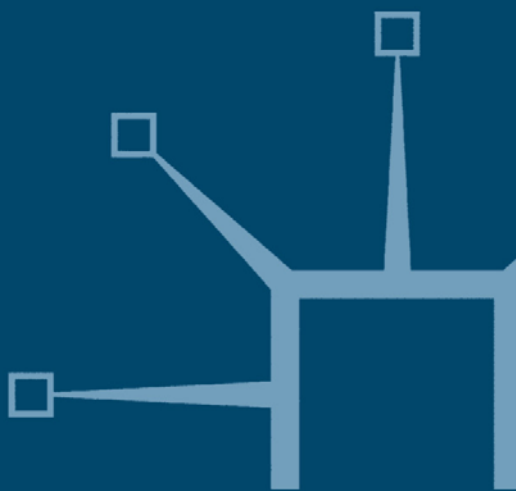


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Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1950s

Stephanie Spencer



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Stephanie Spencer
University College Winchester

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For Georgina

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Recently I found an English exercise book in which, aged nine, I had written: 'When I grow up I would like to be responsible for myself. I would like to have one little girl and get married when I am twenty-eight. I would like to be a private secretary and I would like to be an actress or a nurse. I would keep my hair long and have it in a bun'. In a short paragraph I raised the issues which are the subject of this book. The issues weave together the public and the private, the formal and the informal. First and foremost women claim autonomy and independence, but swiftly following comes dependence, often in the form of motherhood and marriage. Traditional job prospects jostle for priority with notions of domesticity and femininity. The occupations I proposed were unoriginal, but I can trace their origins in home, school and media.

I would like to acknowledge some of the people who have endured my endless discussions on the 1950s. Any misunderstandings or misinterpretations are of course, mine. Colleagues have become friends especially those within the History of Education Society, Women's History Network, the Education Studies Department and Camilla and Andrea in the Centre for the History of Women's Education at University College Winchester. I was very lucky to meet a great group of like minded women during the Royal Holloway Gender and Society MA who provide laughter, criticism and encouragement in equal measure. Sarah Aiston in Durham has shared my interest in the 1950s and the combination of history of education and women's history as research areas. Without the support of three women, Hilary, Joyce and Ruth, *my* career would have looked very different.

So many archivists and librarians have helped that it is difficult to single any out for special mention. However, special thanks must go to Michael Bott, David Doughan, the archivists at the University of Warwick Modern Records Centre and University College Winchester library staff. Random House kindly gave me permission to consult the Chatto and Windus and the Bodley Head archive. It was an extra bonus to meet Evelyn Forbes' granddaughter, Sarah Bauhan and I am grateful for the loan of the 'Reminiscences'.

Financial support from King Alfred's gave me the luxury of full-time research for the initial PhD on which this book is based and I am also

grateful to the London Library for a generous four year grant while I was a student.

Friends and family took on the project enthusiastically; Doreen Cadwgan lent me her collection of *Woman* and *Woman's Own*, Sheran missed her vocation as a research assistant and found willing interview participants and Jill acted as interview guinea pig. The research came to life when I began the series of interviews which are the subject of the final chapter. I was made to feel very welcome by the women who willingly shared their memories and their opinions. Finally, thank you to Peter for his interest and insight into National Service and to Georgie for living with 1950s girls' career decisions when she was trying to make her own.

List of Abbreviations

AAM	Association of Assistant Mistresses in Secondary Schools
CWA	Chatto and Windus Archive
ENEF	Elizabeth Nuffield Educational Fund
GCE	General Certificate of Education
HMA	Headmistresses' Association
NUT	National Union of Teachers
PRO	Public Record Office
SIAS	Social Insurance and the Allied Services (Beveridge Report)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WFL	Women's Freedom League
WMR	Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick
WRAC	Women's Royal Army Corps
WRAF	Women's Royal Air Force
WRNS	Women's Royal Naval Service
WVS	Women's Voluntary Service
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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1

Introduction: The Forgotten Generation

I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig-tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked. One fig was a husband and a happy home with children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Ee Gee, the amazing editor [...] and beyond and above these figs, were many more figs I couldn't quite make out. I saw myself in the crotch of this fig-tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet.¹

Sylvia Plath's metaphor of the fig-tree is a poignant reflection of the decision facing an adolescent girl in the late 1950s. It demonstrates the highly gendered nature of career choice at a time when domesticity and paid work were presented as mutually exclusive. It also suggests that there were similar debates in the United States and in England. This book focuses on the experience of girls making their employment choices in 1950s England and the gendered nature of the concept of 'work'. It raises wider questions about the definitions of work, employment and career for men and women during a period which still provides the quintessential representations of traditional family values of male breadwinner, female full time housewife, 2.4 children and a suburban idyll of timeless domesticity. It explores the relationship between the constructed nature of gender roles and expanding educational and

job opportunities. Overarching representations of woman were both created by and challenged by individual women.

In the 1950s, male experience acted as a norm through which expectations of girls' and women's roles were fashioned. And so, boys and men are not absent in this account, rather they are made conspicuous by their supporting role in providing the norm against which female roles were constructed. Gender, as Joan Scott so famously observed, is relational; an understanding of the gendered nature of the term work can only be successful if both sides of the debate are considered.² In the same article she also referred to gender as 'a signifier of power'. Gendered theoretical frameworks have become increasingly sophisticated, boundaries are acknowledged as fluid and flexible and historically contingent. As Scott recognised, feminist psychoanalytic theorising added a further dimension to the construction of a gendered self.³ 1950s English society was clearly marked along gender lines and in this book by examining the transition from school to work it becomes apparent that, for the contemporary historian, relational gender analysis remains a useful tool. It helps to consider how women as a group were faced with constructing themselves in relation to the male norm. In addition my concern in the following pages is to consider the uneasy relationship between individual women and the powerful construction of 'Woman' in the immediate post war period.

In England teenage girls were faced with a similar dilemma to that invoked by Sylvia Plath. Increased educational opportunity following the 1944 Education Act, together with an economic background of full employment, gave female school leavers a choice in their post-school employment. In popular memory, and in the women's magazines of the time, a woman's place appears securely centred on domesticity.⁴ John Newsom, in *The Education of Girls* stated: 'for the vast majority of women, the business of home-making and the early nurture of children is a dominant theme in their lives'.⁵ Demographic trends indicated that 95% of women would marry.⁶ Girls were marrying younger and having their first babies at an increasingly earlier age. They were also having fewer babies.⁷ Even girls who attended university, traditionally a path which did not lead to early marriage, were likely to be married within six years of graduation.⁸ In the 1960s this generation of young mothers went back to education and into employment.⁹ It was also the generation which occasioned the reprinting of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* fourteen times between 1961 and 1962¹⁰ and read Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* which identified the dissatisfaction with housework felt in middle-class America.¹¹ Hannah Gavron's

Captive Wife, a few years later, revealed a similar ambivalence amongst English women:

In fact the present situation could be summarised by saying that the 'problem' of women represents a network of conflicting roles which interact with each other, thereby aggravating the situation. At the centre of each network is 'Woman' about whose capabilities and responsibilities conceptions and norms have radically altered over the last sixty years.¹²

Young men in 1950s England faced a different but by no means less disruptive framework to their early job choices. For girls their expectations of imminent full-time domesticity constrained their employment decisions. National Service lasting at least two years (more if signed up as a regular) prevented young men from embarking on their careers immediately on leaving school at eighteen. If they left at fifteen or sixteen they were left with time to fill before the uncertainty of Service life which might be spent in the wilds of Scotland but equally might be spent in the more volatile sites of Suez or Cyprus.

This book focuses on the diversity of adult female roles presented to girls, in Britain in the 1950s. The following chapters explore the complex negotiations made by female school leavers between prevailing notions of a universal 'woman' and their own individual desires and ambitions. Morwenna Griffiths' feminist philosophical analysis of the web of female identity offers a useful theoretical framework in order to tease out the 'network of conflicting roles' identified by Gavron.¹³ Employers, magazines, teaching associations and the state itself, all had pre-conceived expectations of the direction that school leavers' lives would take.¹⁴ These expectations were not always coherent and were often at odds with those of parents and peers. The book examines the ambivalence and tensions at work as young women entered the workplace and formed their adult identity through their understanding of their probable employment profile. In 1952, Olwen Campbell noted how often women were aggregated under one umbrella: 'Women *as a sex* are often criticised, mocked, generalised about on the smallest evidence in a way that men are not – because men are felt to represent the norm'.¹⁵ The book cannot claim to offer an insight into the actual decisions made by school leavers in the 1950s, but it does highlight the complex and multi-faceted nature of the way that the adult role was presented to adolescent girls at this period. The gendered nature of

'work' in terms of either domestic duty or waged employee or a combination of both illustrates the historical specificity of the term itself. The relationship of the historian to the past is ambivalent.¹⁶ This is especially true of the women's historian. Women's history has served two purposes; to bring women back into history and to explain the longevity of women's oppression for today's political ends.¹⁷ In this book re-visiting the notion of career in the 1950s with women centre stage enables the gendered nature of the term itself to become more apparent. For women a coherent career could incorporate time spent in caring and domesticity. The difficult decisions facing young women today demonstrate that this is still a problematic area. The concerns of Carrie and her friends in *Sex and the City* and the *Desperate Housewives* of Wisteria Lane reflect the same issues of reconciliation between paid employment, family life and the women they want to be.

Thelma Veness's late 1950s research in the psychology department of the University of London focused on five schools in the west of England and might begin to offer an insight into how a small number of girls went about constructing their individual adult identities.¹⁸ It was a qualitative study based on imagined autobiographical essays, 'best moments' essays, questionnaires and interviews. Children were asked what they wanted 'to be', 'to do' and 'to have'. Interest in this project was spurred by the demographic increase in school leavers between 1957 and 1962.¹⁹ The investigation was carried out between March and May 1956, 1,300 essays were completed of which six hundred were by girls.²⁰ The 'average girl' in this survey was described in these terms:

[T]here is little doubt that marriage and maternity is the central objective of the 'average' girl and that all other ambitions are ordered around this central objective in an entirely rational way. She sees herself leaving school to take a job in which she can 'keep neat and tidy' and enjoy companionship. (She is not greatly attracted to the needle trades in which there is a sexual imbalance in the labour force.) She marries at 21, and often returns to her job which she must relinquish when her children come. When these children can be taken off her hands for most of the day she may again return to work.²¹

In these essays the children were asked to write their imaginary autobiographies looking back from an imaginary retirement. A substantial

number of the girls killed off their husbands at an early age! They gave little indication as to their economic support in widowhood, although Veness commented that in 54% of the stories, the husband's demise coincided with the children leaving home, having 'fulfil[led] his economic and biological function'.²² This provides an interesting insight into the disjunction between the perceived expectations for marriage as inevitable and the individual desire for independence. Unfortunately the raw data for her research has long since disappeared, so even this contemporary insight is mediated by a primary analysis according to the demands of the original project.

It is impossible therefore to understand 'how' girls made their choices. The purpose of this research has been to consider some of the varied expectations and roles presented to school leavers at the time and to contribute to the current mainstream historical debate which seeks to question historical assumptions of post war consensus. The interviews in the final chapter illustrate how women today remember their adolescent choices, offering a bridge, but not a time machine between the twenty-first century and the 1950s.

In the past, the 1950s did not receive a great deal of attention from women's historians. Work by Jane Lewis and Elizabeth Wilson remains the most comprehensive to date in their overview from the perspective of social policy and welfare.²³ Individual reflections on growing up in the 1950s have only been able to hint at the wider possibilities for academic study and are incorporated with the comments of those interviewed specifically for this study.²⁴ Recent work suggests that this decade is now receiving more attention and, in the following pages, I focus on the issue of career choice in order to start to bring together broader histories, which necessarily deal in generalities, with those which investigate the individual experiences.²⁵ The initial project of women's history, to rewrite the female sex back into History as a group, developed into an acknowledgement of the difference between individuals. I argue that in order to consider girls' experience in the 1950s in any depth, both viewpoints have to be taken into consideration. Although focusing mainly on the experience of girls and women, relational issues of gender are integral to an understanding of the way that this was experienced; the celebration of women's domestic role was only possible if men's breadwinner role was similarly constructed and prescribed.

The young women who are the subject of the book were born just prior to and during the Second World War. They left school in the 1950s, aged between fifteen and eighteen. A decade is a comparatively

small time span for a historical study yet it was clearly a transitional time when traditional expectations began to be challenged.²⁶ The period bridges the divide between the end of the Second World War and the 'Permissive Moment' of the 1960s.²⁷ Focusing on the way in which adult roles were presented to teenagers provides a way into understanding wider views on women's, and men's, role. The tripartite system of secondary education was well established by the time these girls took their 11+.²⁸ The economic turbulence caused by the war had stabilised, although wartime experiences would have left their legacy. Many girls had been evacuated, lost parents or grew up in a family with little financial stability due to the wartime disruption in the career of the chief breadwinner. The expansion of Higher Education, following the Robbins Report, was yet to come. Only 3,310 girls out of 271,778 leaving school in 1959 went to university. The vast majority, 238,039, left school and immediately entered employment.²⁹ The prevailing expectation, for a majority of girls after they left school appears to have been a brief period of training, followed by employment which they then left when they took on the dependent role of wife and mother.³⁰

Retirement into full-time domesticity on marriage and motherhood was, however, unlikely to be permanent. The increased availability of consumer goods both fuelled demand for extra family income and contributed to full employment. The ending of the marriage bar in teaching and the Civil Service encouraged women back into these professions, but their primary role, as wife and mother, remained unquestioned by policy-makers.³¹ In a pamphlet for the British Council, Elizabeth Coxhead wrote:

The professions will therefore be obliged to make it easier for the wife and mother to continue or resume their career: to give her special leave of absence in which to have her babies, or if, as is probably a better plan, she retires altogether for ten years or so, to provide retraining and refresher courses for her when she returns. Employers may not like it but they will have to lump it, as they are already doing in understaffed professions like teaching or nursing.³²

Coxhead concluded that despite all these advances: 'it will still be necessary for employers to arrange that mother gets home before the rest'.³³ Full employment enabled women's participation in the workforce, but the domestic role remained of paramount importance.³⁴

Liz Heron wrote about the ambivalent nature of the much-vaunted return to traditional roles following the Second World War:

Giving central importance to the family was part of an effort of national reconciliation, of blurring class differences and sex antagonisms, an effort of reconciliation and consensus that was being made in many parts of Western Europe as order was imposed on the threat of chaos.³⁵

Women as central to the family were also central to this blurring of class differences and the image of a 'universal woman', who was essentially white and middle-class, was dominant in the women's and girls' magazines of the period. The Birmingham History Group noted how despite the variety of representations of woman available at the time: 'The struggle for primacy [...] concerned with marriage, home and family is systematically victorious throughout [the] period'.³⁶ A woman was still officially classed according to her father's or husband's standing in the Registrar General's index, whatever her own occupation in the workplace. Women had to live with the ambivalence of a position within a society where on one hand *all* women were expected to, at the very least, aspire to the same occupation of full-time domesticity, and on the other, be attributed a variety of different class positions derived from the male head of the household.³⁷ Class was a salient factor in the consideration of career choice and as late as the 1970s was still pervasive:

...other contradictions particularly affect working-class girls. The idea of job involvement for example, which is so implicit in school careers' teaching, clashes with the routine and monotony of most jobs open to them. It clashes too with the deep investment that many of their own mothers have made in family life.³⁸

In the late 1950s the grammar schools were mainly a middle-class prerogative and working-class children were more likely to attend secondary modern schools although there was some movement between the two.³⁹ This anomaly occasioned more comment with reference to boys than to girls. Richard Hoggart highlighted the problems of displacement facing a working-class scholarship boy in a grammar school, but not those of a scholarship girl.⁴⁰ Few secondary modern schools prepared teenagers for public exams at 16+ as most of their pupils left at fifteen, thus restricting the kinds of occupation that their school leavers could

consider. Heron noted that at this time there was much fictional and sociological discussion of social mobility:

But the protagonists were almost exclusively male (the working-class hero), their conflicts and dilemmas assumed as masculine by their very nature. The experience was neither examined from a woman's point of view nor looked at in terms of what it meant to women.⁴¹

In the same way, concern over the new youth culture and juvenile delinquency was largely voiced in male terms. Early 1950s representations of male teenage violence in the form of 'Teddy Boys' and wrecked cinemas continued into the early 1960s with rivalries between 'Mods and Rockers'. T. R. Fyvel's exploration of juvenile delinquency focused exclusively on male delinquency.⁴² Girls' delinquency was defined more in terms of sexual promiscuity and concerns over unmarried motherhood than public displays of disorder.⁴³ The working mother whose child came home to an empty house was demonised as the progenitor of the disaffected generation. *Citizens of Tomorrow*, a report by the King George V Jubilee Trust, concerned itself with suggestions for mitigating the: 'fact that many boys and girls, while not actively delinquent, displayed apathy and lack of purpose in life and work'.⁴⁴

Rian Voet suggests that there was little written specifically on women and citizenship between 1940 and 1970,⁴⁵ yet the gendered nature of constructions of citizenship during the 1950s re-occurs frequently in material consulted for this book. It is especially prevalent in the rhetoric of the welfare state and in the discussions over girls' employment and education. Although often assumed to be gender neutral, there was an implicit understanding that girls' citizenship was focused more on the private sphere in their role as mothers than in their role as employees. Recently, the term social citizenship has been used by Ruth Lister in her discussion of the gendered differences between citizen-as-carer and citizen-as-wage-earner in the welfare state.⁴⁶ Her analysis reflects the discussion by George Tomlinson on the provision of education for citizenship in post-war Britain in *Citizens Growing Up*. He argued that the notion of citizenship embraced the private as well as the public sphere. However, he was equally clear that the private or domestic role was undertaken by the female so that although women were included as citizens, it was through their (vital) role as mothers and homemakers and substantially different from their male peers. This notion of women's domestic role being part of their public duty

was problematic in relation to the significance attached to their paid work which underlies much of my argument:

Homecraft forms an important part of education for the family life of a good citizen [...] The important, and often neglected, part that can be played by the men and boys of the household is not forgotten. But the main weight of the shopping, the cooking, the making and mending, the furnishing, the minor household repairs, the fuelling and heating, and even the gardening and poultry keeping, above all, the budgeting and catering, is likely to fall on the housewife.⁴⁷

Judy Giles noted how even in the inter war period the place of the suburb and domesticity, traditionally vilified as part of a rather static and traditional female sphere, can be reconceptualised as the location for understanding gendered constructions of modernity.⁴⁸ She argues that it was within the spaces of domesticity that women negotiated their place in the modern world with improved housing and changing family structures. As the representation of domesticity changes so too does our understanding of the concept of 'work'. As the following chapters demonstrate women's new role in the modern post-war home was clearly designated as 'work' as was the business of retaining an appearance of femininity. If domesticity is recategorised as work, women no longer needed to think of 'giving up' work on marriage or motherhood, simply changing jobs. This enabled a period of domesticity to be woven into a career that might be structured differently to men but took on the same meanings and requirements of job satisfaction and sufficient remuneration.

