somebody'd go to the pub (I mean we all did, you know) but the workmen'd go to the pub and they were on a site which was dangerous and they'd come back really drunk and go to sleep under some machinery. And if they got sent home then it'd be like 'Right lads...' (Kathryn Bond, opted out union member in Bradleys, no past union membership).

> ...when we first got married, Ford's were on strike at the drop of a hat. I mean I must admit at the time it was horrendous. We got married in the September, they were on strike for sort of 12 weeks in the November, and you know, just sort of when you're setting up a home. And I hated it. And it was always over... what seemed to be quite petty things, I mean, at the drop of a hat, Ford's were out. And it wasn't for like two days, it was 12 weeks, you know? Things like that (Laughs) ... ...like I say, some of it with Fords was so militant, it was... you know, your tea break's gonna be 10 minutes late: 'Right, let's down tools' type of thing. You know, some of it, was silly (Bev Atkinson, union member in Alldays, past union membership and union representative).

These women felt that trade unions in the past (and currently some strong unions) had too much power, and that this power had been abused;

> ...when unions first came out in the industrial revolution, then yes they were a good idea, because it was us against them. But unions sort of went very very silly, and they were calling people out on strike for ridiculous things (Pat Rice, unorganized workplace, past union membership).

In addition to their own experiences of these events, the media also seemed to have an effect on the women's towards trade unions. Several interviewees described industrial disputes which had been reported on the television, for example, the 1984-5 miner's strike (for a critical discussion of the way industrial disputes are reported in the media see Glasgow University Media Group 1976);

> Sometimes I think, when you see them on telly, you know these miners and all this, sometimes I think they go a bit too far. They're a bit drastic. But sometimes I think companies do need a shake up now and again, and they need something like that to put them back into line, type of thing to stop, you know, exploiting the workers (Jacqui Woods, unorganized workplace, past union membership).

Indeed, this data may illustrate why it is that in some previous research (e.g. Gallie 1996:157) women are less satisfied with their experiences of trade unions than men.

Another important issue raised by this group of women and related to the theme of union militancy, was the role of unions in the local labour market (the Ford workers in Halewood had been involved in a high profile ballot for strike action

around the time the interviews took place and the Liverpool Dock Workers were also on strike). As stressed in the discussion of satisfaction with pay in chapter five, the interviewees were all too aware of the high levels of unemployment in their region. Consequently, some of these women worried that the unions in their local workplaces were jeopardising jobs by making excessive and unrealistic demands;

> Sometimes I think maybe Fords and that type really push it to the edge, I mean, at the moment, this dispute that's going on, I can see Ford's closing down in Halewood, because I think they're just pushing for so much, you know, a shorter working week, fair enough, but a nine per cent or ten per cent wage rise? I don't know, I really don't know... (Mary Smith, union member in Alldays, past union membership).

> In our place [Bradleys] they haven't got any power but the likes of Fords and that, I think they've got too much power because they're running the business aren't they? 'Cos they're just gonna end up taking Fords out of Liverpool and it'll be all the unions fault in the end. It's like the miners, isn't it, you know, they didn't really help them, they just made things worse (Marie Peters, non-union member in Bradleys, past union membership and union representative).

However, Bev Atkinson, whose husband worked in Ford's painted a different picture of these 'militant' union members. She felt that although union members had abused their power in the past, this was no longer the case. Her quote typifies the hostile environment which trade unions were operating in during the mid 1990s;

> ...they haven't had a strike there now for a very long time, and even now when they've got some pretty strong cases, I mean, he was talking about somebody who'd been sacked... Now 12 years ago, there wouldn't have been a person in Fords for months. So the whole attitude to unions has changed, rightly, and wrongly. I think you know sometimes you can say 'Yea, that's a good thing', but it's taken a lot of power away from workers, they're frightened for their jobs, they're frightened to make a fuss or anything, or say what they think, even (Bev Atkinson, union member in Alldays, past union membership and union representative).

Perhaps of more direct relevance to the trade union movement, was that two of the women who were favourable but critical of unions thought that unions were 'on the way out'. Both of these women were non-union members employed by Bradleys (the anti-union company) and therefore had first hand experience of trade unions trying to operate in a hostile environment;

> ...I mean years and years ago, I mean I do believe that [unions] was something good. It was brought out to protect the workers... If there was one person that they thought was being picked on or targeted, or sacked, everyone'd come out, and be backing that one colleague up. ...It doesn't even act like that any more, so to me it's an outdated thing, it's an outdated system... ...I think somewhere along the line, it's got lost really. You know what I mean? (Julie Bates, non-union member in Bradleys, no past union membership).

> ...I don't think [union's] have got much to say. A lot of their powers have been pulled back off them, haven't they? I do think, I must admit, I think that it'll

> be soon that there'll be no unions at all (Linda Steele, 'opted-out' non-union member in Bradleys, past union membership).

Although supportive of the ideals of trade unionism, these women may reflect the emergence of a growing trend (feared by the union representatives in chapter eight) whereby employees question the relevance of unions in the 1990s. This theme links to the second group of interviewees who did not know anything about trade unions.

A Note on Indifferent Attitudes Towards Trade Unions

A small number of women (four interviewees) felt unable to make a decision whether they were generally supportive or not of trade unions as they had no experience of trade unions. These women were employed in Cheaper DIY (the unorganized workplace) and had not belonged to a trade union or worked in an organized workplace in any of their previous jobs. Additionally, none of the women had husband's / other family members with any significant experience of trade unions. Although these women only accounted for a small proportion of this total sample (eight per cent), it is possible that this lack of knowledge about unions may increase in the future. For example, due to high levels of unemployment, a substantial minority of the adult population of working age have never had a job, while those young workers who do enter the labour market are less likely than in the past to be employed in highly unionized industries and occupations such as manual work in the manufacturing industries. Furthermore, due to the sharp decline of union membership since 1979, these young workers may have parents who are non-union members and will therefore miss out on a 'union background'. Indeed, these issues were of concern to a number of women who were favourable towards trade unionism;

> ...nowadays there's that many people that have never actually been in a union, lots of people that haven't actually worked, that sort of thing, that I don't think most of them have got much of an opinion [about trade unions]. Unless you've actually seen them working, you probably don't realise... Most of the people that have left school and are now approaching their thirties probably won't have had jobs of any sort, or they've had jobs where there's no union involvement, so I don't think a lot of people really know that much about them (Bev Atkinson, union member in Alldays, past union membership and union representative).

> ...It was part of the bringing up... Your Fathers, and your Mothers was fetched up as a union was part of your household and it was part of your job. But it isn't any more. Younger people don't understand what a union does, or what a union is sometimes (Betty Parkin, union member in Alldays, past union membership).

These trends were borne out by the women in the sample: the younger women and their husbands generally had less experience of trade unions than the older interviewees.

In sum, this section has discussed the favourable attitudes held by the majority of women in the sample. The largest group of women who had favourable attitudes towards trade unions had no criticisms to make of the trade union movement and thought that unions should have more power. The remaining women who had favourable attitudes towards trade unions were critical of union militancy over trivial issues and felt that in the past, trade unions had abused their power. This led these women to view trade unionists as 'extremists' and 'militants'. On the whole then, these women's experiences were influenced by their own experiences of trade unions in their current / past employment, experiences and / or attitudes of their husbands and / or other family members and the portrayal of trade unions and their members in the media. The section then commented on the significance of a small number of interviewees in the sample who did not know enough about trade unions in order to decide whether they were supportive of trade unions in a wider context and concluded by speculating that it is likely that in the future, there will be an increase in the proportion of employees who have no knowledge and experience of trade unions. Having explored favourable / indifferent attitudes towards trade unions, the chapter now considers why some of the interviewees posses more hostile attitudes.