The most significant factors in the historical contextualisation of this book are, as already highlighted, the economic background of full employment and the ramifications of the Second World War. Historical analysis of the 1950s has been one of an age of consensus during which a conservative government was able to re-establish Britain's prosperity and build on the welfare state legislation.⁴⁹ This notion of consensus has been challenged as more records have become available and the complexity and compromise of post-war politics have become apparent.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the comparative lack of interest, until recently, shown by women's or gender historians in the 1950s (and conversely the lack of interest evinced by political historians of the 1950s in developments in other fields) means that the mainstream historical understanding of this period remains relatively untouched by the introduction of a gendered

perspective. Becky Conekin identified the way that developments in women's history did not engage with the priorities of historians writing the history of post-war Britain. This resulted in the projection of 'a series of comfortable and familiar images of the period which are instantly recognisable, both to practising historians and to a wider general audience'.⁵¹ The writing of contemporary history caught the spirit of the times in presenting a somewhat whiggish meta-narrative of post-war Britain. Although he examines the changing fortunes of different areas of society in the twentieth century, Paul Johnson begins *20th Century Britain*: 'More than ninety years of almost continuous economic growth have made Britain today a much wealthier, more comfortable place to live in than it was in 1900'.⁵²

The post-war economic recovery and boom in consumer spending supports this narrative of a society in the process of constant improvement. The excitement of the Festival of Britain in 1951, which celebrated British achievements in industry and saw the development of the South Bank in London, reflected optimism in the future. The New Elizabethan Age was heralded by the pomp and tradition of the 1953 Coronation which was also televised to the nation. The Queen and her family assumed a new importance, with constant media attention and interest in their daily lives.⁵³ The Commonwealth of Independent Nations quietly took over from the Empire, but the Queen remained at the head of a worldwide family centred on London. However, conflicts in Korea, Cyprus, and Suez, together with the segregation of the communist block countries provided a darker side to this optimism. The continuing Cold War and concern over nuclear weapons were part of this. Public protest in the form of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament undermined the apparent harmony and stability of consensus. Racial tension over the numbers of Afro-Caribbean immigrants coming to find work boiled over in the Notting Hill race riots of 1958. Control of sexuality made private activities a matter of public concern. The scandals of Burgess and McClean in 1951 and Lord Beaulieu in 1954 illustrate how important the confirmation of heterosexuality within the institution of marriage was perceived to be for a well-regulated society with clear understandings of appropriate gender roles.⁵⁴

Against this less than certain background, girls leaving school in the 1950s were subject to a variety of expectations, from media, family and teachers, which may have had an influence on their perception of their adult role. Adolescence as a distinct period where childhood has been left behind, but full adult status has not yet been achieved, is a complex category. John Springhall defined it as: 'a stage in human life

during and after puberty, a period of semi-dependency in relation to parents and other adults that has to be understood within certain historical contexts'.⁵⁵ The upper and lower boundaries change over time according to social expectations and legal changes, although the point of school leaving remains fundamental. In the 1950s the age of majority was still twenty-one, and so school leavers, although 'workers', were also minors. The period of time between the minimum age of school leaving at fifteen and the age of majority at twenty-one created a discrete group. There was, of course, a blurring of the boundary for those who chose early marriage. For boys, the period of National Service, at the age of eighteen, also crossed the adult threshold. Claire Langhamer defines the time between school and marrying as a specific phase in which the leisure occupations of cinema and dancing assumed importance in girls' lives. Their work legitimated their right to these leisure activities until marriage changed their priorities.⁵⁶

Translated for a period of time into the domestic sphere, the job of being a housewife and mother also demanded its own rewards. Langhamer also notes the significance of the class divide within this group which influenced leisure patterns. To a great extent class was also implicit in secondary school allocation. The relationship between leisure and education is noted in the later education chapter and the deliberations of the conferences of the Association of Headmistresses. Conversations with peers during participation in leisure activities may have swayed employment decisions.⁵⁷ Decisions on employment had to be made in the final years at school, as most teenagers entered work directly on leaving school. Indeed, Penny Tinkler has cited the transition from school to paid or unpaid work, together with the entry into heterosexual relationships, as the most important of the many changes which characterise adolescence.⁵⁸ Provisions for day continuation colleges in the 1944 Act were still on paper only and only 12% of girls were involved in day release schemes.⁵⁹ The greater number of boys attending part time courses indicated their longer term commitment to progression within their chosen careers (appendix table 1.2).

The film *Blackboard Jungle*, which featured rock 'n' roll music by Bill Haley, was released in Britain in 1956 and, according to John Street, announced the arrival of Youth Culture in Britain.⁶⁰ John Springhall has similarly located the 1950s as the period when: 'the period of adolescence ultimately "came of age" in modern British society'.⁶¹ David Fowler has suggested that this actually began in the inter-war period,⁶² and Penny Tinkler has noted the concern over adolescents as a 'special and vulnerable social group' by the end of the Second World War.⁶³

The economic prosperity of the 1950s gave added significance to the identification of the teenage market. Although the notion of 'youth' as a specific time of independence and freedom was not new, their additional spending power gave the teenage group added importance in the economic prosperity of the country.⁶⁴ Those who remained at grammar school had less spending power but were still subject to the same media images of the new 'teen scene' as they made their choices for future employment.

The notion of a 'career' for girls might appear anachronistic in terms of the 1950s. For the purposes of this book I have defined the concept 'as one which refers to a life pattern. It is understood as a progression through adult life which can include time spent in and out of the workplace'.⁶⁵ Carol Shakeshaft has identified the androcentric nature of accepted definitions of career which only include professional activity free from any domestic responsibility. In 1956 sociologists Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein described women's adult lives as having a dual role; that of worker and that of wife and mother and they identified the way that women moved in and out of paid employment according to their domestic circumstances.⁶⁶ Increasingly during this period married women returned to paid employment, as their children grew older. Girls making their school leaving choices were no longer expected to regard the entry into work as a stop gap before marriage, but as something to which they would return at a later date. This had considerable ramifications for the types of job embarked upon in the teenage years and ensured that even in the single years job choice was likely to be gendered. However, the expectation of returning to work at a future date validated the prospect of girls investing their time in training for teaching or nursing.⁶⁷

The combination of changes in education, employment opportunities and the sense of a new beginning following the war may have contributed to the interest in patterns of career choice which developed amongst psychologists, sociologists and educationalists. In the United States, in the 1950s, Donald Super and Eli Ginzburg considered career choice from a psychological perspective.⁶⁸ These studies posited a developmental model of career choice in which young people passed through different stages in their decision making process, moving from fantasy glamour occupations towards more pragmatic decisions.

Interest in 'occupational choice', 'career development' or 'career decision making' grew from the 1950s into the 1970s and extensively referenced and built upon the theories of Super and Ginzberg.⁶⁹ Home and school influences were the most often cited, with class also being

a deciding factor. Gender appears to have been left out of the equation, although the underlying assumption was that career choice was implicitly more relevant to boys than girls. In their discussion of home influence, Hayes and Hopson voiced concern that sex roles learnt in the family setting ensured that: 'girls will be learning roles which are at least a generation out of date'.⁷⁰ As late as 1981 Teresa Keil demonstrated how tenacious were notions that expectations of domesticity constrained girls' choices: 'The Romantic idea of marriage and family helps to modify girls' achievement motivation and their career aspirations'.⁷¹

The raising of the school leaving age following the 1944 Education Act was not always greeted with enthusiasm by parents who had themselves left school as soon as possible in order to start work and the extent of parental influence on career choice is difficult to assess. The relationship between school, home and work and the implications for career choice and expectations is considered in more detail in a later chapter.⁷² As a result of employers' concern over the lack of technologists and scientists entering the workforce, R. V. Clements investigated the way that children in Manchester made their career choices. He concluded that the greatest influence on children's choices appeared to be their family, friends and neighbourhood and that: 'there has probably been too great a stress on the irrationality of children's choice of careers'.⁷³

In the 1970s, Sue Sharpe began a statistical analysis of girls' attitudes at school to work and marriage.⁷⁴ During the course of the research she changed the study to a more qualitative, analytical discussion which compared the aspirations and attitudes of English, Asian and West Indian girls in London. Sharpe suggested that the informal 'beliefs and sanctions' which construct gender roles were as significant as formal structures.⁷⁵ She examined the influence of the media, education and family and included interviews with the girls themselves, an approach which has been followed in research for this book. Christine Griffin's work on girls moving from school to job market also focused on a series of interviews which challenged the way in which assumptions of 'typical girls' can affect the experiences of individuals.⁷⁶

There is little suggestion in the formal and informal sources used here that society was becoming increasingly multi-cultural in the 1950s. Wendy Webster's research into the experience of non-white women further demonstrates their invisibility in the records.⁷⁷

Phil Hodgkinson and Andrew Sparkes coined the term 'careership' in a study of contemporary decision making.⁷⁸ This notion of 'careership'

is useful in that it demands the consideration of a number of different factors. It also allows for unforeseen changes, avoiding the idea of a once-for-all career choice and, finally, it allows for individual agency within certain constraints. The idea of the portfolio career, apparently a recent phenomena and now an ungendered model of employment was clearly established by women in the 1950s. The problem of relating structure to agency within sociological analyses of career choice has also been addressed by Angela Canny.⁷⁹ Like Hodgkinson and Sparkes, Canny critiqued the psychological approach of Super and Ginzburg and was concerned to demonstrate the multi-faceted nature of career choice. She highlighted the integration of factors of gender, class and locality with students' own worldviews.

These studies from the social sciences are concerned with late twentieth century career decision making; their findings have implications for present day practitioners, for teachers and for parents. They also form a useful starting point for a consideration of a historical analysis of career choice. However, they are more concerned with their significance for future policy-making than the historical contextualisation of their production.

Hodgkinson and Sparkes introduced the idea of 'turning points' and 'serendipity' during a career suggesting that career choice was, and is, not a once-for-all decision. It is therefore important to retain the notion of fluidity and change within any theoretical framework. Dorothy Smith discussed her own decisions:

I think I would be by no means alone in seeing my past not so much as a *career* [her italics] as a series of contingencies, of accidents, so I seem to have become who I am almost by chance.⁸⁰

It is significant that Smith describes her career in terms of who she 'is' rather than what she 'does', indicating the important position that occupation, both paid and unpaid, plays in terms of constructing the self. Veness also noted the interchangeability between doing and being, one of her respondents said: '[T]hat what she wanted to do was to get married, what she wanted to be was a wife and mother'.⁸¹ Other decisions within a life pattern such as the return to work were equally complex:

Consideration of the husband's income and the social aspirations of both spouses; of the woman's educational attainment and the type of work she might reasonably obtain; and of her attitude to the rela-

tive importance of her role as wife and mother versus the importance of paid work, either as a means to greater consumer power or personal fulfilment, requires considerable analysis.⁸²

This book is concerned with highlighting just some of the different constructions of adult identity offered to girls leaving school and starting work in the 1950s. It problematises the relation between individual agency and external forces. It builds on and elaborates Carol Dyhouse's analysis of the disjunction, during the 1950s, of expectations of the female role:

The 1950s proved to be a decade hallmarked by contradictions for women: on the one hand there was a growing ideology of home-centredness reflected in the proliferation and phenomenal growth of the women's magazines spreading the gospel of salvation through consumption during the period. On the other hand, the 1950s witness a steady significant rise in the number of women leaving their homes, particularly when children were old enough to go to school, and return to paid employment.⁸³

The book examines the way that a diversity of adult female roles were presented to school leavers in the 1950s, in both formal and informal sources. It underlines the significance of the gendered construction of adult roles for understanding English society in recent history and looks in detail at the way that several, but by no means all, of these life-patterns were represented. It includes observations from women who were themselves school leavers at the time and illustrates the widespread nature of gender expectations to be found in many areas from the formation of the welfare state to girls' comics.

In order to tease out the various, often contradictory, ways in which the adult role was presented, and to incorporate the juxtaposition, highlighted by Griffin, between ideas of a 'typical girl' or 'woman' and individuals, I have been influenced by the philosophical framework of a 'web of identity' posited by feminist philosopher Morwenna Griffiths. This enables me to consider a wide variety of diverse, but by no means exhaustive, material. The central features of the web are that it is constructed by its maker but constrained by outside influences in its overall shape. There is a constant two-way process between these two forces; the web may be destroyed by outsiders, but it can only be re-woven by the individual. The relationship between 'woman', the possibly mythic universal representation of femininity, and individual

'women' is central to the book and the metaphor of the web is a useful tool for exploring this relationship. Issues of agency and autonomy at times may conflict with the demands of institutions and those in authority.

My own autobiography was overt within the methodology of the research. My somewhat eclectic career portfolio and my involvement in a previous research project interviewing women returning to education, highlighted the multi-faceted, complex and above all, the gendered nature of career choice.⁸⁴ The 'why' of looking at career choice, therefore, came both from a personal, but also an academic interest. The 'how' came from a wish, stimulated by readings on feminist epistemology, to cover informal as well as the more obvious formal areas of archival research.⁸⁵

Each of the following chapters engages with a separate area of primary source material. The chapters do not, however, stand in isolation. Common themes of autonomy, independence, citizenship and assumptions of the dual role re-occur regularly throughout. The research in no way explored all possible avenues and I have only been able to consider a selection of the vast amount of available material. I have not, for example, considered film or television, trades union attitudes or religious practices, all highly relevant and deserving of future work. The areas of primary source material covered were chosen for their variety. I was also influenced by discussions in interviews I completed for earlier research. In the course of these, women returners discussed their original motives for leaving school, without gaining qualifications, which had little to do with their academic ability. They frequently cited prevailing attitudes held by teachers and peers and their magazine reading habits.

Using magazines for an insight into constructions of adolescent identity built on theoretical and methodological work by Penny Tinkler⁸⁶ for an earlier period. The influence and representation of young women in popular culture has also been the focus of Susan Weiner's work in her examination of French post war youth and youth culture. Weiner also highlights the diversity of representations on offer to young women in the 1950s. She discusses the disruptive feminine other which 'emerges alongside complicity with patriarchy' in magazines, popular fiction, politics, film and social surveys.⁸⁷ Clearly the construction of youthful femininity in terms of domestic, work and leisure roles was not only tested in Britain but in Europe and the United States as well.