9.2 Hostile Attitudes Towards Trade Unions

Of the 50 interviewees, only five were strongly opposed to trade unions. These women did not think that trade unions are useful nor that union membership is important, yet paradoxically, two of these women were union members (Louise Heath and Maureen Oakley). Two interviewees were non-members in the organized workplaces (Pam Bailey and Felicity Marks), while the fifth woman (Lisa Wark) worked in Cheaper DIY, the unorganized workplace. Just as the women who were favourable to trade unions had husbands or other family members with positive experiences and / or attitudes towards trade unions, one factor which the women who were opposed to trade unionism had in common was that their husband's and / or

other family members had negative experiences or attitudes towards trade unionism. It is worth exploring these women in detail as they provide an interesting insight into why it is that some employees have unfavourable attitudes towards trade unions.

The two women who were union members were currently considering (or had in the past considered) opting out of the union at their workplace. Louise spoke about joining the new 'Law Club' in Bradleys (see chapter eight);

> ...I've found out that lately you don't have to be in the union, there's an independent thing for that, if you wanted them to fight your case, if they think you've got a case, they'll fight it for you anyway and you don't have to be in the union. So yes, I am seriously thinking of not bothering with them. I'd sooner give the money to charity, or buy a lottery ticket, than give the union three pound odd a month or whatever it is.

Maureen had attempted to opt out of the union some years ago when the closed shop was still in operation, but was told by the union representative that if she did so, she would have to pay her money to charity. She was very resentful of being forced into union membership;

> I think you should have the option whether you want to be in the union or not. I mean, as long as you know what you're entitled to and what you're not entitled to and that you have the option whether you join one or not. I don't think they should have these closed shops where you've got to be in the union, 'cos a lot of people don't agree with 'em, do they? [Sally: Would you say that you agree with them?] Well, I would never have thought of joining the union, if it hadn't have been for working at Alldays. Do I agree with unions? No, I don't think I do.

Louise had not belonged to a trade union in any of her previous jobs, therefore her negativity cannot be attributed to any past trade union membership. However, she was highly critical of the effectiveness of the union in her current workplace. Hence, it seems that her negativity could be either due to her experience of trade unionism in Bradleys or to her partner's disapproval of trade unions (he was a self-employed builder). When asked if he belonged to a trade union she replied;

> No. His opinion, why he doesn't agree with them is because he said in the building trade (which he's only ever known since he left school) there's blokes who've been in unions and he says they've been on less money than him. Do you know what I mean? Things like that. So they've never done them any good, so he said he's never been in one...

Louise herself was also very critical of trade unions;

> It's like when it comes on [the television], like it goes in one ear and comes out the other, you know, politics. And it's like, I think the Labour are this and the Tories are that, and I just think they're all as bad as one another. I think that unions are pretty much the same - I think they're all part of the same circle of people... The MPs and the union people are the top ones, and the only reasons they're there, to my opinion, is to line their own pocket. I think, to the average workers, they don't do a lot. I think they're the only ones that benefit from it,

> and they get paid anyway, whether they win or lose debates, do you know what I mean? So that's why I don't support 'em.

Like Louise, Maureen had not belonged to a union in any of her previous jobs and was highly critical of the union's effectiveness at her workplace. Maureen did not mention that her husband (an ambulance driver) had anti-union attitudes. However, he had been involved in unsuccessful strike action in 1989 and Maureen referred to this when discussing her own attitudes towards trade unions;

> I mean, it's like when Alan, in the Ambulance Service, they were on strike a couple of years ago, and I mean, the union didn't do very much for them, and it was all 'erm, getting them to stand outside shops for money and things like that, where the union should have been helping them. And at the end of the day they got nothing. I think they're hopeless.

Regarding *the two women who were non-union members in the organized* workplaces, Pam Bailey joined the union when she started her job in Alldays but opted out after 12 months, while Felicity Marks had never belonged to the union in Bradleys. Indeed, she didn't even know that a trade union organized her workplace! When asked why she opted out of the union Pam replied;

> To put my money into my pension. To boost my pension up, because I thought the three pounds whatever we were paying would be better in the pension scheme than in the (pauses), paying for nothing...

Pam had belonged to a trade union in one of her previous jobs (when she was a clerk at the magistrate's court) and she did not make any criticism of the union's performance in this job. However, Pam demonstrated strong hostile attitudes towards trade unions during her interview. While these attitudes were unlikely to be a consequence of her experiences in her previous employment, her views may have been influenced by her experience in her current job in Alldays. At the time of interview, Pam had been off work for five months as the result of an accident (she slipped on a grape in work and twisted her back). Although Pam had been a non-union member for two years at the time of her accident, she thought the union representative ought to have offered her support and advice and was extremely critical when this advice was not forthcoming;

> They said 'Oh no, she's not in the union anymore'. They wouldn't even give me any advice as a past member. As a past member they wouldn't even give me any advice because I wasn't paying my dues now.

Pam's husband (a company director) was also opposed to trade unions;

> ...My husband, he's not in favour of unions. He said 'You're wasting your money, they're not gonna do anything for you'

and she was vehemently anti-union herself;

> I think the unions don't do anything for you, quite honestly. You see all these unions on the telly. What do they do for people really, in the long run? They don't do anything. They come out on strike. Yea, fine, but what's happening with the dockers strike now?[77] No wonder we've got no ports in Liverpool. They're always on strike. I can't see the point of coming out on strike because you've got a dispute. I mean, if they sack men, or get rid of men, there's a reason for it all the time. I just can't see the point, I think it's ridiculous, I really do - standing there, screaming their heads off. If there's a job to be done, do it. Get on with it. Being on strike isn't gonna help their wives and families. I've never agreed with it. I really haven't. I don't even know why I joined it at Alldays, but I did, but I backed out, 'cos with my age, I thought it would be more beneficial to put my money towards my pension.

Thus, it would seem to be the case that Pam's antagonism towards trade unions is not due to her past experience in other jobs. Her negativity was either due to her experiences of the union at her current workplace, her husband's hostile views, or knowledge gained from the media.

Like Pam, Felicity had also been a trade union member in one of her previous jobs (as an audio typist in a bank). Felicity could not remember anything about the trade union's performance when she worked at the bank, nor did she make any criticisms of its effectiveness. It would seem that her negativity towards trade unions was not influenced by any past trade union membership or direct personal experience of unions. What does seem to have influenced Felicity's views is her father's experience of trade unionism (i.e. indirect personal experience). He had recently been made redundant by his employer (a car manufacturer) and duly accepted the redundancy package which was offered. However, one month later the package was doubled. Although the union were attempting to resolve this with the company, the dispute was still ongoing at the time of the interview;

> The unions are useless, you know, when you hear of an incidence like that. My Dad lost a lot of money - thousands of pounds. The unions are very sort of... They're on the side of [car manufacturer], and I think well, they seem to have run their pack and they're running with the pack in this case. They're frightened to death they'll be frozen out, so if you tell me that unions are good, well in that incident, they're no good, because they're following their, you know, they're frightened to death of their own jobs.

Finally, Lisa Wark, who was employed in the unorganized workplace was also critical of trade unionism and said she would not join a trade union if one was to organize in Cheaper DIY as she perceived unions to be 'a dying breed'. This was

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[77] For a detailed account of the strike, see Lavalette and Kennedy (1996).

particularly surprising as she had been a trade union representative in one of her previous jobs for a short while (Lisa made no criticism of the role of the union in her former job although she did criticise the union members for their lack of support). Perhaps of more influence on Lisa's opinions was the experience of her husband. He had recently given up his role as a union branch secretary to become a manager in the bus company where he worked. Consequently, he had undergone a considerable amount of criticism from the union members in the branch for accepting this promotion. It would seem more probable therefore, that Lisa's negative opinions were more to do with these criticisms of her husband, rather than her experiences as a trade union representative some nine years earlier.

This section has discussed the attitudes of a small group of women in the sample who are opposed to trade unions. Their opposition towards trade unionism stems from their own personal experiences, the experiences or attitudes of husbands / other family members, or from reports by the media. However, this is not to suggest that the influence of these men's attitudes on those of their wives is a one way process. On the contrary, it is logical to assume that husband's experiences and / or attitudes affect their wives attitudes and vice versa although these issues are not explored in this thesis.

9.3 Conclusion

This chapter began by outlining favourable attitudes towards trade unions, advocated by an overwhelming majority of the sample (41 interviewees). A clear finding to emerge from the research is that as may be expected, women's favourability towards trade unions is affected by their experiences of trade unionism. All of the women who were favourable towards trade unions either recalled positive experiences of trade unions during their own working life time and / or mentioned their husbands / other family members' experiences. The chapter then went on to unpack why some of the women who had favourable attitudes towards trade unions were also critical of them. It was the case that these women were critical of union militancy over trivial issues. Thus, they felt it important that unions should have some power, but that they should not abuse this power. Again, these women illustrated their attitudes with reference to their own personal experiences or those of

their husbands / other family members and the portrayal of trade unions in the media was also an important factor here. These women raised their concerns of the way trade unions were operating in their local labour markets, fearing that the excessive and unrealistic demands of these unions may drive employers from their locality. Section one concluded by discussing what may be an increasing problem for trade unions: that there are a small group of women who do not know anything about trade unions as they have no experience of trade unions. These women were unable to say whether they would like to join a trade union in their workplace or even indeed, if they had favourable attitudes towards trade unions. It is speculated then, that due to several reasons, this may become an increasing trend. Section two discussed hostile attitudes towards trade unions. The women who were critical of trade unionism, or opposed to unionisation in principle had either had negative experiences of trade unionism themselves or had husband's / other family members who had unfavourable attitudes towards or negative experiences of trade unionism. The section concluded by asserting that the influence of husbands experiences and / or attitudes are likely to be part of a two-way process.

The key point to emerge from this chapter then is that even though union power has been reduced by a succession of conservative governments throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of women in this sample remained supportive of the ideals and principles of trade unionism (this also reflects the findings in the SCELI survey, that 39 per cent of the sample thought union membership had become more important over the last five years compared to 15 per cent who thought it was less important. Gallie 1996:146). An important finding is that it is not the case that these women are opposed to trade unions because they work part-time nor that those women who have low levels of work commitment are 'anti-union'. Perhaps the most striking thing which comes out so clearly in the quotes is that the women's attitudes in this sample are probably very similar to those of male and female full-time workers. Their attitudes are related to the positive and negative experiences of themselves and their families, to the perceived impact of industrial disputes in their local labour markets and to the media coverage of disputes more distant from their vicinity and experience. Furthermore, attitudes to trade unionism appear to have a complex relationship to trade union membership. For example, two of the anti-union

women were trade union members while six of the eight non-union members employed in the organized workplaces had favourable attitudes towards trade unions. As concluded in chapter eight, those women who are critical of union effectiveness are not opposed to unions. This raises interesting questions then, of why women have belief in the principles of unions but don't feel committed to supporting them in their work environment. Why isn't their support for unions translated into membership? Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the way unions have approached women and part-time workers, as discussed in chapters one and two.

10 Conclusion

One of the recent debates in the sociology of women's employment has centred around orientations to work. For a substantial period of time, it was generally agreed that demand-side factors determined women's employment, however, the debate around women's labour supply has now been re-opened. The first aim of this thesis was to assess the labour supply of female part-time workers. The research explored why the interviewees worked part-time and the route by which they entered part-time work. The research also aimed to uncover whether female part-time workers are a homogeneous group, with high levels of satisfaction and low levels of commitment to work. The second aim of the thesis was to examine female part-time workers' attitudes towards and experiences of trade unions. Since the late 1970s trade union membership has suffered massive losses. These losses are attributed to several factors, one of which is the restructuring of the labour market and the increase in part-time and other forms of a-typical employment. Some commentators speculate that part-time workers are less likely to want to join a trade union as they have low work commitment. Bearing these issues in mind, the thesis set out to explore whether attitudes to work are related to attitudes towards trade unions or if more complex factors affect the trade union membership of part-time workers.

The thesis contributes to the sociological literature in that it provides an insight into the working lives and aspirations of a group of women who work part-time in low level jobs. Until now this has been an important omission within the sociology of women's employment: the majority of recent research on women's attitudes to work has concentrated on women in part-time jobs higher up the occupational structure. These studies are invaluable as they show how part-time work can be a positive bridging function: women in professional jobs are able to successfully retain their position within the occupational structure and combine work and family life. However, although encouraging, this is not the common experience for the majority of women who work part-time in Britain. Most part-time jobs are concentrated at the bottom of the occupational structure, where women (mainly with

low level qualifications) become trapped. The second important omission in the literature on part-time workers concerns their trade union membership. Indeed, it is surprising that the area of part-time workers and trade unions has not attracted more attention considering that trade union membership continues to decline and the rise in part time work is argued to be a factor associated with this. Apart from structural explanations of part-time workers' trade union membership, a common perception is that part-time workers have low interest in joining a trade union because of their low attachment to work. However, although this area has attracted some speculation little existing literature has addressed this area. This concluding chapter begins by summarising the main empirical findings of the research. It then relates these findings to the sociological theories discussed in chapter two, while section 10.4 concludes.

10.1 Conducting the Research

The research is based on in-depth qualitative interviews with a group of 50 female part-time workers employed as check out operators or general assistants in three national retail companies in the North West. The aim of the research was not to generalise the findings to all part-time workers but to explore the diverse attitudes and experiences of a group of women with very similar personal characteristics. For the most part, these women had low level qualifications and were married to men employed in working class occupations. It is likely that this group of workers have very different orientations and aspirations to other groups of part-time workers in the labour market. For example, male and female students and older male part-time workers may have different orientations to work and attitudes towards joining a trade union at their workplace. Indeed, it would be fruitful to examine these issues in a larger qualitative study, and to contrast the attitudes and experiences of employees in different sectors.[78] Unfortunately the sample is confined to the attitudes of White women. Even though statistics show that ethnic minority women are less likely to

[78] Hakim (1991) has noted that we need to understand men's attitudes and orientations to work in order to gain a deeper understanding of women's attitudes to work. Similarly, she argues that it is important to examine the orientations and aspirations of full-time home-makers. Other commentators stress the importance of a longitudinal approach when assessing attitudes to work (Procter and Padfield 1999).

work part-time than White women, it is still surprising that none of the interviewees were from minority ethnic groups.