The decision to omit religion as one of the main chapters was difficult. It is certainly an area which will benefit from more research.

Women interviewed for this book mentioned religious influence in their teen years to a far greater extent than their contemporaries interviewed for my previous project. Religion was discussed in terms of its spiritual influence but also, and more frequently, for the social space that it provided for middle-class girls in the London suburbs. It was not clear how much this was limited to the very specific experience of this group of women who were predominantly from middle-class backgrounds. A 'religion' chapter would have required research not only into Catholic, Protestant and Jewish attitudes but also a consideration of the religion of the new Afro-Caribbean and diverse Asian communities which were being established at the time. The limited amount of space therefore precluded an adequate discussion of this topic.

The next chapter pre-dates the 1950s. It deals with the setting up of the welfare state and the discussions around the Beveridge Report, published in 1942.⁸⁸ This Report voiced the rationale for welfare legislation. The chapter looks at some of the evidence submitted by women's organisation to the Beveridge committee and at Katherine Abbott and Elizabeth Bompas' alternative suggestions on behalf of the Women's Freedom League.⁸⁹ In order to illustrate the general public's reaction, it also considers comments on the publication of the Beveridge Report in the Mass Observation archive. An entire chapter is devoted to the subject of the welfare state in order to examine the ways in which a prescription for gender roles was written into the administrative structure of post-war society. An understanding of the nature of these roles is fundamental for understanding the highly gendered nature of the entry to employment throughout the 1950s. In Beveridge's model, a married woman was only entitled to reduced state benefits through her husband's contributions. A welfare state in which husbands were freed from domestic responsibility, to enable their full economic participation, was only possible if women remained at home. Their domestic role was integral to the success of the welfare state but, at the same time, women were not rewarded by admission to full membership. The chapter considers the way that different groups of women reacted to the prescriptive tone of the Report for *all* women.

Chapter three focuses on the role of formal education in school and college. Education for, and expectations of, citizenship were frequently employed by educationists discussing girls' adult roles. Issues of gendered autonomy and independence were also present in the debates. Pupils were expected to make their career choices in their last year at school and school was also the initial provider of information. It was the point of contact between the pupil and the Youth Employment

Officer whose job it was to find, or suggest, suitable employment for school leavers. Issues of class are central to the discussion in this chapter and intersect with gender assumptions. Contemporary studies on school leaving and vocational choice illustrate the way that 'experts' focused on boys and marginalised girls in their research.

The records of the many teaching organisations provide rich pickings for the historian and again could be the focus of an entire book. I have used the records of the 'Joint Four' – the Association of Headmistresses and the Assistant Mistresses' Association and the Association of Headmasters and Assistant Schoolmasters as these single sex organisations do provide a particularly gendered view of the profession. For anyone wishing to pursue this aspect of archival research the records of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) would provide further material.⁹⁰ The two female organisations give a particularly clear insight into the expectations of the schools for their female pupils whether they attended secondary modern or grammar schools and provide the material for discussion.

The teaching associations had more than an 'academic' interest in the careers of their pupils. A constant anxiety throughout this period in the female organisations was the lack of recruits to the teaching profession. The proposed increase in teacher training to a period of three years, combined with an increase in the school leaving age, was expected to put even more strain on teaching resources, especially as even after the lifting of the marriage bar, many women left the profession on marriage and motherhood.

A frequent concern voiced at the women teachers' conferences was the early leaving of grammar as well as secondary modern school pupils. The County Colleges were originally planned in the 1944 Education Act to provide continuing education after school leaving. These had failed to come to fruition by the end of the 1950s and the *Crowther Report*, in 1959, examined this issue of provision for those aged between fifteen and eighteen. The final part of the chapter considers the gender expectations in some of the submissions and findings of the Report and its implications for career choice.

Careers' advice manuals, career novels and *Women's Employment*, a fortnightly publication published by the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women with the Student Careers Bureau, presented paid employment for girls without undermining the assumptions of domestic priority in the Beveridge Report. The analysis of these sources is set against the background of sociological studies of the period, which demonstrated the pervasive nature of contemporary gender

assumptions. The conflict between universal notions of Woman and individual women is apparent as these publications moved between discussing girls as a homogenous group and referring to them as individuals.

Hodkinson and Sparkes included serendipity in their proposal for a model of career choice analysis. Serendipity also played its part in the research for this book. References in *Journal of Education* and *Women's Employment* to a couple of novels on careers for boys and girls led me to the career novel genre which flourished in the 1950s. Bodley Head and Chatto and Windus both published a series of novels by different authors. As well as indicating that girls were indeed thinking in terms of 'careers', these somewhat formulaic books gave an insight into the acceptable parameters within which girls could consider employment. Reading University holds the Chatto and Windus archive which contains extensive, almost daily, correspondence between Mary Dunn, the editor of the girls' series, and Nora Smallwood at the publishers. This correspondence discussed the rationale behind choosing the careers covered in the novels, the publishing outlets and readers' reactions.

Girls do not necessarily follow advice given by teachers and the way that popular women's magazines presented adult womanhood is discussed in chapter six. There were of course no parallel men's publications, *FHM* and *GQ* were years away and men had to be content with hobbies and gardening publications. In contrast to the education chapter, which illustrates the continuing power of social class, the magazines created a cult of 'woman' which ostensibly overrode class issues. 'Being a woman' was constructed as a career in itself. The three publications considered are *Woman*, *Housewife* and *Girl* which acted as guides to the construction of a single 'female' or 'feminine' identity despite their classed target audience. The rhetoric may have been similar but as the chapter notes *Woman* was a very different publication from the monthly 'glossy' *Housewife*. Women's magazines reached their peak readership during this time and it was editorial policy to encourage a younger readership.⁹¹ The dearth of magazines for a specifically teenage market ensured that girls were likely to pick up their older sisters' and mother's magazines. From the letters pages and the advice features it is apparent that the comic *Girl* was also read by the younger end of the age group under consideration and is relevant to the discussion. The chapter focuses on the way that the magazines constructed an image of a universal 'woman' to whom all women, whatever their age, class or ethnicity, could supposedly relate. This 'woman' was also in part constructed by the readers themselves,

illustrating the two-way process of the construction of identity. The popularity of the magazines indicated that this was indeed what the readers wanted and gives the historian a valuable insight into the construction of an overarching 'femininity' in the late 1950s. Paid employment played a very subsidiary part in these magazines as copy material, yet they were staffed by working women who produced powerful images of full-time domesticity. The chapter explores the way that the construction of housework and motherhood as 'work' helped to overcome this divide in order to create a community of 'woman'.

The final chapter focuses on twenty-three interviews carried out at the end of the research with women who left school in South London between 1956 and 1960. Their reflections are combined with already published autobiographical and oral history accounts of a wider geographic spread. The women interviewed were invited to reflect on their transition from school to work and their later experiences of juggling family life and paid work. The way that they told their stories, with all the accompanying tensions and inconsistencies, illustrates the complex negotiations involved in the formation of an adult female identity. They were a self-selected sample who either replied to a request in the local paper, or heard of the project by word of mouth. They were not representative of their cohort, a majority of those interviewed went to grammar schools; ex-secondary modern school pupils were reluctant to be interviewed and nobody from the independent sector volunteered. The significance of this response in terms of self-esteem, was itself noteworthy. All the women in my sample married, although some had divorced. Not all had children. The chapter focuses on the way that they constructed their stories and how they narrated their present understanding of their teenage selves. This cannot explain how girls actually thought through their entry to work, but offers another perspective on the period under discussion:

Memory simply can't resurrect those years, because it is memory itself that shapes them long after the historical time has passed[...] We rework past time to give current events meaning, and that reworking provides an understanding that the child at the time can't possess.⁹²

I consider the way that the women constructed their perception of the expected female adult role and then related this to their own experience. The women reflect on the relationship between the home and the school and the potential conflicts between parents' expectations

and those of the headmistresses. A central feature of Griffiths' web analogy is the constant reweaving of individual webs according to circumstance and the interviews illustrated this shifting position very clearly. The women could not tell me how they felt at the time but they demonstrated the relationship between the present and the past in the construction of their histories. At the end of each interview, after I had left, I noted my own impressions of the interview. These impressions were those which it is difficult to transcribe into words, they were the way of telling; the weaving of the web. The turn to a more abstract understanding of 'woman' in women's history has been criticised for losing sight of 'real' women.⁹³ As 'interviewer' or 'researcher' I observed, on that particular day, each woman creating her own story for my consumption. It was a lesson in how sometimes dense, complex theoretical analysis can be seen at work, in practice.

In conclusion I draw together the underlying themes of the book. Women's dual role of home and work in the late 1950s was under review and discussion in a number of fields. A consideration of the factors involved in girls making their career decisions gives a wider insight into the ambivalent nature of the female role in England in the 1950s. It suggests that it is not only the notion of consensus politics that needs to be re-evaluated but also that the notion that 'work' necessarily only refers to paid employment. There are more women in the British workforce today than ever before and 'long hours' culture ensures that increasingly we define who we are through the way we spend our days. Research for this book demonstrates that this is not a new phenomenon. The highly gendered expectations of adult roles in the 1950s were confirmed at the entry to work, expectations of future domestic roles (for both men and women) and the underlying structure of welfare state provision.

Previous research on career choice has been concerned with mapping contemporary views. Ironically by adding a gendered dimension to the concept of work in the 1950s which for women included periods of domesticity, we can trace the rise of the portfolio career, now notably gender neutral in the early years of the twenty-first century.

2

Women and the Welfare State

For those of us who were children during or after the 1950s it is difficult to appreciate the radical changes wrought by post-war welfare provision. That the welfare state provisions were based on assumptions of what are often referred to as 'traditional' gender roles was by no means uncontested and if William Beveridge had not been such an assertive chairman of the Interdepartmental Committee on Social Insurance and the Allied Services, the 1950s story might have been very different. It has now become a truism to highlight the changes that the Home Front caused in women's lives in all social classes, but it does seem to have been acknowledged at the time that this was likely to be a long term change, not a temporary flight from domesticity:

In this war we have millions of women going into industry, hundreds and thousands of them for the first time, single women and married women. They have enjoyed an income of their own, they have begun to enjoy economic independence. At the end of the war a large number of them will want both their careers and marriage and motherhood, and we have to base our plans for reconstruction on that.¹

The introduction of a welfare state was central to plans for post-war reconstruction which were initiated in the early 1940s.² The resultant changes meant that, for the first time, government policy made state provision for the individual citizen from the cradle to the grave. As a result, the boundaries between public and private life became blurred, women's domestic activity was constructed in terms of their public duty.³ Conversely the state had greater powers to interfere, if those duties were not deemed to be carried out efficiently, through

the institution of Children's Departments in 1948. Health care, education, town planning and housing, pensions and social security all came under the umbrella of the welfare state. It would be unwise to consider late 1950s society without examining the way in which the infrastructure of that society contained assumptions of, and prescriptions for, adult gender roles. These assumptions in turn affected the creation of adult identity in terms of an individual's expectation of their future life pattern. The Report by William Beveridge on social insurance became the blueprint for legislation, and contained not only detailed specific recommendations but also clear expectations of gender divisions in post-war Britain.⁴ This chapter focuses on the Report as the embodiment of expected gender roles in the 1950s. Social Insurance was only one of the Acts which made up the welfare state and is used as a case study in order to consider the way that the infrastructure of society affected the way that employment patterns were perceived by school leavers. Social insurance legislation which followed was based upon these assumptions which, in turn, had repercussions for girls' employment decisions.

Women's relationship to welfare provision and social policy has been the subject of discussion by historians and social scientists and is a useful example of the way that gender frameworks invite interdisciplinary study. This chapter discusses the gendered assumptions for all women (whatever their class) contained in the Beveridge Report. It looks at the significance of the role played by William Beveridge as an individual and then at the reaction of some women's organisations to his recommendations. The Beveridge committee received evidence from a number of these organisations, who did not necessarily share Beveridge's own vision of the gender divide. This material provides the opportunity to explore some of the ambivalence and tensions which lay behind the final document.⁵ In particular the chapter examines the Women's Freedom League pamphlet written by Elizabeth Abbot and Katherine Bompas in which they set out an alternative, less dependent, model of social insurance provision for women.⁶ The Women's Freedom League (WFL) was a nationwide organisation which grew out of the suffrage movement. Although the League's ideas might not have been widely supported, they nevertheless represented the views of a significant minority of publicly active women and, as such, are worthy of consideration.⁷

The chapter concludes with a consideration of the Mass Observation Archive records of the public response to the Beveridge Report. The opinions recorded in Mass Observation are no more 'authentic' or

representative of a wider body of opinion than those officially recorded in the Public Record Office, but they do add another dimension. They are largely spontaneous comments to a question asked in the street, or overheard conversations: '[A] passionate concern for "trifles" unconsidered by others, for the sights and sounds and smells of ordinary life going on irrespective of politicians...' ⁸. The actual dynamics of the Mass Observation movement itself have repercussions on the type of comment filed and they must be read with that caveat in mind. It was left to individual observers to decide what to record and so the comments may reflect more the preoccupations of the observers than those of the general public. Mass Observation attracted a large number of women observers and diarists who sympathised with the aims of Tom Harrison and Charles Madge, the founders, who were primarily concerned with class analysis. The attention to day-to-day trivia and the domestic served to validate women's domestic activity in a public arena. This resonates with the preoccupation of women's historians with writing women as a group back into history. ⁹ Penny Summerfield has commented on the similar middle-class backgrounds of the observers and their common desire to use the collection of everyday comments to change society. ¹⁰ The purpose was not to get at any 'truth' but to understand general opinion in more depth 'They tell us not what society is like but what it looks like to them'. ¹¹ School leavers made their decisions based on their perceptions of adult roles; the 'truth' of these roles was irrelevant.

The Report clearly presented 'women' as a universal grouping irrespective of class. Any woman falling outside the category of dependent 'housewife' was designated a 'problem': 'There was also the problem of the woman whose marriage ceased, not through the death of her husband but through divorce, separation or desertion'. ¹² The idea of citizenship was a recurrent theme in the rhetoric of the welfare state, but it was a gendered citizenship in which women's private roles, as wives and mothers, were also the most significant part of their role as public citizens. This in turn affected the proliferation of the stop gap model of female employment which is discussed later in the book. The material from the women's organisations and Mass Observation illustrates how individuals and groups related to, and contributed to, this overarching model. There was an underlying ambivalence beneath the construction of the gender specific roles, endemic in the eventual social insurance legislation, which both girls and boys had to negotiate when making their school leaving decisions.

The welfare state and women's history

As noted in the introduction to the book, the 1950s have received little attention from women's historians. They appear as a dull decade between the excitement of the war years and the beginning of the Second Wave Women's Movement in the 1960s.¹³ Even politically active women like Shirley Williams, Judith Hart and Marghanita Laski felt that the feminist battle had been won and they had missed the excitement of earlier campaigns.¹⁴ This sense of inertia may have transmitted itself to those researching the period. Perhaps it is only as the more general notion of consensus has been challenged by mainstream historians that the complexity of women's experience in the 1950s begins to interest modern historians. As a result, most analyses of the Beveridge Report and the welfare state, in terms of their impact on women, focus on the long term, rather than the immediate effect and are to be found in feminist sociological and social policy literature.¹⁵ For my purposes it is the mid-term effect of these prescriptions which is of interest and which framed girls' career choices. General histories tend to marginalise the gendered prescriptions inherent in the provisions for the welfare state and to concern themselves with wider economic and political structures.¹⁶

Jane Lewis and Elizabeth Wilson, as already stated, have provided the most comprehensive analyses of the gendered nature of the 1950s welfare state.¹⁷ Lewis reflected on changes in the profile of women's economic dependence since 1945 and compared family structures in relation to the state in the late twentieth century.¹⁸ She noted the prescriptive effect of Beveridge's Plan on women's role and how it fitted the 1930s: 'better than his wartime world, or as it transpired, the post-war world'.¹⁹ Lewis emphasised the powerful long term nature of Beveridge's prescription for women; married women's limited entitlements remained unrevised until the 1970s. In common with the concern in this book over the relationship between accepted notions of women as individuals and women as a group, Lewis noted how Beveridge conceptualised women in terms of: 'the needs of race and nation for women's work as wives and mothers, rather than the needs of women as individuals'.²⁰ She highlighted the tensions inherent in Beveridge's plan whereby, despite a rhetoric of partnership within marriage roles, the expectation of women's economic dependency left them with few alternatives to their domestic role.