Another caveat is that the research is confined to part-time workers in one sector. However, this sector was carefully selected in order to reflect employment which is typical to low level part-time jobs in the service industries. The retail sector is a high user of part-time employment and employs the largest absolute number of part-time workers; part-time work in retail is broadly characteristic of part-time work in general; part-time work in retail is expanding in the context of important restructuring of the sector and finally, retail has low levels of trade union density. The companies used in the case study were chosen for their union status: two of these companies recognised a trade union while the third did not. A range of members and non-members were interviewed in the organised workplaces, while employees who did not have the opportunity to join a trade union were interviewed in the third workplace. A final point to note about the research is that it was conducted in the North West of England, which historically has higher levels of trade union density than some other geographical areas.

Despite the inevitable problems of representativeness which arise with a small scale qualitative project, studies such as this make a valuable contribution to the sociology of work and employment. There is a growing body of large-scale survey data on attitudes to work which allows us to identify important patterns and trends (for example, the recent SCELI surveys and the *Employment in Britain* survey). However, in order to place attitudes in context, we need to generate rich qualitative data which is more adept at tapping the preferences which individuals hold and the constraints which they face in terms of their employment decisions. This up to date research complements much of the existing survey data on attitudes towards work and trade unionism by teasing out the 'stories' behind these surveys. For example, the material on past experiences and recollections of trade unions is particularly rich and helps to explain why interviewees may be unfavourable towards certain aspects of trade unionism. By its very nature, qualitative research gives interviewees a platform on which to discuss their own experiences and attitudes.

10.2 The Empirical Findings

The empirical chapters began by exploring work histories in depth. Commentators have stressed the particular importance of using work histories to understand women's working lives. By examining work histories we are able to gain an understanding of the effect of certain life events on an individual's labour force participation. In order to understand and locate an individual's attitudes, orientations and aspirations with regard to their employment, it is essential to be able to locate these within their previous employment experiences. For example, we know that interviewees compare their present situation with their past work experiences when arriving at a decision of how satisfied they are with their employment.

The research demonstrates the effect which motherhood has on 'employment careers'. Of course, the onset of motherhood did not result in part-time employment for all of the interviewees - some had been employed in full-time jobs and switched to part-time work at a later stage in their working lives. The research highlights the different routes by which women enter part-time employment and provides interesting data with regard to the decisions which women make in relation to their return to the labour market. This usually depended on the age of their child(ren) and financial pressures. The research supports previous research findings which show that women make decisions regarding their employment status within a household context. Some 15 years on from the *1980 Women and Employment Survey* (Martin and Roberts 1984) the reasons given by the women in the sample for returning to work were the same. The common features in women's employment profiles were their need to earn money, whilst being available to provide child care and deal with housework.

The satisfactions and dissatisfactions of interviewees were also explored in the research. The research illustrates that the high levels of satisfaction expressed by female part-time workers in surveys is somewhat superficial. For the most part, this group of women employed in low level jobs were not highly satisfied with the extrinsic aspects of their jobs. What emerged clearly from this data is that women form their answer as to how satisfied they are with certain aspects of their job in the context of the constraints which operate on their labour supply. For example, the

preferred work schedules and / or number of hours worked by many of the interviewees were different to their current hours. These women were constrained by their family commitments to work these hours. With regard to pay although many interviewees would like to be earning more money, they express satisfaction with this aspect of their job and justify it by 'weighing up' how much other jobs / employers in the locality pay, or noting the perceived low skill level needed to perform their jobs. The same picture emerged with the women's satisfaction with their jobs overall. Clearly, a distinction emerges between whether the women are satisfied with their jobs, or satisfied with their employment. The research indicates that female part-timers in low level jobs are more likely to express satisfaction with their employment (that their jobs are close to home and convenient) rather than being satisfied with their job (the nature of the work). Crucially then, what the research highlights is that while many women may initially say they are satisfied with aspects of their jobs, their preferences indicate that these women are constrained and their employment decisions are to some extent determined for them by the opportunities which are available to them. These women are not able to make unconstrained 'choices' as has been suggested. For example, when deciding how satisfied they are with their hours, women with young children take into account their child care arrangements and consider how feasible it would be for them to work different hours.

Orientations to work were uncovered by probing around the women's aspirations and future plans. The research demonstrates that Hakim's thesis is simplistic: female part-time workers are not a homogeneous group. Women who work part-time, in some of the poorest jobs in the occupational structure are not without employment commitment. Even in this sample of women with very similar profiles, several differing orientations to work are clear. There were a group of women who were involuntary workers and worked for financial reasons. These women would give up work if they could afford to. A second group of women resembled Hakim's 'Modern Homemakers', while another group of women had more ambitious orientations to work. This latter group of women hold long-term goals for their future employment and plan to get promoted or gain more qualifications in the future. For these women then, their part-time jobs were 'just for now'.

After examining the women's attitudes and orientations to work, the research was then able to explore issues centred around part-time workers' trade union membership. Attitudes towards unions were explored to understand whether part-time workers are opposed to trade unions. Trade union biographies were detailed in order to provide some context to the women's attitudes towards trade unions. The research highlighted that most of the interviewees had some direct experience of trade unionism, either as members or by being employed as a non-member in an unorganised workplace. Although a minority of women had been union representatives in their former jobs, for the most part these women had not been involved with the union other than by way of being a member and occasionally attending meetings. Nonetheless, the majority of interviewees with experiences of trade unions had positive evaluations of their experiences.

On the whole then, the research highlighted that this group of female part-time workers had positive attitudes towards trade unions, with many saying that trade unions had too little power. Indeed, several of the women spoke of the need for protection now that the labour market was more 'flexible' and competitive. However, a substantial proportion of interviewees were critical of union militancy over trivial reasons. Inevitably, their attitudes to unions were shaped by their past and current experiences and also by the experiences of close family members. There is some ambiguity around what women have seen on television and what they have seen in their own locality and this may contradict or reinforce what they thought before. A small proportion of the sample were 'anti-union'. This usually related to their own or their husband's experiences of trade unionism. Attitudes to trade unionism appear to have a complex relationship to trade union membership: women who are favourable to trade unions are not necessarily trade union members even when they had a recognised trade union at their workplace. Similarly, it is not unusual for employees with strong anti-union views to be union members.

The union members in the sample expressed the same reasons for joining a trade union as documented in the literature: that trade unions are a 'backup'. The trade union members valued the protection offered by their workplace union, even though some were critical of the union's effectiveness. However, their criticisms of

the workplace union did not mean they were critical of trade unions in a wider context. Several reasons were given for non-membership by the women in the organised workplaces. These ranged from not being asked to join the workplace union to the workplace union being ineffective. Indeed, several women who made criticisms of the union's effectiveness had opted out of the trade union at their workplace. A further reason expressed was that the workplace trade union did not adequately represent the interests of part-time workers.

The majority of women in the unorganised workplace said they would join a trade union if they were given the opportunity in their workplace. These women expressed similar reasons for the benefits of trade union membership as the union members and also felt they would be in a better position to raise grievances if they had a trade union at their workplace. However, a substantial minority of employees in this workplace were unsure as to whether they would like to join a trade union or not as they felt they did not know enough about trade unionism. This is highlighted as a potentially significant future trend i.e. an increasing proportion of employees (especially young entrants to the labour market) have little experience of trade unionism and may therefore be unaware of the benefits of union membership. A smaller group of women were unsure if trade union representation was necessary in their company. These women spoke about instances (whether experienced directly or indirectly) of trade unions wielding their power for trivial reasons. Finally, a minority of women in the sample (employed in both the organised and unorganised workplaces) said they would not join a trade union as they were opposed to the principles of unionization.