Elizabeth Wilson also focused on the centrality of gender roles within welfare state ideology. In addition, she highlighted how, given

the priority of their domesticity, women were expected to be content to move in and out of relatively unskilled paid employment.²¹ Writing from the standpoint of the 1970s, she traced the ideology of welfare as it led to the politics of the contemporary Women's Liberation Movement. Wilson was adamant that the result of the Beveridge Report was to confirm women in a subordinate position in society: 'it was not until the fifties that ideological oppression of women became fully refined, along with the development of consensus politics'.²² She discussed the problematic nature of the description of women's 'job' as domesticity. However, it may well have been considered a realistic option for girls to consider at least a period of domesticity as part of their career profile.²³ Wilson thought that describing the domestic role as a 'job' was a crude way of describing what, for many, was women's 'natural' role, although this was a popular notion in women's magazines. I suggest that this representation of the domestic role as a 'job' was indeed a prevalent notion, both of external agencies and of women themselves and supports the understanding of 'career' as a mixture of paid and unpaid employment. Beveridge described women's domestic role in post-war society very much in terms of their 'work' as well as their natural place. Wilson noted the insidious nature of the relationship between education and childrearing in encouraging girls to consider their futures in terms of domestic fulfilment:

Women in particular are reared almost from birth, certainly from early childhood, to conceive of happiness and emotional fulfilment in terms of their future relationship with husband and children. To many it therefore seems alien or even sacrilegious to discuss these relationships as jobs undertaken for a capitalist state.²⁴

She argued for the importance of feminist analysis of this area:

[T]he State defines femininity and...this definition is not marginal but is central to the purposes of welfarism. Woman is above all Mother, and with this vocation go all the virtues of femininity; submission, nurturance, passivity.²⁵

In the different sources consulted during this research, women's domestic activity as wife and mother was variously described as; 'natural', 'a job', 'a career' and 'a vocation' and the diverse nature of these various interpretations made occupational choice a difficult undertaking.

Wilson's argument that a consensus of ideology over women's dependent role emerged in the post-war period is substantiated by the welcome accorded the Beveridge Report. However, the heated debates over whether the father or mother should receive the proposed family allowance illustrate how strongly many women felt towards this enforced economic dependency.²⁶ Ultimately the public approval of the Beveridge Report enabled it to be instrumental in promoting the desirability of a domestic model as the norm of female adult activity, but it was not without its detractors. Wilson argued that this consensus was reached out of a diversity of opinions and evidence presented to the Beveridge committee supports this.²⁷

Sheila Blackburn suggested that the complex nature of the creation of welfare policies had largely been ignored in feminist analysis in sociology and social policy.²⁸ Blackburn demanded a more nuanced understanding of the foundation of the British welfare state, based on primary sources. She contended that when the historical context of the Beveridge proposals was taken into consideration, there were benefits to women which had been overlooked by social scientists. This highlights one of the problems in an interdisciplinary approach when a 'present-minded' historical stance is taken and an analysis relevant to present day policy making is used as a perspective on past experience.²⁹ In ignoring historical evidence, feminist opponents of the welfare state overlooked the new feminist campaigns of the early part of the century for better welfare services for women. They largely ignored the material benefits which it brought and which were clearly welcomed by women in immediate post-war society. Extra financial support in times of sickness and unemployment were welcome through whatever means they were claimed.

When feminist academics in sociology and social policy disciplines do analyse historical material their work is pertinent to historical studies. However, it may be undertaken for a different purpose than a purely historical analysis which focuses more on contextualisation than the long term. Jennifer Dale and Peggy Foster warned readers not to impose late twentieth century ideas onto earlier groups of women. They noted that the domestic role was not necessarily perceived as oppressive in the 1950s and that woman's role as mother was awarded a high status.³⁰ This argument is to be found throughout this book, from the deliberations of the teaching associations to the features in women's magazines. Dale and Foster recognised that the Beveridge Plan acknowledged this status of housewife as a profession, but concluded that it is the assumption of dependence and the

low esteem of the role of housewife which has overshadowed recent feminist analysis.³¹

Blackburn highlighted the way in which Beveridge has been vilified by socialist feminists both for his treatment of women as second class citizens with reduced access to welfare provision *and* for the way in which he wildly underestimated the amount of married women in paid work after the war ended. These arguments are all pertinent for a discussion of the *later* effect of the Beveridge proposals on women. Blackburn usefully noted how, historically, the practical proposals in the Beveridge Report were received sympathetically, and introduced the issue of social class into her analysis. She also commented that motherhood did seem to be the aspiration of most women at the time.³² Blackburn conceded that there were different feminist approaches to an analysis of the welfare state. By the very nature of the article which was an overview of research on the welfare state, most of her observations concerned 'women' as a group, while acknowledging differences amongst groups of women.

Feminist criticism of the welfare state implies that the subordination of women was a prime part of Beveridge's agenda, yet the Report itself constantly talked in terms of partnership, teamwork and complementary roles. Beveridge's biographers, José Harris and Janet Beveridge (his wife) leave the impression that he genuinely thought that he had women's best interests at heart.³³ Their work illustrates the significance of understanding the autocratic personality of the author of the Report, and the way in which his ideas, formed over a number of years, were based on earlier expectations of gender roles. It must have rapidly become apparent that the expected role of women as non-workers was not working out as predicted. Richard Titmuss commented on this unexpected female employment pattern in his *Essays on the Welfare State*.³⁴ Beveridge frequently used the analogy of a team when he was discussing the marriage relationship, and Titmuss also identified the emergence of the companionate marriage, largely as a result of demographic changes, in the 1950s:

New patterns in the psychological management of married life have been slowly evolving; the idea of companionship in marriage is being substituted for the more sharply divided roles and codes of behaviour set by the Victorian patriarchal system.³⁵

The notion of the companionate marriage was also to be found in the progressive circles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries where

equality of esteem between husband and wife were originally prevalent. In the twentieth century the idea of the companionate marriage was underpinned by the wife's potential wage-earning capacity. Exchanging a paid job for the work of wife and mother may have meant that 'parity of esteem' took the form of compensation for loss of actual earnings after marriage. Penny Summerfield and Janet Finch have suggested that although the concept of a companionate marriage did take root at this time, it did not necessarily lead to a more equal role for women:

It imposed particular pressures upon women [...] we suggest that there was a profound dissonance between the post-war ideology of companionate marriage in which the benefits were all on the husband's side, and the lived experience in which wives were striving, evidently not successfully, for a companionate marriage which worked to their advantage.³⁶

The idea of the companionate marriage was also fostered by the women's magazines. However some of the marriage guidance articles suggested that this was not an unproblematic development. As a model it also offered the women's teaching associations a reason for promoting extended education for girls beyond domesticity and it impinged on the understanding of the gendered nature of women's citizenship. The model of a companionate marriage and 'teamwork' validated housewives' participation in part-time work but it also served to underline perceptions of employment between school and marriage as a mere stop gap. It was also, as Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein observed, part of their duty to help re-build the country's economy.³⁷ Part-time work did not challenge the supremacy of the male breadwinner norm and confirmed women's secondary relationship to the workplace. It was, however, a popular option; between 1951 and 1961 the number of women in part-time work rose from 779,000 to 1,851,000.³⁸

Beveridge's model was only one suggestion as to how the state could support the family. Susan Pedersen has considered how, and why, certain ideals of womanhood became dominant in the 1950s.³⁹ She traces the reassertion of the breadwinner norm in three areas: social inquiry, Labour politics and civil servants' policy making. She suggests that in the inter-war period it became apparent in all three areas, that feminists did not have enough political or economic leverage to significantly influence policy outcomes. She refers to the 'cautionary tale [of the endowment campaign] about the dangers of difference

based arguments in a world where women lack significant institutional or economic power'.⁴⁰ The apparently negligible impact of suggestions by women's groups, such as those discussed below, offers some support for this view, yet their very existence also illustrates that the overarching prescription for women in the 1950s welfare state was not produced without its dissenters. Even if the women's voices were not heard at the time, an exploration of them broadens a historical analysis of contemporary views.

The Beveridge Report

The post-war society envisaged by William Beveridge in his Report on Social Insurance and the Allied Services was based on the foundation of a welfare state which would banish once and for all the 'five evil giants' of Want, Idleness, Disease, Squalor and Ignorance.⁴¹ Specific adult gender roles were central to the successful execution of what he termed 'The Plan' and were ultimately as constraining for men, in their expectation of continuous paid employment as they were for women as the domestic support systems. Membership of the welfare state was couched in terms of reciprocal duty between husband and wife and between citizen and nation state. The role of married women was central to the creation of this society and was, from the first, defined as 'other' to that of the single woman: 'The attitude of the housewife to gainful employment outside the home is not, and should not, be the same as that of a single woman. She has other duties'.⁴² The assumption, by Beveridge, which became embedded in national insurance legislation, was that girls would leave school, work for a short time as a stop gap, then retire on marriage in order to devote themselves to full time domesticity. It is significant that it was their role as housewife, not only as mother, which was so widely proclaimed and this had repercussions on their long term expectations of paid employment. Judy Giles has recently brought the domestic role centre stage in the construction of modernity in the years preceding and immediately after the war, and social insurance legislation confirms this central and very public role.⁴³ Mothering, even of a reasonable size family would not take up such a large proportion of their adult life as their time spent as a 'housewife'.⁴⁴ In contrast, women interviewed for this research indicated that it was their role as mothers, rather than wives, which kept them at home. Employment after marriage, if undertaken at all, was expected by Beveridge to be supplementary to the family income and women could therefore 'opt out' of full national insurance

contributions. Couples were also assessed jointly for income tax. If the wife's earnings put the couple into a higher tax bracket, her salary had the higher tax deductions, thus reducing the incentive for her to return to, or continue in, work.

These gendered expectations, reinforced by legislation, formed the framework of the adult web of identity within which girls could make their employment choices as autonomous citizens. However, it was not a framework which was imposed on an unwilling female population; an exploration of the origins of the Report shows the extent to which women were also instrumental in, and supportive of, its creation. 635,000 copies were sold on the first day of the Report's publication. It was even used as a propaganda document and shortened versions dropped over occupied France. G. D. H. Cole described it as:

[A] substantial contribution towards the establishment of a right frame of mind among the peoples of the world. The acceptance of it by the British Government would have an immense moral value not only among British people but [...] among peoples now oppressed by Nazi tyranny, among our allies and even among Germans themselves.⁴⁵

This enthusiastic reception has rather overshadowed any opposition to the Report.⁴⁶ Originally announced on the 10th June 1941 as: 'A comprehensive survey of existing schemes of social insurance and allied services', by the following January Arthur Greenwood (a member of the War Cabinet) awarded Beveridge, as an individual, a much more central role in its creation:

In view of the issues of high policy which will arise, we think the departmental representatives should henceforward be regarded as your advisors and assessors on various technical and administrative matters [...] That means that the Report when made, will be your own Report; it will be signed by you alone and the departmental representatives will not be associated in any way with the views and recommendations on questions of policy which it contains.⁴⁷

The final Report was therefore very much Beveridge's own as was confirmed by his wife in her biography, with the result that one individual was able to prescribe the employment pattern for the school leaving population. His ideas were formed earlier in his career and may have been more appropriate for the structure of Edwardian society

than that of the mid twentieth century.⁴⁸ Even if the Report was his sole responsibility, his sentiments on gender roles probably also reflected the opinions of that generation of policy makers.

The document established the relationship between the state and the individual citizen, and placed much emphasis on individual agency and responsibility within an overarching welfare framework:

The third principle is that social security must be achieved by co-operation between the state and the individual [...] The state in organising security should not stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility; in establishing a national minimum, it should leave room and encouragement for voluntary action by each individual to provide more than that minimum for *himself and his family*.⁴⁹

From the beginning, therefore, it became apparent that married women had a somewhat semi-detached relationship to the welfare state, as their eligibility for benefit came as a result of their husbands' economic activity. 'Individuals', by default, appear to be those men who were working and paying full insurance contributions. As Jane Lewis observed, women's role was quite specifically to redress the decline in the population and provide domestic support for men in full-time employment.⁵⁰ As such, the National Health Service protected women and children through their husband's insurance payments. These protective sentiments were echoed in the parliamentary debate over the population by Sir Francis Freemantle in his reply to a demand for more equality within the Act:

I am afraid she does not realise what the wife would lose if she had equal position and responsibility for the home instead of the husband paying Income Tax and rent and the cost of upkeep and the care and protection of the home [...] The loss of protection which the woman would suffer might prove to be much harder than the hardships of her present position.⁵¹

That family allowances were intended to promote the increase in the birth rate, rather than reward the non-working mother, is supported by the decision to withhold provision for the first child in any family. The assumption that a family unit would consist of more than one child was clearly not a figment of the imagination of advertisers and magazine editors which is discussed in more detail later.

Beveridge gave public acclaim to the domestic role of women within his proposed system, yet by not paying full contributions women

remained marginal to full membership of the welfare state. Whatever their husbands' category within the scheme, married women were treated as a separate group, with sweeping assumptions as to their occupation: 'married women, that is housewives'.⁵² Housewives became a classless group and women in work paid a lower insurance stamp than men, who were presumed to be paying a proportion of their contribution on behalf of their non-working wives. Women received a state pension when their husbands retired and were also eligible for a widow's pension. However, widows of working age without children were to have a temporary training benefit which would help them back into full-time work: 'There is no reason why a childless widow should get a pension for life: if she is able to work, she should work'.⁵³ The issue of working-age widows' pensions was extremely important at this point as a result of wartime casualties. The women who did not fit Beveridge's model of the dependent wife were classed as a 'problem'. There was no notion that the model of woman's role might change, which has been the main critique made in recent social policy analyses.

Beveridge's attitude to paid work was highly gendered and has its roots in the Victorian ideal of work as ennobling. In his concern to keep men in employment, the legacy of the Depression was also clear in his rhetoric:

The greatest evil of unemployment is not physical but spiritual, not the ruin of citizens and the killing of bodies, but the perversion of all that is best in a man's spirit, to serve purposes of destruction, hate, cruelty, deceit and revenge.⁵⁴

Titmuss, who also saw man as defined by his work, supported this sentiment: 'It was an activity that gave him a place in the social world and in large meaning gave measure to his life'.⁵⁵ Women, on the other hand, apparently suffered no such dehumanising effect of unemployment as their time in full-time work was limited and their fulfilment to be found in their 'natural' domestic setting. Despite being fully enfranchised citizens, women's adult role in employment was structured according to their domestic situation as surely as men's roles were structured by their paid employment to the age of 65. The amount of time envisaged that men would spend at home was also curtailed by the norm of Saturday working, further limiting the amount of time men were even physically present in the domestic arena.

As Sheila Blackburn has noted, feminist social policy analysis has tended to view the Beveridge Report negatively in the way that it reiterates apparent paternalistic oppression of women as a group.⁵⁶ Yet,

within a historical context, it was also an attempt to give women, as a group, some form of state support. As such it was viewed positively when it was introduced, as the later section on Mass Observation illustrates. Genuine concern over the falling birth rate, coupled with the prevailing imperialist ethic, created a representation of women as mothers of the Empire: 'In the next thirty years housewives, as mothers, have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world'.⁵⁷ The rise in the birth rate had not been foreseen by policy makers and concern over the reduction in the number of babies being born had led to a Royal Commission on the Population in 1940. By the time its findings were published in 1949 the panic was over, but it was a very real concern when Beveridge was drafting his proposals.⁵⁸

The concept of being a mother as 'work' brought mothering into the public sphere. It was part of a woman's public duty to her country to nurture the next generation. If mothering was perceived as a 'job' or profession, then it followed that training might be needed to complete the job in the best way possible, hence the ambivalent relationship between promoting women as instinctive mothers and the proliferation of health advice and mothercraft classes in schools during the 1950s.⁵⁹ There was a real concern that, once women had a taste of the outside world, they would be reluctant to return to their 'natural' place and needed to be cajoled, bribed or educated back into it.⁶⁰ The fall in the amount of paid domestic help available (ironically partly due to the increase in the availability of alternative types of paid employment⁶¹) also meant that middle-class professional women who might once have returned to the workplace were unable to do so, despite apparent advances in domestic technology.