In short, these findings contribute to our understanding of the attitudes and experiences of part-time workers with regard to their work and trade union membership. The following section will now relate these findings to the theories examined in chapter two.

10.3 Returning to the Theories

Chapter two showed how supply-side theories of the labour market have evolved from women's two-roles theory, through human capital theory to new home economics theory. The chapter illustrated how debates around women's supply of labour are currently dominated by Hakim's 'preference theory' (Hakim 1998a, 1998b) and her critics. To briefly recapitulate, these criticisms of Hakim's 'preference theory' are two fold: firstly, that employment status cannot be used to identify different types of worker and secondly, not all women are able to make unconstrained choices and decisions with regard to their employment careers. The research reported in this thesis provides further evidence for both of these criticisms.

With regard to Hakim's assertion that employment status can be used to identify different types of worker, the research reported here undermines Hakim's claims. In chapter two, I outlined how various empirical studies of female part-timers in high level jobs show that this group of women do not fit Hakim's description of home-makers (Caven 1998; Crompton 1997; Crompton and Harris 1998a, 1998b). Arguably then, the 'prime candidates' for Hakim's home-makers may be more likely to be found in jobs at the bottom end of the occupational structure. Furthermore, potential home-makers would be highly likely to be in their 30s and 40s with dependent children. Hence, if Hakim's home-makers are to be found anywhere, one could assume they would be found in the women interviewed for this research.

Indeed, it was certainly the case that a high proportion of the sample had characteristics and attitudes similar to those identified by Hakim: a number of involuntary workers and modern home-makers existed. What we need to remember here though, is that involuntary working and 'home-making' attitudes are not exclusive to female part-timers. A considerable proportion of women who work full-time and men would also share these attitudes. Conversely, not all of the female part-timers in this sample matched Hakim's home-making criteria: a substantial proportion expressed significant work commitment and had more ambitious orientations to work. Ultimately then, the research reported here goes some way towards overcoming Hakim's limited explanation of attitudes and orientations to work by adding more insight into the attitudes of women in low-level jobs. What the

research shows is that attitudes to work are much more complex than Hakim suggests.

The empirical research reported in the thesis also provides evidence that not all women are able to make unconstrained choices and decisions with regard to their employment. As outlined in chapter two, Hakim argues that women who work part-time 'choose' domesticity and the marriage career. Indeed, this was certainly the case for a substantial proportion of the women interviewed for this research - they were happy with their current situation and had no desire to change it either now or in the future. However, not all of the women felt they had a 'choice'. Many were dissatisfied with their current employment situation, remarking that their jobs were 'just for now'.

Fundamentally then, these women were disadvantaged in terms of their class position. The majority of interviewees were working class with low level qualifications and therefore did not have the necessary human capital to make the transition to meaningful, well-paid, full-time work. Rather than making unconstrained choices, these working-class women had made rational household decisions with regard to their employment; their male partners were able to earn more money, so the major responsibility for child care fell upon the women. Additionally, these women were institutionally constrained (by a lack of affordable child care) and socially constrained (by the prescribed cultural norms within their society which dictate that women rather than men should care for children and that this care should extend until the children reach an age deemed old enough to fend for themselves). In sum, what these findings show are that many women (as well as many men) still face constraints with regard to their employment participation.

Nevertheless, despite the heavy criticism of Hakim's work, she does make a valuable contribution in the area of women's employment as she has placed attitudes and orientations to work back on the research agenda. We now need to take these empirical findings and use them to re-design the existing explanations and theories of labour supply. An integrated approach, which highlights the diversity of women's (and men's) attitudes and preferences towards work, along with the constraints

which they face in making these decisions, is necessary. Hence, although the labour market participation of some individuals can be explained solely in terms of their individual tastes and preferences, this is not the case for all. It is here where we need to build into the model an understanding of the social constraints which operate on labour supply (e.g. the hours and opportunities which the employer is willing to offer), along with an understanding of the role played by the state (e.g. the provision of child care) and an individual's social class position.

With regard to female part-time workers' low trade union membership, chapter two outlined the three theories which can be used to account for this: structural explanations, individual explanations and the approach which trade unions have taken towards part-time workers. Structural explanations go some way to explain why it is that part-timers are less likely to be members of a trade union than full-time workers: part-time workers are concentrated in occupations and industries where unionisation levels are low. However, they cannot fully explain the differential between part-time and full-timers' membership rates: even when part-time workers are employed in an organised workplace they are still less likely than full-time workers to be trade union members. Therefore, it is useful to incorporate Individual explanations and the approach which trade unions have taken towards part-timers in an attempt to understand their membership rates.

The thesis concentrated on individual explanations of part-timers' trade union membership rates, in particular, attitudes towards trade unions. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the second aim of the thesis was to assess whether female part-time workers' low work commitment meant they were less likely to want to be trade union members. Although it is popularly acknowledged that part-time workers attach less importance to joining a trade union than full-time workers, this was not the case with the women interviewed for this research: it became clear that commitment to work and attitudes to trade unions were unrelated. However, the findings reported here highlight that female part-timers' attitudes to trade unions are more complex than commonly thought.

Although academic researchers such as Gallie (1996) have suggested that part-timers' lower unionisation rates reflect the structural conditions in which they work rather than anything distinctive about women's attitudes, I argued that we do not have any qualitative research which addresses female part-timers' attitudes towards trade unions. This research set out to redress this balance and contributes valuable findings to this under researched area. The empirical findings show that female part-timers' attitudes towards trade unions are formed in relation to several factors. These include the effectiveness of the workplace trade union and past experiences / family experiences of trade unions. For example, those women with positive experiences of trade unions (whether in their current or previous jobs) were supportive of unions. This supports Sinclair's (1995) quantitative analysis of the SCELI data, that female part-time workers' attitudes towards trade unions are influenced by whether or not the women had favourable experiences of trade unions. Clearly then, attitudes towards and experiences of trade unions do affect the union membership of female part-time workers.

However, all this leads one to question to what extent the attitudes of female part-timers are any different to those held by female full-time workers and men. Of course, I can only pose this as an interesting question for future research, but I suggest that women's employment status does not affect their attitudes towards trade unions and their attitudes are no different to the attitudes of the rest of the working population. For example, male and female full-timers' trade union membership is also likely to be affected by whether or not they have favourable experiences of trade unions and so on. However, this is a tentative finding as women who work full-time were not included in the research. Further research with male and female full- and part-time workers would be necessary to explore this suggestion further.

With regard to the trade union approach to part-time workers the research reported in this thesis did not explicitly examine this and therefore cannot make any solid claims in this area. However, what the research did show is that when asked if they felt the union represented their interests, only a tiny proportion of women mentioned that the trade union did not adequately represent the interests of part-time

workers. Other interesting findings to emerge include that some women had not been asked to join the union at their workplace, while other women stated that they don't know anything about trade unions or were unsure if a trade union at their workplace would result in better management / employee relations. Both of these findings help to explain why it is that trade union membership rates are still lower for part-time workers even when they have the opportunity to join a trade union at their workplace. It appears that unions still have a lot of work to do with regard to successfully targeting part-timers in recruitment drives and campaigns and educating the existing and future workforce of the benefits of trade union organisation.

As with the explanation of women's attitudes to work, the research reported in this thesis suggests that an integrated approach is needed in order to fully understand part-time workers' trade union membership rates. Non-membership is due to a combination of structural factors, attitudes towards trade unions and the approach which trade unions have taken towards part-time workers.

10.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is likely that the proportion of women in paid employment will continue to increase. Perhaps the greatest factor influencing this increase is the rising educational level of younger generations of women (Walby 1997) and their entries into jobs higher up the occupational structure. These changes will have implications for the sociology of gender and the sociology of the family. For example, young educated women will face fewer constraints than their mothers in returning to the labour market. In short, due to their differing experiences, it is likely that younger generations of women will have work orientations different to their mothers'. Indeed, several commentators have argued that this will create divisions between these young, highly qualified women and the older, unqualified women who have fewer opportunities available to them. This in turn may feed through to a more complex understanding of work orientations.

The implications of women's continual increase in the labour market for trade unions is that they need to continue to recruit, retain and encourage the participation

of women, part-time workers and other a-typical groups within trade union structures. It is clear from this research that trade unions have not died a death in the eyes of the workforce, even though their power has been weakened by a number of factors over the last two decades. After nearly 20 years of hostility towards trade unions by the state, unions are now operating in a more favourable political climate. We have recently witnessed the introduction of the *1999 Employment Relations Act*, which will reinstate the right of statutory recognition to trade unions[79]. It remains to be seen if these legislative changes can provide trade unions with a much needed boost to increase their membership levels.

[79] If employers fail to respond to unions' request for recognition within a specified time limit (in companies with 21 or more staff), the union can refer the case to the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC). At this stage, the procedure to award recognition begins. The first step the CAC takes is to encourage the parties to settle the matter between themselves. If this fails, the CAC can either award recognition if more than half of the workforce are in the union and there is no evidence to suggest these employees do not wish the union to bargain collectively on their behalf or hold a ballot. To win the ballot, 40 per cent of those eligible to vote have to vote in favour of recognition, and a majority (50 per cent plus one) also have to vote in favour. If the union fails, it cannot reapply to the CAC for three years. Regarding disciplinary hearings, this gives unions to right to represent an employee at a disciplinary or grievance hearing regardless of whether s(he) is a union member and whether the employer recognises a union (Labour Research 1999c:28).

Appendix

A) INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FEMALE PART-TIME WORKERS

First of all, I would like to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I'd like to stress that anything you say during this interview will be completely confidential, and that your interview will not be shown to your employer. When I write up the interview material, your name will also be changed. Please feel free to talk and elaborate as much as you want during the interview. There are no right or wrong answers, I am interested in your opinions. I'll start by asking you some details about yourself, about the jobs which you've had since you left school, and then about your current job.

Biographical Details
Name:
Date of birth and age:
Date of interview:
Marital status:
Does your husband / partner work?
If yes, is he self employed?
What is his job?
If no, are you the only wage earner?

Child Care / Elderly Care Arrangements
How old is / are your child(ren)?
If over 16, do they live at home or elsewhere?
Who looks / looked after the children while you are / were, at work?
What do you do if problems occur with these arrangements?
How satisfactory are these arrangements?
Would you prefer a different set of arrangements?
Do you look after any elderly relatives or neighbours?

Education
Did you obtain any qualifications whilst you were at school?
How old were you when you left school?
Have you been on any training courses, in work or otherwise, or gained any qualifications since leaving school?

Work History
If you think back to when you left school, I'd like you to tell me of all the *main* jobs which you've had, and think about why you took the job, how long you worked in each of them, whether you were full or part-time, and why you left (e.g. to have children). You can also include any periods of unemployment, and any voluntary work.

This section also covers your history of trade union membership. For example, if you've ever belonged to a union in any of your previous jobs. If not, have you ever worked anywhere where there was a trade union? Were there ever any disputes?

Repeat for all main jobs - make list.

Starting with your first job, then, what was your job? Type of industry?
How did you get this job?
Why did you take this job?
Were you full or part-time?
Were you ever offered promotion in this job?
    If yes, did you take it?
Did you enjoy the job?
What did you enjoy / dislike about it?
Why did you leave this job?
    (If left to have child, how old was the child when you took your next job? Who looked after the child? Why did you decide to go back to work at this time?)

Thinking back to the time when you left school, what did you want to do / to achieve in your life, job wise and family wise?

If you were (age left school at) again, would you do the do the same thing? Would you take the same path?

Looking back, then, to what extent have you been able to do what you wanted / achieved what you set out to achieve with your jobs and your life?

Trade Union History
Thinking of all the main jobs which you've mentioned, were you ever a member of a trade union?

<u>Previous Union Membership</u>
Which job was this in?
Which union did you belong to?
What influenced your decision to join?
Were you ever a union rep?
If no, did you ever think about getting more involved?
Did you ever attend union meetings?
What sorts of things did the union do for its members?
Do you feel the union represented your interests?
Did it represent some people better than others?

<u>No Membership But Union at Work Place</u>
Were you ever asked to join the union?
Why didn't you join?
Would you have liked to join the union?
What sorts of things did the union do for its members?

<u>No Membership - No Union at Work Places</u>

Would you have like to have joined a trade union?
Why do you think there was no trade union to join in this work place / these work places?
Was there any form of employee representation at your work place?
How were problems / grievances solved?

Disputes at Previous Work Places
Were there ever any disputes at places where you've worked in the past?
Was industrial action ever taken?
Were you involved in these disputes?

Current Job
What is your current job?
How did you come to get this job?
How long have you been in this job?
Are you temporary or permanent?
Which department do you work in?
Have you done any other jobs at ....?
Do you have any other part-time jobs?
    If yes, discuss (hours, where, what doing, why?)

Hours and Overtime
How many hours per week are you contracted for?
What are your days, hours and shifts of work?
Do you ever work overtime?
    If no, why not?
    If yes, do you have a choice in this?
How much notice are you given? Is this a problem?
How much overtime do you usually do a week?
Have you always worked these hours?
    If no, how long did you work (other) hours for?
    Why were these changes made?
Are you satisfied with your hours of work? If yes, why?
If you could choose your own hours of work, any hours, which would you choose?
    Would you work the same number of hours, or would you prefer to work more or less?
    What about in the future?
Do you get any breaks at work?

Home, Family and Work
What do you do in your spare time / social life? Do you have any past-times?
How well do you feel that you manage your home and your job?
Why would you say you work part-time, rather than full-time or not at all?
If working PT due to lack of child care, if child care were available would you prefer to work full-time?

Pay
Would you mind telling me how much you earn per hour?
Do you get paid for overtime?
    If yes, what is the rate of pay for overtime?

Are you satisfied / dissatisfied with your pay?
How important is your income for managing household wise?
What sorts of things do you spend your income on?
If the situation arose where you could manage financially without going to work, would you still go to work at (Company)? Would you work somewhere else?

Job Security
Do you feel your job is secure at the moment / future?
Do you feel your husband / partner's job is secure?
Is it a source of worry to you?

Bonus Scheme
Is there a bonus scheme at your place of work? (Do you get discounts?)
Are you included in it?
    If not, why not?
Are you satisfied / dissatisfied with this?