Beveridge was also concerned that babies were born in the 'right circumstances', that is within wedlock. He agonised over the decision to award unmarried mothers maternity benefit, grudgingly conceding that: 'It will probably be felt right, in the interests of the child, to make this benefit available to unmarried mothers'.⁶² The document was, therefore, not only concerned with policy for individuals but with policing morals:

It may be said that the interest of the state is not in getting children born, but in getting them born in conditions which secure to them the proper domestic environment and care.⁶³

Child care advice in the early 1950s was predominantly concerned with issues around the effects of maternal deprivation, which suggested

that children would suffer if left by their mother for even short periods of time. This effectively ensured that women would stay at home, if at all possible, with not even the prospect of part-time employment.⁶⁴ Leonora Davidoff et al. have noted the change in attitude towards women and paid work after the war. They suggest that concern to keep women at home was less to do with safeguarding men's jobs and more to do with securing healthy children.⁶⁵ By acknowledging the central role of the mother in recreating a stable society and making public provision to enable her to leave the workplace, the Beveridge Report and subsequent legislation severely limited the perceived options open to school leaving girls in the next generation. While school girls were unlikely to have actually read the Beveridge Report, its sentiments appear to have struck a chord in the general public if the Mass Observers are to be believed. Social Insurance legislation with its clear demarcation between women and men and between married and unmarried women was a constant reminder of the separate gender roles expected of the 1950s citizen. This in turn resulted in a fairly rigid framework within which girls and boys made their individual decisions and choices.

The Report and following legislation ensured that women's relation to full citizenship remained questionable. The wording unwittingly confirmed this:

There will be new benefits for funerals, marriage and other needs as well as comprehensive medical treatment, both domiciliary and institutional for *all citizens and their dependents*.⁶⁶

When Beveridge was reflecting on his Plan in *Full Employment* his definition of citizen liberties which, he said, had to be preserved were: 'freedom in the choice of occupation and freedom in the management of personal income'.⁶⁷ There was to be little freedom for women as a group, whatever the rhetoric towards individuals may have been.⁶⁸

Beveridge proposed that on marriage a woman should forfeit her previous insurance contributions (already lower than her male peers) and became a 'new person'.⁶⁹ She was not allowed to pay a full contribution even if she continued in the same job and had no children. This put her at a disadvantage to her unmarried colleague. Girls contemplating entering the workforce and creating their identity in terms of a fully-employed member of society also knew that this was probably, even ideally, only temporary. It would be refashioned upon marriage and the assumption of a new identity as housewife. It is unsatisfactory, therefore, to consider women's or girls' individual choices without

analysing them in relation to the state prescription for 'woman' as an undifferentiated group.

Records of discussions in the Committee on Social Insurance and the Allied Services show that Beveridge himself took a leading role in the questioning of witnesses. He was adamant that he wanted to receive as many opinions as possible, for example he was concerned that the evidence from the National Council of Women was not representative of working-class views and suggested that the committee should consult with the Women's Co-operative Guild.⁷⁰ The final Report, however, grouped women together regardless of social class and apparently differed little from an original draft.⁷¹ According to his wife Janet, her influence was considerable and so it appears that the sentiments in the Report, in addition to the formal submissions by women's organisations, also reflected the individual contribution of one woman:

Never on any account trim your sails to a putative prevailing wind has been my motto, and it usually succeeded in my getting everything I planned, including the margin. By degrees William came round.⁷²

Janet Beveridge saw no difficulty with the position of women in the Report, she stated that: 'the whole joy of William's scheme is in its unconscious fairness to women'.⁷³ The following extract, from one of Beveridge's speeches given on a promotional tour of the United States, illustrates the genuine importance attached to women's domestic role as a job of work, with all the privileges that entailed:

My Scheme recognises the home. I hope that we shall now proceed to take as much trouble to shorten the hours of work by the housewife, by better and more efficient housing and equipment, as we have done to shorten the hours of work and improve conditions in the factories [...]. Security for old age is something that a wife doing essential work, not for pay, but as part of a team has earned.⁷⁴

Beveridge's model of marriage was very much that of a public institution where each partner had a clearly prescribed role. The three way relationship, which Jane Lewis notes, was clear; marriage was a contract, with the state as a third party.⁷⁵

On marriage a woman gains a legal right to maintenance by her husband, she undertakes at the same time to perform vital unpaid

service [...] Unless there are children, the housewife's earnings in general are not a means of subsistence but of a standard of living above subsistence.⁷⁶

The view that a wife's earnings should provide the luxuries, rather than day-to-day necessities, was one which was also offered by those interviewed for this research. This again suggests that Beveridge's analysis was in harmony with the opinions of the general public. The lasting effect was to embed the assumption that women would take the prime responsibility for the domestic role well into the end of the twentieth century and beyond. The ramifications for girls thinking of their post-school choices meant that, even if they did not construct it in such explicit terms, their career plan necessarily included elements of domesticity. This not only affected their employment prospects but also educational provision, expectations of training and the relative importance they attached to their paid employment.

Women's domestic support and nurture of husband and children was fundamental to the creation of Beveridge's vision of the welfare state. In order for her to concentrate completely on this role, her participation in the state insurance scheme was through her husband's contributions. However the multitude of women's organisations which had been established during the earlier part of the century also recorded their views to the proposals. These did not necessarily challenge the primacy of the domestic role but sought to integrate an understanding of woman as an independent citizen within a structured framework based on the role of women as a group.

Women's organisations' response to the Beveridge Report

As a response to the Beveridge Report, the Women's Freedom League published their own proposals in a pamphlet by Katharine Abbot and Elizabeth Bompas in 1943, *The Woman Citizen*. Ruth Lister has argued that it is recent feminist scholarship which has lifted 'the veil of universalism to make visible the female non-citizen who stood outside it and to reveal the male citizen lurking underneath'.⁷⁷ This pamphlet also identified the way that the Beveridge proposals marginalised women from full citizenship. Lister argued that while post-structuralism has demanded a celebration of difference, an understanding of women as a unitary group is still essential for explaining their relationship to the state.⁷⁸ She suggests that entry to the public sphere remains profoundly gendered, and, although this exclusion might be

experienced differently by individual women, it originates from 'common structural constraints'.⁷⁹ In 1943, women's organisations were quick to identify how specific interests were disregarded by the overarching prescription for women. The 'domestic spinster' who remained at home to look after elderly relations was most frequently cited as the Cinderella of the new legislation. However, many of the objections to the Beveridge Report, in addition to questioning the practicalities of administering specific benefits, hinged around the degree of independence granted to married women, irrespective of class who were *the* representative of 'Woman' in the proposals.

Abbot and Bompas dismissed the 'tribute of the word' as 'a sad commonplace for women'.⁸⁰ All the rhetoric in the world did not grant her full citizenship on an equal footing with men:

It is with the denial of any personal status to the woman because she is married, the denial of her independent personality within marriage that everything goes wrong, becomes unjust and ungenerous, sometimes comic, always unrealistic and inevitably antagonistic to the best interests of marriage and social life.⁸¹

The strength of this statement would suggest that Abbot and Bompas would not have subscribed to any notion that independence might be found within the constraints of the domestic model proposed by Beveridge. The women's organisations did not question the primacy of the domestic role but they felt that the importance attached to mothering by Beveridge did not seem to be reflected in his proposals:

[T]he inequalities as between men and women largely spring from the inferior position assumed for the married woman. If she is given equal status throughout it is a comparatively simple matter to remove the other inequalities.⁸²

Issues of status centred around the idea of independence, or loss of it, which an implementation of the Beveridge Plan would engender:

The error which lies in the moral rather than the economic sphere – lies in denying to the married, rich or poor, housewife or paid worker an independent personal status. From this error arise a crop of injustices, complications and difficulties, personal, marital and administrative involving, in the long run, both the unmarried as well as the married woman.⁸³

Issues of independence and autonomy centre on the public and private nature of gender roles. Proposals in the Beveridge Report illustrate the complexity of the public/private, male/female divide. These were not presented as complex in the initial document, it was only the subsequent discussions and objections by the women's organisations which highlighted the inherent tension in the definition of these roles.

Abbot and Bompas were concerned that the domestic role so promoted by the Report should not compromise women's independence. They demanded that married women should be able to contribute equally in an insurance system and that retirement ages should also be equal.⁸⁴ They framed their blueprint in terms of a business relationship between husband and wife with husband as employer. It is significant that they thought that the position of wife as employee of her husband offered more independence or status than Beveridge's model of equal (but unpaid) partner in a team;

The average working housewife, must, if there is to be any reality in an insurance scheme, be looked upon as a gainfully employed partner in that her contribution to the home has a definite financial value and in as much as her work there, is as much her livelihood, as the work of those persons put into class II of the Scheme who are not under contract of service.⁸⁵

Many women's organisations wrote or gave evidence to the Beveridge Committee. Their support for the concept of the Plan was virtually unanimous, but their reservations were considerable. Given the amount of documentation submitted by the women's organisations, it is surprising that they had so little effect on the final draft.

The dismissive attitude of the civil service advisors offers an insight into the prevailing power structures of government; it was a power structure to which women, even in high positions had little access. MP Mavis Tate wrote to Lord Woolton requesting a meeting with a deputation from women's organisations which included the British Federation of Business and Professional Women, The St Joan's Social and Political Alliance (the Catholic women's voice), the Open Door Council and the National Union of Women Teachers. Their main concerns were the specific arrangements for women's contributions and the unequal retirement ages. The request for this meeting drew scathing comments from the civil servants involved. The sixteen members of the deputation were eventually received and in their suggested agenda for the meeting they requested a discussion focused on

the status of women within the report.⁸⁶ This did not mollify the civil servants, and hand-written note reads: 'Minister, it is unsafe to assume that they will adhere to any agenda'.⁸⁷

The records of the deputation suggest that the women shared Beveridge's concept of the important nature of housewives' role, but, like the Women's Freedom League, wanted equal status in benefits and contributions. The tone of the civil servants' handwritten comments indicate how the opinions of women, even highly placed women, were dismissed:

By equal I take this to mean that they wish women to pay the same as men do. This recommendation is indeed an expression of advanced feminism, which presents a concession to women as a discrimination against them. They say in the pamphlet that it bolsters the existing practice of remunerating women less than men. I suppose that it can be argued as having that effect, yet it can be argued per contra that the employer makes a smaller contribution in the case of women and can therefore afford to pay them more. I do not suggest that the argument really has much validity.⁸⁸

A further deputation, from the Married Women's Association on October 17th 1944, led by Dr Edith Summerskill, MP, included nine members described as 'ordinary housewives'.⁸⁹ They focused on the importance of paying family allowances to the mother, increasing the suggested maternity benefit and including maintenance for deserted wives and children as the state's responsibility. They reflected Beveridge's sentiments on the public role played by mothers: 'the welfare of mothers and children should have first consideration in any social security plan, in order to further the future well-being of the community'.

The civil servants' notes were concerned with the cost of defining the domestic role as a job: 'It may be that the deputation are relying on the view that the wife engaged on household duties is a wage earner with her husband as her employer'.⁹⁰ Throughout the discussions of the housewife's place in society there is the familiar confusion as to whether this is a 'natural' occupation for women or their 'job'. If the work of housewife were a 'natural' way of life for a woman, this would create an unchanging view of girls' ultimate place in society. If it were a 'job' then, as the domestic burden eased as a result of smaller families and improved household technology, women would be effectively freed to pursue other types of employment.

The correspondence received from women's organisations voicing their reactions to the Report is voluminous. It indicates the extensive networking capabilities of these organisations; many of the requests were verbatim copies of the demands made by the Married Women's Association, and came from all parts of the country. The Women's Co-operative Guild was adamant that housewives' high status should be endorsed by legislation. The Standing Conference of Women's Organisations in Wolverhampton added a note on behalf of single women, appealing to national conscience and voicing the reality which faced many women in the 1950s: '[V]ery many women have been and will be deprived of the security of husbands and homes by the death of thousands of men on the various battle fronts'.⁹¹ Whatever the desirability of the housewife model proposed by Beveridge, many school leavers in the late 1950s grew up in female-headed households where maternal role models may have conflicted with the Beveridge 'ideal'. Equally the role of husbands as main and substantial breadwinners was not always easy to resume after demobilisation.

Abbot and Bompas concluded *The Woman Citizen* with an observation which set individual women within a larger framework:

To continue to give women what seems to others to be good for them, to give them indeed anything with an ulterior motive – be it the preservation of marriage and the family or a rise in the birth rate – is doomed to failure. To respect women as individuals, to give them what is their right as citizens and workers, may on the other hand have great and beneficial effects far beyond any immediate object.⁹²

The implication was that both men *and* women should have an entitlement to benefits, rather than being 'given' an allowance by a munificent state. In constructing women as citizens and workers, Abbot and Bompas brought them out of the domestic community and into the public realm.

Submissions from the women's organisations hinted at the inherent ambivalence of women's relationship with the public sphere. Individual identities were independent of, yet interdependent with, wider constructions of the female role. The variety of parts played by women of all ages and classes during the war involved re-thinking accepted roles whilst retaining the expectation of 'returning to normal' when peace came. Images of women in different communities abounded in the media; one woman could be employed worker, mother and wife.

Despite this, the prediction and prescription in the Beveridge Report favoured a return to pre-war roles.⁹³ Beveridge seems to have been unaware that this was unlikely and that a majority of middle-class women would no longer have the domestic help that their mothers had enjoyed. The extra amount of domestic work effectively reduced the amount of time available for middle-class women to take on traditional voluntary public work as James Hinton has recently observed in his analysis of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service.⁹⁴ This segregated even further definitions of citizenship into private and public for women and men.

The arguments put forward in the WFL pamphlet and by other women's organisations suggested that there were opportunities for a more radical integration of mothering roles with state recognition. That the domestic role, which was so often described as 'natural', could even be a subject of discussion, meant that there was an awareness of the socially constructed, and therefore mutable, nature of 'traditional' gender roles.

It is clear that the Beveridge Report did have its opponents. However, the dismissive tone of the civil service minutes may have been repeated in the wider sphere. Janet Beveridge observed that the only real criticism came from the industrial insurance companies 'which was strong and persistent'.⁹⁵ Material from the Mass Observation Archive indicates that the implications of the gender division in the Report were not of concern to most of those whose reactions were recorded. It suggests that contemporary constructions of gender roles as 'natural' or unchanging were so deeply embedded as to be unnoticed and unquestioned by a significant number of people. The chapter concludes by discussing the reaction to the Beveridge Report recorded by Mass Observation and the response of women both as individuals and as a group.

Mass Observation

Material in the Mass Observation archive provides an insight into the preoccupations of the man and woman in the street, albeit mediated by the observers themselves. While the issues of gender were central to the Women's Freedom League, they were largely absent from more general discussion. The snippets of conversation overheard by observers, the replies to direct questions and diary extracts illustrate the way that women saw themselves, at one and the same time, as individuals and as part of a wider community. They might equally be

members of alternative communities which sometimes had conflicting loyalties.

A Mass Observation Report on the first reactions to the Beveridge Plan, on the 24th December 1942, indicated that a great many people had, at the very least, read a summary of its proposals. The overriding reaction was favourable, with a majority anticipating that the Plan would be passed into law.⁹⁶ Reports made by Mass Observation were not analysed in gendered terms, although the anonymous comments were ascribed either 'm' (male), or 'f' (female). The main concern of those interviewed was the issue of housing, followed by employment, improved social services and education. Most comments over the status of women in the Report were favourable, which suggests that the provisions were *not* seen as limiting. The most enthusiastic of the comments came from a woman MP who clearly supported the idea of separate gender roles:

A historic document as far as women are concerned a [...] triumph for the women's cause. The first document of its kind to regard husband and wife as a team and to take a reasonable view of the status of the housewife.⁹⁷

Husband and wife as a team was also how Beveridge described the marriage partnership, and it evoked the wartime idea of everyone 'pulling together'. The war involved the whole population, inviting people to construct themselves on the Home Front as part of one unified community, irrespective of their sex. Women were just as likely as men to become civilian casualties, again bringing them into the public arena.

The Mass Observation material suggests that the provisions of the Report were accepted in principle, but there was discussion of the practical viability of the plan. These were centred on more individualistic interpretations, in which women placed themselves within different, yet overlapping, communities. Adverse comments voiced concern over the extra money involved in paying even the reduced contributions. The problems of historical analysis in current social policy research, as discussed earlier in the chapter, are apparent here in the issue of unequal pay for men and women. It would have appeared manifestly unfair to demand equal contributions from those earning unequal wages and equal pay for equal work was a long way in the future.

Some women who welcomed the proposals for 'women' as a group, nevertheless were afraid that the provisions would be abused by sub-groups; these were usually defined in terms of social class. Comments

also illustrate the significance which women of all classes attributed to their paid employment. Their comments sit uneasily alongside the expectations of full-time domesticity. It is also clear from some of the comments that the eugenics movement had many supporters.⁹⁸ The comments of the women in the following extracts were very similar to comments made by men. The concept of male self-esteem created through paid employment was widely accepted:

I think it is a direct encouragement to the lowest type of humanity to do no work and at the same time breed like rabbits. Meanwhile the hardworking middle-class get dragged into this scheme not only as contributors but as income tax payers as well.⁹⁹

Another racket for making the middle-class support the lowest dregs of humanity in greater comfort than ever.¹⁰⁰

It's just another case of taxing people who work all hours of the day and night to keep a lot of idle boozing, dog-racing crowd of toughs in luxury and unemployment.¹⁰¹

There was little sympathy for those not at work:

Who's going to pay for it? I suppose hard working girls like me. If unemployed people are to be paid all that money, then barmaids deserve at least £5 a week. Can you see us getting it?¹⁰²

It's time they did something about these soldiers' wives. Some of them are getting £3 a week and earning themselves into the bargain. I know a woman, all her children were evacuated and she don't have to pay a penny for them. And she's drawing £3.5/- a week for them and she's earning £3.10/- and she's nothing to keep going at all. Her husband away, the kiddies away and £6 coming into the home. There's too many like that!¹⁰³

In all the areas of research undertaken for this book, there is difficulty with the commonly held belief that women's ultimate domestic role, and consequently schoolgirls' ultimate domestic destiny, was 'natural'. At the same time they had to be persuaded and cajoled into it and trained for it. Equally any possibility of exploiting men's nurturing abilities or domestic roles, other than gardening or DIY were ignored. During this period it was assumed that women would take the responsibility for all the domestic arrangements, whether or not there were children

involved. By default they also became responsible for elderly relatives, relieving the state of a considerable financial outlay.¹⁰⁴ Discussion centred around how women could combine all their domestic work with some part-time work as their children grew.¹⁰⁵ If this role were indeed 'natural', domestic skills and mothering would not need to be taught, yet not everyone shared the idealised view of women's innate abilities:

I think a more practical education would be useful. Teach young girls all about marriage and how to bring up children and cooking. Young married women don't know how to bring up children. A lot of them only marry for the allowance and to men they hardly know. The Beveridge Plan would remedy all that.¹⁰⁶

The Mass Observation Archive contains some interesting commentary on the post-war choice between work and full-time domesticity and again there is evidence of the way in which women defined themselves in relation to the group norm. The centrality of the housewife role was established but there was a body of opinion which thought that, having had a taste of independent earning, not all women would be happy to subscribe to this norm. The plans put forward by Beveridge might have given the stay-at-home wife more status, but it undermined her financial autonomy. There were a variety of opinions on this matter which, to an extent, were generational:

Mrs M senior says young married women will not want to give up their independence. Mrs M suggested that many of them would be only too glad to return to home life and get away from the discipline.¹⁰⁷

The position of women in the workplace after the war could only be a matter of conjecture. As already seen, Beveridge's estimate that the number of married women in the workforce would fall was wide of the mark. Although most state day nurseries closed very swiftly after the end of hostilities, the Ministry of Labour mounted a campaign to get married women back into the factories, at least part-time, by the beginning of the 1950s.¹⁰⁸ One Mass Observation bulletin asked respondents what they thought would be the best way of dealing with demobilisation. Women returning to the home came well down the list of suggestions and an observer remarked:

Some suggest that the answer lies in the return of women to the home. This is scarcely brought up at all in answer to unemployment

and is a thing which people fear will be necessary rather than want in most cases.¹⁰⁹

Beveridge's Plan centred around providing state support for women through their husbands' insurance contributions. Single women, therefore posed a 'problem' in this planning. Widows would be provided for through their deceased husbands' contributions, although, as already stated, young childless widows would not get ongoing state support past a period of retraining. Beveridge's scheme made allowances for young girls' brief foray into stop gap employment; they paid a lower rate of insurance and then became 'a new person' on marriage. It was the long term spinsters, some of whom had never been officially employed, who posed a problem in fitting in with the proposals, and yet these women were often carrying out the expected female duties of caring for an elderly relative.¹¹⁰ Two conversations recorded concern over the spinsters' plight:

- Have you seen the Beveridge Report? We're not mentioned.
- Oh, don't we come into it? Pay our 4/3d or whatever and get the benefits?
- How can everyone come into it? You can't take 4/3d from a little girl earning £2 a week [...] And I see widow's pensions are mentioned, but nothing about spinsters.¹¹¹

In Sheffield, a spinster of sixty remarked: 'Why no mention of spinsters in it? We are always left out'. Beveridge assumed that the number of spinsters in the population would decline and, by the mid 1950s, the demographic statistics did show a lower age of marriage and a surplus of males to females in the population. However, this marginalisation of the spinster status further reduced the desirable options open to girls making their future plans.¹¹² Full adult status for girls was to be achieved through marriage and parenthood; the period of economic independence was portrayed as less desirable and of lower status than dependence on a husband.¹¹³

The ideal of the post-war nuclear family supported by, and supportive of, the state produced a very seductive image. A middle-aged woman wrote in her diary for Mass Observation:

It's going to be a grand thing for family life. The parents will have more time to spend on their children because they won't have to save. And the young people will not be constantly worried about

having to keep their parents in later life. They will all feel freer and happier and it will improve family life – get it back to what it used to be in Victorian days.¹¹⁴

This middle-aged woman saw the community of the family becoming stronger as the unofficial ties which bound it were loosened by state support, although of course there was no state support at all in her halcyon vision of the Victorian period. As the state became more involved in the private sphere, public expectations of gender roles within the family inevitably became part of the individual construction of a gendered self.

Girls leaving school in the late 1950s had a variety of work available to them. Full employment meant that they were welcomed into the workforce. Social insurance legislation was based on the assumption that their foray into full-time work was only a temporary stop gap to fill in time until they took up full-time domesticity. Feminist analyses have suggested that the new welfare state attached more importance to their identity as potential wives and mothers than as long term workers.¹¹⁵ Their income as married women was expected to provide no more than pin money and their public position as full citizens was guaranteed as a result of their private duties of mothering. That so many women chose to follow this model of dependence on a husband indicates that they constructed the notion of autonomy or independence in a different way from the public economic independence of the male citizen.

As Blackburn has suggested, and the Mass Observation extracts confirm, women in the 1950s may have welcomed welfare provision which materially improved their day-to-day lives, without being overly concerned at the inherent assumptions contained within it. Against expectations, the model of women as workers and mothers continued into the 1950s and Mass Observation records indicate that many women were critical of those who chose to limit their activity to the domestic arena.

This chapter has sought to establish how expectations of adult gender roles in the 1950s were embedded in the provisions of the welfare state. However, legislation was not simply imposed on women, it was partly constructed, and supported by them as well. It is difficult to assess the extent of their contribution, although the support demonstrated in the Mass Observation records is considerable. Susan Pedersen's assertion that women's voices had little impact on policy making is persuasive, given the final content of the Beveridge Report.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless,

women's organisations submitted voluminous evidence to the Beveridge committee which offers an insight into the inbuilt tensions within this model. While women may have approved the principle of publicly acknowledging the role of the housewife, many were not convinced that dependence on husbands' contributions was the best way forward.

Of course, the provision of the welfare state covered far more than simply Social Insurance legislation as proposed by Beveridge. However, the Beveridge Report has been discussed in detail as it encapsulated many of the sentiments expressed in the longer debates in parliament during the passage of all the relevant legislation. The euphoric reception of the Report by the general public and the newspapers suggests that Beveridge did indeed catch the mood and expectations of the populace. This chapter has looked beneath the surface of the report in order to uncover some of the dissidence which underpinned the apparent consensus of the New Elizabethan Age.

The next chapter turns to a discussion of the way that education affected the entry into work and pupils' decision on their career or job aspirations. The 1944 Education Act as part of the welfare state provision brought secondary education to everyone for the first time. However, the form that this education should take was left open in the provisions of the Act and the selective tripartite system which reached its heyday in the 1950s lent itself to a highly gendered curriculum in terms of preparation for employment. The majority of grammar schools, modelled to a large extent on the existing independent schools, were single sex institutions. The secondary moderns with more emphasis on skills than academic work and without the pressure of public examinations also tended to divide their curriculum along gendered lines and confirmed the expectations for future gender roles following the Beveridge model. A vast majority of children still left school at the minimum school leaving age of fifteen and many grammar school children left after O' levels at sixteen or completed just one year in the sixth form, often on a vocational course.¹¹⁷ With the entry to work following a brief secondary education an examination of attitudes towards adult gender roles during the last years of school is particularly useful.

3

Formal Education and Career Choice

[T]he modern girl is expected to earn her own living, which may involve entering almost any occupation on a competitive basis with the opposite sex [...] she is also expected to retain her womanliness, to dress with taste, and eventually marry and organise a household. The emancipation of women has placed on her the onus of more responsibility as far as her citizenship is concerned. She should have a social consciousness and an intelligent awareness of social problems. Her education must prepare her to face her responsibilities. Her occupation, her influence in her future home, her social responsibilities and her use of leisure have to be taken into consideration when planning the course.¹

In 1959 M. Woollett, headmistress of a technical school for girls, described the relationship between employment, domesticity, femininity and citizenship for which teachers had to prepare their female secondary school pupils in their final year of formal education. The advantages of the welfare state discussed in the previous chapter brought with it ideas of 'social citizenship' which were clearly gendered.² The 'two-fold' experience, that is the need to prepare their pupils for both domesticity and employment, was discussed by the Headmistresses' Association Education Committee, during their deliberations over their submission to the Crowther committee which considered developments in education for teenagers after the age of fifteen. The view of the headmistresses was that education served a dual purpose for their pupils: 'vital to themselves as individuals and to the society of which they are a part'.³ This chapter considers the part that formal education played in the school-leaving decisions of girls in the 1950s.

Inevitably social class is integral to the analysis of this material. In his 1971 study of the Youth Employment Service, Kenneth Roberts suggested that the type of education received, due largely to the individual's position in the social hierarchy, determined the type of employment undertaken.⁴ However, success in gaining entry to grammar school at 11+ did not automatically confer middle-class status along with the potential for university entry. Ken Jones has noted how the cultural processes of the grammar school which reflected the traditions of the public school 'formed part of the process of attrition whereby [working-class] students were "sieved out" of grammar school education'. In feeling marginalised from the middle-class ethos of the grammar schools working-class children left early and failed to fare much better in employment than their secondary modern counterparts.⁵ Arguably the intersection of class and gender was crucial to the formation of female adult identity. Morwenna Griffiths suggests that individuals think of themselves as belonging to two groups; those defined by structures of society, which include class, but also those defined by voluntary membership, where members may feel an affinity with each other through shared values which may also include class.⁶

The sources in this chapter demonstrate the way that education reinforced expectations of imposed class differences (in the different provisions and expectations for grammar and secondary modern pupils) and illustrate how a majority of pupils shared similar expectations and ambitions according to the type of school they attended. Gender expectations intersected with class as prescriptions of expected domesticity affected girls of all classes and in all types of education. What becomes apparent in many of the opinions cited by those in authority is the increasing concern voiced over the growth of a youth culture. Generational differences between pupils and teachers reflected the changing cultural climate outside the school environment in conflict with the traditional expectations apparent within the school gates. An added factor not apparently envisaged by Beveridge in his future plans was the increase in migrant students from Ireland, the Caribbean and Asia during the 1950s. Ian Grosvenor highlights the prevailing attitude amongst the education authorities of assimilation, confirmed by regulations limiting the proportion of migrant children in schools to 30%.⁷

Both Beveridge and the careers advice literature assumed a class-less grouping for women, which was, in essence, dominated by middle-class assumptions of status achieved through a rewarding job and with the prospect of eventual dependence on a single male breadwinner.

At the same time, the stop gap model of female employment was becoming discredited. The rhetoric of the dual role pre-supposed that there was a viable alternative for married women *not* to return to full-time work in middle-age, but also implied that they had a duty as citizens to contribute in the workplace whenever possible. The education system, as it evolved in the 1950s unwittingly propagated class as a relevant issue when it came to making career or job decisions. As the allocation of secondary school determined the type of qualifications attained, 'passing' or 'failing' the 11+ effectively predicted future job prospects.

Following the 1944 Education Act, a majority of children within the state education system were divided at eleven, ostensibly according to their individual aptitude and ability, into grammar, technical or secondary modern schools. Most of the children who attended grammar schools were middle-class.⁸ At grammar school they could achieve General Certificate of Education (GCE) passes which would permit access to the professions, thereby maintaining their class status. The majority of children attended secondary modern schools, where they were most likely to leave at fifteen before taking any public exams, indeed initially pupils were expressly prevented from taking GCE exams in these schools. Even in 1961, 73% of children left school without having taken a public exam.⁹ Professional middle-class occupations were therefore only open to those children who had received a state grammar school education or succeeded at independent or public schools. The small number of technical schools in existence meant that they were unavailable for most eleven year olds.¹⁰ Expectations of future adult gender roles in society also affected the curriculum provision, with all girls in both grammar and secondary modern systems receiving some kind of domestic science education, though the amount of time spent on it varied.

Class has traditionally been ascribed through the occupational capacity of the head of the household (assumed to be male).¹¹ The occupation of a girl's future husband was seen to be a clearer indicator of her eventual place in society than her own employment. Parents may therefore have expected, or at the very least hoped, that schools would prepare their daughters for entry to an occupation in which they would meet a 'suitable' husband which would maintain or improve their class position. As a result, girls' occupational choice was inextricably woven in with their ultimate domestic role, and inevitably retained an element of the idea of the stop gap nature of female school leavers' employment. Carol Dyhouse has noted how the back to the

home movement after both world wars and the concurrent development of the ideology of family contributed to an increasing 'feminine curriculum for girls'.¹² This was especially problematic for staff in grammar schools who, while encouraging girls to remain at school and train for qualifications, were also aware that their time in the job market was likely to be limited. In order to reconcile these tensions, schoolgirls' preparation for their expected adult role was frequently couched in terms of their public duty and social responsibility as citizens, as well as their private duty as wives and mothers.

Sources identified here include sociological and educational writing on school leaving occupational choice; the archives of the Headmistresses' and the Assistant Mistresses' Associations and submissions made for the Crowther Report. As secondary modern schools were free to pursue their own curricula, it seems more appropriate to focus on sources which offer a broad overview of opinions rather than examining day-to-day provisions in individual schools in detail. The 1950s literature both contextualises the debate and offers an insight into the gendered assumptions made by sociologists in the late 1950s. Surveys of vocational choice in the 1950s are to be found in sociological and educational psychology publications. P. W. Musgrave has considered the relationship between history and sociology and suggested that by bringing the two together: 'there is at least the chance of a fuller view of the particular problems under consideration'.¹³ Sociological literature used as historical text highlights this 'fuller view' of women as a group rather than as individuals.

The Headmistresses' and Assistant Mistresses' Association journals and reports contain opinions from both the state and the independent sectors of girls' secondary schools; their deliberations illustrate the major pre-occupations of those dealing directly with the school leaving cohort. They were not, of course, the only teaching associations and attitudes from other organisations are included in the evidence to the Crowther committee. The concluding section focuses on this evidence submitted to the Central Advisory Council for Education for the Crowther Report, on the future of education for those between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. All these sources address issues of school leaving in grammar schools, technical schools and secondary modern schools when there was widespread concern that schools were not meeting the needs of employers at a time of industrial and economic growth. This concern was exacerbated by the knowledge that the failures in our education system to prepare children for the world of work were helping our industrial competitors; Japan, USA, France and Germany.¹⁴

Material consulted for the three sections of this chapter reveals a number of contradictions, most significantly the tension between the aspiration of the individual and wider expectations of women's role. Morwenna Griffiths' notion of women formulating their identity within overlapping communities is useful because adolescent girls split their time between school and home. In many cases these had shared values and expectations. For working-class girls (and boys) who made it to grammar school there were potential clashes of interest, most crucially over expected leaving ages.¹⁵ In secondary modern schools the point of contact between staff and parents could be even more disparate. This could take two forms; one the failure on the parents' part to see any value in education at all and, conversely, concern by the more ambitious parents of children who had 'failed' to get to grammar school, that the secondary modern, by not offering the opportunity to take GCE exams, was denying its pupils access to better jobs and condemning them to low paid, low status, occupations.

Academic analyses of the historical development of the education system can also be found within the disciplines of sociology and history. Government policy on the nature of education provision touches many aspects of an individual's life and underpins any discussion of the topic. The type of school attended has far reaching implications for career and life patterns, beyond the immediate experience of school itself. Historians of girls' education have mainly focused on the period prior to the Second World War, although concepts which they have invoked such as the double burden of class and gender and dual conformity could quite reasonably be argued to hold for the later period.¹⁶ In common with the concerns of social policy research discussed the previous chapter, educational sociologists consider wider implications of educational policy as they affect social and institutional attitudes and practices and use historical material to chart the development of these. Madeleine Arnot, Miriam David and Gaby Weiner have noted how little impact the 1944 Education Act had on the education of working-class girls in their analysis of gender and education in the post-war era.¹⁷ These texts illustrate the close relationship between constructions of women as individuals and women as a group which is a central concern of this book.