Sick Pay
Have you ever been off sick?
    If yes, did you get paid for this?
    If no, would you get paid if you were sick?
Are you satisfied / dissatisfied with this?

Pension
Are you included in the company pension?
    If not, why not?
Are you satisfied / dissatisfied with this?

Holidays
Do you get paid holidays?
    If not, why not?
If you needed to take unpaid time off from work would you be able to do that?
Have you ever had problems trying to take holidays / lieu days?
Are you satisfied / dissatisfied with this?

Promotion and Training
Have you ever received any training for your job?
Do you think you know how to do your job properly, or are there things which you feel that you should know about to do your job?
Do you feel that your current job makes full use of your qualifications, abilities and experience?
Do you think that your job will lead to promotion?
    If yes, what?
    If no, do you think it could lead to promotion?
Would you like to be promoted?
    If yes, what to?
    If no, why?

Job Content
What does your job involve?

How varied is your work?
Are you ever asked to do anything else?
Do you consider your job to be skilled?
What skills do you need to do your job?
How much responsibility do you have at work?

Job Satisfaction
How interesting do you find your job?
Do you ever find your job boring?
If yes, how do you deal with this?
Do you feel your current job makes full use of your abilities, qualifications, and experience?
Do any parts of your work make you feel like you have achieved or accomplished something?
Does anything in your work make you feel irritable or frustrated?
How much effort would you say you put into your work?
Would you like to change anything about your job?
Would you say that you like your job? What do you enjoy / dislike about it?
Would you say that you are satisfied with your job?
Are there any other jobs where you work which you would rather do, (even though the pay is roughly the same as your own job?) (If yes what, and have you ever applied for one of these jobs?)
Would you say that there are better places to work for someone doing a job like yours, or is this as good as anywhere?
If there were plenty of jobs available, would you like to change the job that you do or the place where you work? (If yes, where / what job would you like to do? Have you applied for one of these jobs recently?)
Looking back on all the jobs you've had, how does this job compare to the others that you've done? For example, would you say that this is the best one? (If no, which one was?)

Future Plans
Do you expect to stay in the same job in the future?
Would you like to work full-time in the future?
If yes, do you think that will be here? Anywhere else?
What can you see yourself doing in five years time and what would you like to be doing?

Relationships between Management and Employees
What are relationships like between management and employees in your work place?
Do you feel appreciated by the management?
Do you feel like you are part of the company?
Do you ever attend meetings in (company)? (E.g. huddles, listening groups, etc.).
Do you, or have you in the past, had any grievances / problems at [company]? (e.g. changing hours, wages, holidays, accidents, clash of personalities, etc.)
If yes, who did you report these problems to? What happened?
If no, who would you report any grievances to?
Can you think of any disputes which have taken place at this workplace? (e.g. over pay, hours, working conditions).

Has industrial action ever taken place at this workplace? (e.g. go slow, overtime ban, postal ballots, strikes).
Did you have any involvement in this action / any other involvement?
Are you a union member at the moment?
Is there a union which you could join at your present workplace?

Union Member at Organised Work Place
How long have you been a member of (union) for?
Do you attend union meetings?
If yes, when did you last attend a meeting?
If no, why don't you attend meetings?
Have you ever been a union rep?
If yes, why are you no longer a rep?
If no would you like to become more involved?
What influenced your decision to join (union)?
What sorts of things does (union) do for its members? (Do you know anybody at your work place who has used (union) for anything?)
Do you feel that (union) represents your interests?
Is there anything which you would like (union) to do which it doesn't already?

Non-union Member at Organised Work Place
Have you ever been asked to join (union)?
If yes, why did you decide not to join?
If no, why do you think this is?
Do you feel that the union at (Company) could do anything for you?
If no, do you feel that another union would be able to do more for you?
Would you like to join (union)?
Would you like to become involved in (union)?
Can you think of any event which would make you want to join (union)?
Are there any issues which (union) could address which would make you want to join?
What sorts of things does the union at your workplace do for its members?
Do you feel that (union) represents some people better than others?

Opted Out of Union
When did you opt out of (union)?
How did you go about doing this?
Has anyone else you know at (Company) opted out of the union?
Have you ever been asked to sign up again to join (union)?
If yes, why did you decide not to join?
If no, why do you think this is?
Do you feel that the union at (company) could do anything for you?
If no, do you feel that another union would be able to do more for you?
Would you like to join (union) at (company)?
Would you like to become involved in the (union)?
Can you think of any event which would make you want to sign up again as a union member?
Are there any issues which (union) could address which would make you want to join up again?
What sorts of things does (union) at your work place do for its members?

Do you feel that the union represents some people better than others?

Unorganised Work Place
Has there ever been a trade union at this workplace?
If yes, why is it no longer there?
Have attempts ever been made by a trade union to recruit members?
Do you think a union will ever organize this workplace?
Do you think a union could do anything for you?
If there were to be a vote to join a trade union in your workplace, would you vote to join or not?
Would you like to join a trade union?
Is there any form of employee representation? (How do employees solve problems / grievances?)

What Should Trade Unions Do?
What issues should unions be concerned with?
Are there any areas where unions interfere where they shouldn't? (For instance, would you say they've got too much power or not enough?)
How useful do you think trade unions are?
Do you think trade union membership is important?

Influence of Family
Does your husband / partner belong to a union?
If yes, which union is this?
Does he attend meetings? (How regularly does he attend these meetings?)
Is he, or has he ever been a union rep?

If no, why does he not belong to a union? (Is there a union at his work place?)

Do / did either of your parents / siblings belong to a trade union?
If yes, did s(he) hold any positions in the union?

Thanks very much for letting me interview you.
Are there any areas which you feel I should have asked you about?
Is there anything you would like to ask me?

B) INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Biographical Details
Name:
Date of birth and age:
Date of interview:

Current Workplace
Pay and Benefits
Do you think that (company) pay fair wages?
Do you think the bonus system in (company) is fair?
Do you consider (company's) sick pay to be adequate?
Do you consider the pension scheme to be fair?
Are (company's) holiday arrangements fair?

Union Representative History
How many other reps are there at your work place?
How long have you been a union rep for?
How did you become a rep?
What influenced your decision to become a rep?
How capable do you feel in dealing with problems which arise within (company)?
Do you plan to continue as a rep? / planning to move jobs?
Would you say that the management relate to you differently due to your position as union rep? Do you ever feel under threat?

Management and Employees
What are relationships like between management and employees in your workplace?
Can you think of any disputes which have taken place at this workplace?
Has industrial action ever taken place at this workplace? (For example, go slows / demonstrations / strikes, etc.)

Management and Union
What facilities do (company) make available for you to carry out your role as rep? (Office / use of phone / time in work to attend to union matters / time off to attend courses etc.).
What sorts of issues do you come into contact over? What would happen - who asks for a meeting?
In general, would you say that the management consult the union on issues to do with the work force or not?
How much influence do you feel that the union has in (company)?
Generally, would you say that (company) is a relatively pro-union, or an anti-union firm?
Have there been any changes in the way the company interacts with the union since you've been there?

The Membership
Have you any idea how many members you represent?
Do you know who the union members are?
What sorts of issues do members raise with you?
Thinking of the members you represent, are they mostly men or women?

Would you say that there are any differences between representing men and women?
Any differences between representing part-timers and full-timers?