Studies of the comparatively recent past highlight the nature of the ongoing dialogue between past and present. The Birmingham Feminist History Group used a sociological framework for their analysis and considered the impact and purpose of education in the 1950s in functionalist terms. Functionalism was a popular theory of society

in the 1950s, supported by sociologist Talcott Parsons. Parsons placed great importance on the social interaction between individuals and institutions to provide a social system. He argued that individuals internalised public norms and values as they grew up and this ensured the continued stability of society.¹⁸ The Birmingham Group concluded that the gendered nature of education in the period occurred as a result of collusion between those who sought to maintain women as a reserve army of semi-skilled labour and those who sought to maintain the primacy of the domestic role. The group suggest that this occurred within the educational rhetoric of promoting individual interests and they highlight the constant tension between policy for the individual and prescription for the group.¹⁹

Feminist analyses have sought to untangle the origins of gender inequality within the education system. Eileen Byrne used a historical overview of the development of girls' education in order to highlight the inequalities which remained endemic to the state system in the 1970s.²⁰ She analysed the relationship between marriage and curriculum planning in careers education and concluded that it was: 'riddled with false assumptions, negative and inconsistent thinking and inherited attitudes traceable directly back to Edwardian and Victorian mother-worship'.²¹ Byrne identified herself as one of those who had benefited from the 1944 Education Act, but noted that her career decisions were complicated by the lack of awareness of the gendered nature of their choice. The pattern which Byrne followed reflected the model presented in the career novels discussed in a later chapter:

None of us thought out the conflicts and interlocking needs and demands of marriage, work, home, non-marriage (by choice not an accident of fate) or alternating patterns of each lifestyle. The unwritten rules were very clear. College or professional training away from the city, but not domesticity. A local marriage and a good steady job for the time being. Careers talks meant a local job, which university or do you *really* want to be a vet?²²

It is precisely 'the unwritten rules' which are so elusive for the historian and doubly so for a gendered perspective as traditional gender roles were taken as given.

Most girls went straight into paid employment, and, as indicated in the final chapter, a majority lived at home until marriage. It appears to have been the middle-class girls who attended grammar school (and whose peers are most likely to have attended university) who were

most likely to break from their home background. Rosemary Deem has noted the way that gender was influential in structuring girls' 'actions, beliefs, values and life chances and providing them with a set of contradictions about their role in society'.²³ Deem's analysis of women's education highlights the tensions in the messages purveyed in the last years at school. It is located within a patriarchal framework which foregrounds gender but makes integration with class more problematic.

Madeleine Arnot offered a comprehensive overview of previous analyses in the sociology of education.²⁴ She divided the theorists into two groups, one group took a cultural perspective in which school was located as a site for the confirmation and proliferation of gender roles. This analysis assumed that girls wanted to be treated as a homogenous and distinct group, and parents, teachers and employers saw the 'problem' as the proliferation of traditional attitudes. The second, the political perspective, assumed the wider influence on schooling from wider social and institutional factors, analysed through an awareness of the role of capitalism and patriarchy in the formation of gender roles. Arnot posited the need for a synthesis of both these perspectives in which gender roles were determined by their economic and cultural position, but she warned that this model might be overly deterministic and allow women no independence of action. The amount of freedom that the individual boy or girl had in making their employment decisions was as much constrained by their understanding of appropriate adult gender roles as by the type of formal secondary education they received. This goes part way to explaining why many girls left grammar school after one year in the sixth form rather than staying for the full secondary course and university entrance (appendix, tables, 1.1, 1.2). Girls may have had limited access to higher education at this time, but the records of the teaching associations reveal concern over girls leaving early rather than concern over the lack of university places available.

Gary McCulloch has noted how little attention historians have paid to the secondary modern experiment.²⁵ This is surprising, given the amount of interest at the time in analysing the results of the 1944 Act which is discussed in the next section. The eventual vilification and rejection of the secondary modern model may have rendered it superfluous as a subject from a sociological point of view, but in order to improve historical understanding these schools need further consideration, especially as they catered for the vast majority of the teenage population. Gary McCulloch traced a common thread in educational policy from the years prior to 1944 with a lineage back to Plato in the

distinctions which were made in *The Republic* between the three different groups in society. McCulloch concluded that recent educational policy: '[W]as also an effective means of social stratification in consolidating distinctions between different social categories and creating a hierarchy among them'.²⁶ Brian Simon also highlighted the way in which the social order was maintained by the education system.²⁷ Girls were more marginal to this analysis. A pupil with a secondary modern background could seek clerical work in an office and land herself a middle-class husband. In order to achieve such a job, the school had to educate girls in manners and social graces in addition to academic subjects and the teaching associations were well aware of the problems inherent in this model.

This role of the secondary modern school in socialising the working-class girl is a theme recognised by McCulloch. As discussed in the introduction to this book, there was much concern at the growth of juvenile delinquency during the 1950s which was largely defined as masculine.²⁸ Girls' delinquency was manifested rather by fears of sexual promiscuity and 'unfeminine' behaviour. This may have affected the gendering of the secondary modern syllabus. McCulloch suggests that working-class girls had an: 'uncomfortable and often hostile image'. It was asserted that they were: 'generally rebellious, sexually promiscuous and a danger to society'.²⁹ It appears that new opportunities of secondary education for all were to be endured rather than relished and an escape made into the adult world as soon as legally possible.³⁰

Ideologies of distinct gender roles underpinned education policy in the new welfare state. Anne Marie Wolpe noted these common ideological assumptions for girls' education in the Norwood, Crowther and Newsom Reports.³¹ They confirmed the continuation of dominant gender roles in English society from 1943 to 1963:

Where they have considered educational problems for girls as distinct from those of boys they have revealed that they have presupposed what will and should be the lives of girls.³²

Wolpe noted how all three reports unproblematically assumed that boys were preoccupied by their future occupation, while girls' interests were concerned with their role as wives and mothers. She identified the way that, in the 1943 Norwood Report, adult life was divided into the areas of work and citizenship. She argued that by locating girls within the area of citizenship their paid employment could be side-

lined while still validating their need for education.³³ Wolpe suggested that the division was somewhat mitigated in the Crowther Report, as girls' place within the employment structure was recognised, although as will be seen, this was often couched in ambivalent terms by those who submitted evidence. She considered that a new dichotomy was created within the workplace as, according to Crowther, girls took up jobs which required little technical knowledge. Most girls were still effectively marginalised from either taking up further education or being accorded more than a subsidiary place in their role as paid workers.

Penny Tinkler recently highlighted how the County Colleges recommended by Crowther and initially contained in the provisions of the 1944 Act, were expected to cater for the specific needs of adolescents in their post-compulsory education.³⁴ Although the Colleges were designed to provide instruction for all early leavers, implicitly, she suggests it was the working-class young workers (boys) who were the focus of the proposals. The Colleges were designed to promote the citizenship of young people yet, as Tinkler observes, the intended curricula in the Colleges were likely to be gendered, with specific expectations of girls' future domesticity.

There are a number of educational texts written from the viewpoint of the 1950s. It is a somewhat arbitrary distinction to make between these texts and the sociological surveys. They illustrate the very blurred boundaries between what might be considered primary and secondary historical text. Three of the studies focus on the secondary modern pupil. This offers a rare alternative to the dominance of the middle-class perspective, although of course they were written from the viewpoint of middle-class educationists. Contemporary studies on the secondary modern schools illustrate the ambivalent relationship that they had with middle-class mores.

Michael Carter surveyed several secondary modern schools in Sheffield. He compared attitudes which differed according to varying home influences and aspirations. He discussed the strategies employed in school policy as it attempted to mitigate these differences, which often centred around the outward appearance of 'schoolgirl' or 'adult', confirming McCulloch's view of the role of the secondary modern schools in socialising their pupils. In one problem area Carter observed that:

The provision of full length mirrors for girls and the toleration of dyed hair, were part of the attempt to develop girls' femininity, to

meet them half-way, and to eradicate the tendency to hardness which was apparent in young women in the area, so soon laden with young families, their freedom gone.³⁵

Carter was quite explicit about the influence of the home on pupils' aspirations and expectations of work.³⁶ He identified differences in the working-class areas but he also commented extensively on the gendering of these expectations. The majority of parents were less concerned with their daughters' work prospects than their sons' employment, although Catherine Avent of the Youth Employment Service suggested that parents in the North of England were more interested than those in the South in their daughter's employment prospects.³⁷ This may have been because since industrialisation the North of England traditionally had a higher expectation of married women continuing in employment than the South. Economic growth was also patchy and new prosperity was slow in arriving in parts of the country.³⁸ The lack of interest appeared to be prevalent amongst the girls in the South too, who, in contrast to the heroines of the novels discussed later, did see their work in stop gap terms. Work as shop assistant, clerical worker or factory worker was subsidiary to their domestic role. School was a preliminary to work, not a preparation for it:

[A]s the girls were concerned – their function is to have babies and look after the home, so what does it matter what occupation they enter so long as the wage is reasonable? [...] The emphasis was on training 'nice' girls who were polite and would not lose their virginity too lightly.³⁹

In Carter's research, apathy towards formal education was endemic except for a few aspiring parents. This provides an interesting contrast with the emphasis placed on training for citizen and duty which was so prevalent in the careers advice. Carter also found that many girls, and boys too, took little interest in choosing a job. They expected their parents, or the school, or the youth employment officer to find them some work.⁴⁰ Only one girl in Carter's survey thought that a job might be enjoyable and only one: 'referred to the independence which earning a wage may confer on a woman'.⁴¹

Griffiths' concept of a gendered autonomy, which can work within the constraints of relationships, explains the priority which these girls attached to their domestic role in terms of their adult identity. Low-status, unskilled jobs were unlikely to provide as much of a sense of

autonomy as running their own homes. Carter observed this in follow up interviews after a year at work: 'The status of being engaged was important to such girls, almost independently of the man involved'.⁴² This, in turn, begs the question of how the girls came to that conclusion; did the strong domestic bias of the secondary modern school curriculum promote that opinion, or did it reinforce and validate previously held notions?

Despite its eventual demise, the secondary modern system was intended to provide a useful alternative education for children who were not considered academically able. H. C. Dent's *Secondary Modern School: An Interim Report* and William Taylor's *The Secondary Modern School* are largely descriptive monographs which supported the secondary modern ideal.⁴³ Dent sought to redress the poor publicity which secondary moderns were receiving by the late 1950s. He highlighted the diverse nature of the schools and the way in which they catered for a range of abilities, aptitudes, interests and social backgrounds. Like Carter, he noticed the effect that the location of the school had on their overall policy. Vocational courses provided by schools pleased pupils, parents and teachers alike: 'They give a lively sense of purpose and reality. They have done more to raise the prestige of the secondary modern school than any other single cause'.⁴⁴ The vocational courses which he mentioned were gendered; girls took horticulture, dairying, housecraft, cookery (domestic and institutional), commerce, retail shop work, secretarial work, nursing, teaching, art and crafts and academic subjects.⁴⁵ Dent painted a rosier picture of attitudes to careers amongst the schools he visited than Carter, mentioning one school with careers evenings and a social studies course: 'which paid particular attention to health, hygiene and the public services'.⁴⁶ As most of the children went straight into work, it was reasonable that the curriculum should have a high vocational content, but Dent warned against it becoming a trade training school.⁴⁷ He introduced the idea of citizenship in a general, not a gendered, way. His concern was that the vocational element was not emphasised at the expense of: 'education which aims also at the enrichment of personal living and the understanding of social and civic rights, responsibilities and obligations'.⁴⁸

In a chapter on special courses, Dent summarised different ways in which secondary moderns around the country had endeavoured to make their content relevant to the future lives of their pupils. Courses were, as might be expected, divided into those suitable for girls and those for boys. Girls' courses covered dressmaking and shop display

and placed a heavy emphasis on domestic science. One school streamed one set for academic subjects only: 'except that all the girls did domestic science; while they were thus occupied the boys had extra English and mathematics'.⁴⁹ It was difficult for girls to escape domestic education; in another school girls were allowed to choose from six 'options' for part of their time each week. Apart from the commerce option each course contained elements of housecraft or mothercraft.⁵⁰

William Taylor's study illustrated 'among other things, the difficulties of reconciling an educational system based on premises of equality and the provision of a liberal education, with the realities of occupational stratification'.⁵¹ Taylor was writing following the publication of the Crowther Report and highlighted the inevitable stratification inherent in attending a secondary modern school. Taylor observed that; 'it has been at the point of entry of its pupils into employment that the social function of the secondary modern schools has been most clearly manifested'.⁵² He identified two influences on vocational choice in schools; one the direct influence of the teachers and careers advice and second; 'the climate of expectations and possibilities transmitted by the school through its curriculum and traditions and the pupil's perception of its place in the educational and social structure'.⁵³ Above all, Taylor placed great importance on the way that choice had to be made within wider social and educational assumptions.⁵⁴

Taylor discussed a number of contemporary sociological surveys which devoted themselves to the issue of vocational choice and these too, even though secondary material in their own time may be regarded as primary text for consideration by today's historians.

1950s sociological and educational research

The sociological and educational material from the 1950s overwhelmingly illustrates the way in which the 'experts' marginalised all girls, as a result of their concern over researching the effects of class. Floud and Halseys' much cited *Social Class and Educational Opportunity* omitted girls from the analysis altogether, although the authors made claims for 'children' and explained the purpose of their investigation as: 'to examine [...] the ways in which the educational system affects the processes of social selection'.⁵⁵ The reason for excluding girls from the survey was dismissed: 'The records in the boys' grammar schools [...] proved unexpectedly rich, and those in the girls' schools so much less so, that the historical account has been written up for boys only'.⁵⁶

The male model as a 'norm' for all children was not considered problematic as no attempt was made to redress the imbalance in the rest of this research. As discussed earlier, girls' relationship to class, as defined by occupation, was ambiguous, so removing them from the sample was felt to be justified.

The gender blind nature of some of the material, even by female sociologists, is partly explained by male dominance in the academic discipline of sociology at the time. Olive Banks has noted that in order to be taken seriously, women had to follow this model.⁵⁷ In the articles discussed here, Emily Sykes and Mary Wilson are concerned with class rather than gender as factors in occupational choice. Articles and surveys from the 1950s and early 1960s illustrate sweeping assumptions made about adult gender roles. A female model, in which career and domesticity were not mutually exclusive, was ignored. Sandra Acker has highlighted the long standing gender bias in the sociology of education:

Writing of men, sociologists show an acute awareness of the social constraints on their actions. Writing of women or of sex differences, they frequently switch to psychological or biological levels of explanation.⁵⁸

Acker identified the result of this as studying "'sex as a variable" more often than "women as people"'.⁵⁹

Gender discrimination was compounded by issues of class in the reduced opportunities offered to those from secondary modern backgrounds. Like Carter, Olive Banks' work on secondary education in Britain after the 1944 Act observed the importance of the interaction between home and school in terms of class. She suggests that this interaction was most visible in attitudes towards employment: 'To the middle-class parent who cannot afford the fees of an independent school, the secondary grammar school remains, as before, the only sure gateway to a middle-class occupation for his child'.⁶⁰ The school, she wrote, drew its prestige (or lack if it) from the type of occupation for which it prepared its pupils. As girls were universally assumed to be bound for domesticity, an analysis of their choice of employment was deemed less significant.

The surveys suggested that girls had a totally different route to adult responsibility, which included dependence. The way in which girls, as a group, were written out, offers no avenue for exploring any rationale, or sense of autonomy, behind their individual decisions, or

for exploring any apparent differences. A model for girls which incorporated not a prescribed, but a proactive, model of interactive domesticity, employment and citizenship described towards the end of this period by Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein, was either not recognised at the time, or overlooked in the sociological material as irrelevant to an understanding of the male norm.

When discussing material written in the 1950s it is difficult to untangle when 'he' or 'him' is being used as a generic term and when it specifically refers to the male child. Either way it demonstrates the pervasiveness of the male norm at this point.⁶¹ Donald Super, the American vocational analyst, was extensively referenced in vocational literature in Britain. He paid scant regard to girls' choices: 'Why do people work? The ready answer is that men work to earn a living'.⁶² He made sweeping assumptions as to the sex specific nature of some occupations, which again acted as an excluding device: 'Thus the nurse at the hospital is aware of the difference between herself and the physician, he expects to give the orders and she to take them'.⁶³ His representative sample of *all* white Americans was composed of 1,100 *men*. The notion that women might have had any choice in their future role was dismissed against the functionalist background, and denied agency to girls making their post-school decisions: 'It is important to point out that women's role as childbearer makes her the keystone of the home and therefore gives homemaking a central place in her career'.⁶⁴ Super conflated homemaking with motherhood, prescribing for all women, whether or not they became mothers, and lengthening the time that they were expected to spend in the home. This reflects a similar interpretation of the female role to Beveridge's model of marriage as a 'team'. Both of them ignored the dual role model in favour of a pattern of part-time subsidiary employment to fit around domestic commitments.