Non-members
Have you ever been asked to assist a non-member?
How are the non-members represented if they have a grievance?

Meetings
Do you have meetings with the members you represent?
What is the attendance like for these meetings?
How useful are these meetings?
Is there anything which would make the attendance at these meetings higher?
Would you change anything about these meetings if you could? (Time, venue?)

Do you attend shop stewards meetings? (If yes, how often?)
Is it convenient for you to get to these meetings? (How do you get there?)
How useful do you consider these meetings to be?

Recruitment
Do you ever try to recruit new members? (new / existing employees?)
Are there any differences in recruiting Part-timers and Full-timers?
Have you any ideas how the membership in your store could be increased?
Have you any ideas how to get the existing members more interested in the union?
What are your views on the union contribution rates?

What should unions do?
What do you think are the most important issues facing the union in this store at the moment?
Are there any things that you think the branch should be doing, but isn't?
Are there any areas where unions interfere where they shouldn't?
How useful do you think trade unions are?
Do you think trade union membership is important?

C) LETTER TO EMPLOYERS

[Name and address]

6 August 1995

Dear [Name of personnel director]

I am currently overseeing two research projects on women's part-time employment - a comparative study of women's part-time employment in Britain and Denmark and a case study of women part-time employees in the retail sector in Britain. It seems that Danish women with family commitments have a preference for part-time employment as much as British women even though childcare facilities are more extensive in Denmark than Britain. The aim of the case study in Britain would be to explore these issues further and to examine the often neglected fact that the majority of women part-time workers choose to work shorter hours and have high levels of job satisfaction.

Myself and my researcher, Ms Sally Walters would like the opportunity to talk to you further about the proposed research, and to discuss the possibilities of interviewing a small number of your employees. We would be grateful for a meeting on the feasibility of the research and the possibility of your assistance with the project at your convenience. I shall look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

Dr Fiona Devine
Lecturer in Sociology

D) LETTER TO EMPLOYEES

10 October 1996

Dear [name of company] employee

I am a research student in the Department of Sociology at Liverpool University. This letter briefly explains about the research which you have been asked to take part in.

The aim of the research is to put together a picture of female part-timers' working lives. Sixty women in the North West will be asked informal questions about the following:

- Previous main jobs
- Ages of children, and if relevant, who looks after them when at work
- Hours of work
- Future employment plans

If possible, the interview will take place in your home at a time that is convenient for you. Your name will be changed, and you will remain anonymous. If you could spare the time to take part in this project, I would very much appreciate it.

Yours sincerely

Sally Walters.

E) COMPUTER ASSISTED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

There is a growing literature on computer assisted qualitative research and this debate has centred around whether qualitative research benefits from these techniques (Buston 1997, Fielding and Lee 1991, Kelle 1995, Weitzman and Miles 1995). On the one hand, computers are seen to speed up the laborious manual techniques used by some qualitative researchers, such as card index systems. Coding and retrieving becomes much quicker thereby allowing more time for analysis (Bryman and Burgess 1994; Richards 1995).

On the other hand, critics have expressed concern over the use of computers in qualitative research. Hesse-Biber (1995) outlines five of these fears. Firstly, critics see that qualitative research will no longer be creative. The qualitative researcher may over rely on the computer instead of thinking for herself. One example of this may be by getting the software to automatically relate code categories, rather than using theoretical insight. Secondly, the line between quantitative and qualitative analysis may become blurred. Qualitative computer packages can deal with large numbers hence some qualitative studies are now as large as quantitative ones. The concern is that in-depth analysis may be sacrificed to meet high volume standards. Moreover, the logic of quantitative and qualitative research are very different - qualitative research cannot be used to make generalizations, but rather it identifies patterns. Thirdly, some software programmes may dictate how the research is to be conducted - it may determine the types of questions asked. Fourthly, the qualitative researcher must be explicit in the procedures and analytical processes used in the generation of data, ultimately making the researcher more accountable. Finally, critics of computer assisted qualitative research fear that there may be a loss of confidentiality regarding the use of multimedia data e.g. videos.

Stanley and Temple (1995) reviewed five of the main packages and concluded that to avoid wasting time, qualitative researchers should use a good word processor as their basic analytic aid. Only when they want to do something which this package can not, should they consider using one of the dedicated packages;

> Such packages are best seen, as we have termed it throughout, as 'analytic aids', not something which in their own right analyzes (Stanley and Temple 1995:190-1).

A useful point made by Stanley and Temple is that it depends how many cases the research involves as to whether the time spent learning the package will pay off i.e. the more cases the more beneficial a specialist package.

Despite the reservations of some commentators, I decided to use the NUD.IST (non-numerical unstructured data: indexing, searching, theory-building) computer package to assist with the data analysis. The interviews were fully transcribed and themes were identified by reading and re-reading the transcripts. The transcripts were then entered into NUD.IST and each document was coded manually which was a time consuming process. Although this could have been done automatically by assigning key words to relevant words or phrases and collecting under a common theme or 'node', it helped to 'get to know the data' by indexing each document individually. The end product was twofold. Firstly, a document database was created which held all of the interview transcripts. These documents could be easily edited or retrieved. Secondly, a tree-structured index system was created. This consisted of categories of themes ('trees') and subcategories within these 'trees', which are known as 'children'. To aid analysis, 'memos' were written about the documents or index categories. As outlined in the NUD.IST manual;

> A QSR NUD.IST project is the product of the researcher's knowledge and organizational and analytical skills. QSR NUD.IST creates an environment to store and powerfully explore data and ideas, to maximize clerical routine and maximize flexibilty, and to discover new ideas and build on them. QSR NUD.IST helps users to:
>
> - manage, explore and search the text of documents;
> - manage and explore ideas about the data;
> - link ideas and construct theories about the data;
> - test theories about the data; and
> - generate reports including statistical summaries (QSR NUD.IST 1995:2).

The data was explored after the documents were indexed in NUD.IST. This involved searching the index system to find links between categories and data. An advantage of the package was that these searches were conducted quickly and could be simple or complex. For example, all documents were searched for the following criteria and then collected;

> all current union members, who have belonged to a trade union in a previous job and are supportive of trade unions and;

all current union members, who have belonged to a trade union in a previous job and are unsupportive of trade unions.

The new categories created as a result of the search were then indexed at a new location and the information used or discarded.

The disadvantages of using NUD.IST to analyze the interviews were twofold. Firstly, rather than being selective, I seemed to index everything, thus ending up with endless categories which were not particularly insightful. Of course, this was a consequence of my own limited experience of analysing qualitative data rather than a shortfall of the package but extremely time consuming nonetheless. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996:26) warn 'although coding may be part of the process of analysis, it should not be seen as a substitute for analysis'. Secondly, I felt detached from the interviews as a whole, rather than being immersed in the data. The basis of the package involves exploring 'chunks' of interview data (which have been indexed by the researcher) rather than the interview as a whole. Although sections of the interview were retrieved, it was necessary to return to the whole interview in order to locate the material in context. At this point I moved away from the computer and went back to the interview transcripts, only returning to NUD.IST to collect information from time to time.

On reflection, I should have persevered with the package. This would have involved deleting unnecessary indexing and revising the index structure rather than abandoning it. However, time was pressing on and I did not feel confident with spending any more time on the package (it had taken about three months to use the package, index all the interviews and do some preliminary analysis). A later version of NUD.IST (N4) is now available along with a text book (Gahan and Hannibal 1998).

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