Sociological interest in the school leaving choice came partly as a result of changes in the age of school leaving. Adolescents who, a generation earlier would have been out at work, were still confined to the school room. At the same time the need for economic and industrial reconstruction demanded that when they did leave school they were ready to play their part as citizens. The school's role in the last months of education was seen as critical. The research for Thelma Veness's *School Leavers* was initially funded as part of a wider project comparing the level of ambition amongst young people in the United States and England.⁶⁵ Final year courses were the site for motivating the 'citizens of tomorrow' and demonstrated the perceived close link between edu-

cation and employment. Emily Sykes' article for the *Sociological Review* in 1953 came as a result of the Ince report into Juvenile Labour. She emphasised the need for research into vocational guidance and her description of the methodology of her report is illuminating:

Adequate information from a truly representative sample of the juvenile population is very difficult to obtain. However, it was felt that the sample taken for this study, boys of 18 registering for National Service would fairly represent those who had left school at the minimum leaving age.⁶⁶

Sykes also cited Ferguson and Cunnison's *The Young Wage Earner*, which was a three-year study of Glasgow boys. When writing about vocational guidance she defined an individual in terms of a gendered functionalist analysis:

The function of vocational guidance is not to find out how natural and acquired ability could be used for the greatest good of the individual concerned, but rather how each individual starting his career can fit into the society which exists today, with benefit to both himself and society.⁶⁷

School provided the launch pad for employment and educationists were faced with finding something worthwhile to occupy those in secondary modern schools who were not entered for public exams during this decision making period. Mary Wilson wrote two articles for the *British Journal of Educational Psychology* in which she analysed the vocational preferences of secondary modern school children. There were two purposes of her investigation. The phrasing indicates the way in which 'correctness' and 'realism' of choice were decided by outside agencies, not the children themselves:

- (1) To discover how far the vocational aims of children near to school leaving age were in accordance with their abilities and vocational opportunities.
- (2) To study some of the factors making for realistic vocational choice.⁶⁸

The sample included boys and girls and did not take into consideration any likely domestic role. 'Realistic' was defined in terms of ability and availability. 'Correct' choice was elaborated in terms of consistency

with intelligence testing, itself a somewhat contested concept. Significantly, Wilson differentiated between vocational choice and vocational preference; choice was a statement of interest in one or two occupations which the child seriously considered. The children's choices were gendered; the girls choosing clerical work, shops, hairdressing, dress-making and nursing, 'in descending order of intelligence'. The girls had, however, already defined nursing as 'highly-skilled' along with secretarial work and Wilson commented on this anomaly.⁶⁹ Wilson's survey implicitly suggested a continued class differentiation between occupational choices, given the way in which the selection process worked in practice:

The segregation of children into different types of secondary schools will have a profound effect on their attitude to vocations. Children of average ability, when educated separately from the highly-gifted will be less likely to adopt inappropriate ambitions [...] children in the secondary moderns show a healthy desire to climb to the top of the tree, but little yearning to move into another part of the forest where there are taller trees.⁷⁰

In the second part of her article Wilson considered sources of careers advice in the last months at school, identifying the web-like nature of choice. This included input predominantly from friends and relatives, in addition to direct work experience, either following a school visit or a school activity. Girls placed emphasis on working with other people and the cleanliness of an occupation.⁷¹ Wilson invariably placed the boys' results first in her analysis and then discussed the girls in comparison, establishing the boys as the norm. The hierarchy of occupations; clerical, shop, factory, observed by Carter, was confirmed in Wilson's study. For the girls: 'social conformity and prestige seemed to be the dominant motives for their selection'.⁷² Wilson concluded by observing the importance of the role of the school in creating 'appropriate' vocational interest.

Wilson's conclusions over the influence of education in determining occupational destination were confirmed at the end of the decade by a survey conducted by William Liversidge.⁷³ His survey carried out in 1960 in Leicestershire, compared the aspirations of secondary modern and grammar school boys and girls. He concluded that the educational background of the child was more influential in his/her occupational choice than home (class) background.⁷⁴ As Gary McCulloch has shown, a child's class was already likely to have influenced the type of educa-

tion s/he received, so there appears to have been a self-perpetuating cycle established which was exacerbated by the selective nature of secondary schooling.⁷⁵ Those involved in Liversidge's study showed:

[A] shrewd appreciation of the social and economic implications of their placing within the educational system. They know at what age they will marry, the best type of job they can get, and the best wage they can hope to earn at that job [...] while previous experience may be of great importance in shaping the school child's expectations of the future, the most potent force operating is undoubtedly the experience through which the child passes during his involvement in that part of the educational system to which he has been assigned.⁷⁶

Liversidge analysed his data according to type of school and social class of the individual pupil. The results were separated for boys and girls 'for convenience' and were significantly different. Girls in the grammar school had slightly lower aspirations than their male counterparts, whereas girls in the secondary modern school had higher aspirations than the male pupils (although the grammar girls still aimed higher). Girls' choices were more similar in both schools and classes; boys differed according to school more than their social class, yet it was their result which formed the basis of Liversidge's conclusion. The author did not offer much explanation for the gendered differences; with reference to the secondary modern girls' higher aspirations he suggested:

This may be partly explained by the higher social grading of the clerical and office work sought by these girls. In our opinion, their higher fantasy aspirations may be due to their different curricular activities and also the traditionally different treatment they receive in the educative process.⁷⁷

He did not elaborate on this different treatment. Neither did he comment on why grammar school girls might expect to earn less than the boys and the secondary modern schoolgirls to expect that, by the age of thirty, their earnings would have fallen behind their male peers.

The conclusions reached by sociologists reflect Arnot's notion of the cultural and political implications of education.⁷⁸ The analysis of the surveys provides a contemporary outsider's view of the interaction between school and employment in the education system and the close ties that were assumed to exist between employment

and formal education. The exclusion of girls from the surveys or the dismissal of the gender difference in the results obscured the ambiguity of this relationship once gender entered the equation. The records of the Headmistresses' Association and the Association of Assistant Mistresses offer more of a 'view from the chalkface' of this complex relationship.

The Headmistresses' and the Assistant Mistresses' Associations

The Reports of the Association of Headmistresses and the Journal of the Association of Assistant Mistresses illustrate the very fine balancing act which schools performed in preparing their female pupils for adulthood. Their archives are particularly useful as the organisations represented teachers in single sex girls' independent, grammar and secondary modern schools. Their policy discussions were therefore gender specific but crossed the social class divide. Both organisations accepted that women would take the onus of domestic responsibility and the reports of their conferences and committees seem to reflect Byrne's conclusion that expectations of a girls' future domestic role affected curriculum planning. These assumptions were also articulated by the employers who addressed the conferences:

Let us face the fact that girls do leave and get married. Perhaps they could come back after they have got married. They may leave because they have children and perhaps come back again, and, as the children grow up, increased responsibilities may pull them away again, or perhaps there are sick relations in the household who have to be looked after, and all this falls to the woman whether she is a graduate or not. *These are facts and you cannot get away from them.*⁷⁹

Not only were women, of all classes, to be responsible for their children, but also, despite the provisions of the National Health Service and legislation which removed their official responsibility for their parents, they were still expected to be the prime carers of the elderly.⁸⁰

Against this background the schools, especially the grammar schools, had to justify a secondary education for girls which focused on more than the domestic sphere. The demands of the economy for a high female participation in the workforce against a demographic trend which predicted an increasingly short period of time as a single worker before marriage, made for a complex value system within female education. Throughout this period the acute shortage of teachers was

frequently discussed in the associations' committees and conferences and may have influenced the promotion of teaching as a career within the schools. The associations, like the authors of sociological research reports, reflected on the relationship between formal education and employment preparation. Education was specifically not only about vocational training, but, as a majority of pupils left school and went straight to work, the final years in school, needed to prepare the students for the workplace.

Once more the ambiguous relationship between representations of 'woman' and concern for the development of the individual is apparent. Girls were treated as a cross-class homogenous group, but also divided according to class, type of school attended, *and* attention paid to their individual needs. The relationship between communities of home, school and employment was a fluid one without fixed boundaries. Dame Kitty Anderson took up this dilemma in her address to the Annual Conference of Headmistresses in 1956 when she asked: 'But what is best for the girl? Are we to fit the sixth form girl to the course regardless of her needs as a person, or fit the course to the girl? Which is the more important?'⁸¹

The act of leaving school and starting work brought with it adult status for those who left at fifteen. Those girls, who stayed at school, destined for the higher status occupations, were still largely treated as children, subject to school rules, uniform and the strictures of homework. Teachers had to contend with this conflict, and sometimes the lack of parental support, which was not helped when the same domestic fate awaited both sets of girls:

It is hard to be unable to join in their play because one has homework, harder to have only scanty pocket money when they are earning, hardest to be reckoned schoolchildren when they are junior clerks. Our grammar school girl will need all her independence of mind and all her self-discipline and all the help of her parents if she is going to stand steadfast in the faith.⁸²

Miss P. Kelvin of the Association of Assistant Mistresses was concerned that staying at school actually retarded girls in their approach to adulthood. She, like Michael Carter, cited the importance of appearance, suggesting that if a girl was accepted as an adult, she then behaved as one.⁸³ This tension was also addressed in the career novels, especially *Social Work for Jill* which is discussed in a later chapter and this suggests that it was a matter of common

concern. Not only might schoolgirls have friends at work, but also with the prevalence of early marriage, the difference might be even more acute:

Girls still at school would have friends who were married and already bringing up families, it was obviously not the most intellectual girls who would be concerned with this early marriage, but this change in the social pattern of older girls in schools must be viewed with delicateness and constructive thinking.⁸⁴

Teachers were very aware that there were competing influences on their pupils, and frequently noted the tension between home and school which Carter had observed:

A girl is not primarily a pupil of such and such a school or a member of such and such a club. She is Mr and Mrs XYZ's daughter. She inherits their characteristics, lives by their code, acquires their manners and morals. She judges us by comparison with them, and tries to square their demands with ours.⁸⁵

Parents, especially of first generation grammar school girls, and often the girls themselves, needed persuading that education served a greater purpose than simply preparation for work. In order to do that, as Wolpe noted, the teachers presented an image of the adult woman whose full citizenship was dependent on more than her role as paid worker:

The girl who leaves school at 18 after following successfully an advanced course is a potential contributor to the community, whether she continues her studies and in turn joins the ranks of those who 'hand on the torch', devotes herself to work in some quite other field or undertakes the exacting responsibilities of wife and mother.⁸⁶

This created added complications when the role of the wife and mother, as the fulfilment of adulthood, was presented as a strong motif in discussions of feminine identity. The associations constantly juggled between advocating the benefit of education at all levels for the good of society and industry and the benefit to the individual:

Miss Briddon spoke for the modern school, Miss Dickie for the grammar school and Miss Sackett for the technical school. All three

speakers stressed the value for the girls of the development of artistic skill and the various ways in which this skill can enrich their lives. The careers in which it can be used vary according to the demands of different industries in different districts.⁸⁷

The teachers were well aware that their female pupils might feel marginalised from the public sphere, and during discussion of their submission to the Crowther committee framed their advice on the raising of the school leaving age, not on grounds of increased vocational opportunity but on the issue of citizenship for both sexes. It is significant that they demonstrate a very different view of citizenship from the gendered roles envisaged by Beveridge:

A further year of education will make these boys and girls more serviceable to the community, better citizens, [...] We cannot help thinking that this is even more important for girls than for boys for we know well that there is an education, not of the schools, which comes from moving and working in the world of men and women and it seems to us that girls get less of this than boys. And yet woman has *exactly the same rights and duties as a citizen as the man*.⁸⁸

The teaching associations were clear that girls had a duty to society both to enter paid work while they could, and to be caring wives and mothers. The role of the housewife was increasingly not a full-time one, despite Beveridge's prediction. The dual role was not only promoted in terms of creating a more fulfilling life for the individual, but also in terms of duty to the community. This was not the same as the notion of the somewhat low status reserve army of labour posited by the Birmingham Feminist History Group:⁸⁹

Girls should be given a sense of responsibility. They had to repay the community the value of the training they received so that they would be willing to return to their work when they had brought up their families [...] the housewife's job was no longer a full-time one [...] and her time and energy could be usefully directed to work outside the home, with advantage to both her and to society.⁹⁰

A Standing Committee for Careers with representatives of all four secondary schools associations (Headmasters, Headmistresses, Assistant Masters and Assistant Mistresses) met frequently to discuss general

careers policy.⁹¹ The dual role model was utilised in order to validate later school leaving and vocational training:

It is essential that women should learn to think in terms of a career as well as a home and children [...] Of course it is right that girls should be interested in getting married, making a home, founding a family. But these interests will be all the better for not being narrow and limiting.⁹²

The complications which the likelihood of early marriage added to the consideration of a girl's future role were never long absent from the deliberations of the associations, and there is evidence of contradictions within their discussions. They did not question women's ultimate responsibility for the domestic role. The reduction in the need for semi-skilled female labour as automation increased, combined with demographic predictions of an increasing male: female ratio and the entry of the 'bulge' into employment were all cited by the Assistant Mistresses, in Spring 1958, as heralding the end of the 'career woman'.⁹³

The importance of maintaining a feminine image, even for the most academic girls was an issue for the girls as well as for those in charge. The peer pressure to conform to the images in magazines on television and in the cinema was commented on several times, Jones' suggestion that educationists developed a sense of a generational battle ground where school and youth culture could find no common ground seems apt:⁹⁴

As one member of my own sixth form explained to me when I queried her need to work all through the summer holiday before she did Oxford Entrance: 'But Miss Walker, I must earn some money! One must be feminine; one must have pretty clothes and lipstick; one can't go out to tea dressed just anyhow!' And my argument that it was the person invited to tea and not her clothes quite obviously merely dated me as belonging to a previous generation.⁹⁵

The models of femininity portrayed in the popular magazines of the day may well have effectively discouraged girls from considering some occupations. The increased demand for technically competent workers meant that engineering was one profession much discussed by the two associations. The objections to the type of job her daugh-

ter was entering voiced by Anne's mother in the career novel, *Anne in Electronics*, reflected very real concerns. Opportunities existed but there was apparently little take-up. Bolton ran a course specifically for girl technicians in 1957 amidst much local and national publicity yet there was only one applicant, whose friends thought her 'dippy'. It is apparent that the masculine image of engineering rendered it undesirable to girls; it would not 'fit' within their understanding of the paradigm of femininity.

I discovered that her friends thought that in engineering their fingernails would be broken, their stockings would be laddered, their hair would be covered in grease and their faces would be black with smuts. So on the whole the attitude of the pupils can be described as negative. As I have indicated before, the attitude of the teachers, although expressed in benevolent terms was really quite negative.⁹⁶

The Women's Engineering Society ensured that engineering was maintained as an option for girls, but the overall conclusion was that: 'The door is wide open, but nobody is beckoning the girls to come in'.⁹⁷ The debates around engineering as a career illustrate how highly gendered the workplace was in the late 1950s, whatever the rhetoric of expanded opportunity produced by the increase in secondary education might have been.

This book focuses on the experience of a vast majority of girls who entered employment straight from school in the 1950s. Prior to the Robbins Report and the expansion of the university sector in 1963, a small minority of girls attended Higher Education.⁹⁸ Only 4.6% of the age group (boys and girls) undertook degree level study in 1958.⁹⁹ Their experience of the transition from education to work and their expectations of their future career pattern have been well documented by Sarah Aiston, Carol Dyhouse, Elizabeth Kirk and Pat Thane.¹⁰⁰ Although their level of intellectual achievement was higher than that of their contemporaries, their career patterns appear to have been remarkably similar. Pat Thane has noted how few married Girton graduates spent their adult lives in full time paid employment. Indeed Judith Hubback's contemporary investigation *Wives Who Went to College* examines this group of women and the way that they reconciled their extended academic achievements with their married roles.¹⁰¹

The Crowther Report

For girls at the other end of the academic spectrum who left school at the minimum school leaving age, the 1944 Education Act had recommended the establishment of County Colleges. Financial constraints meant that these were delayed, and in the event were never part of the education system, but the provision of part-time, post-compulsory, education remained a concern for policy makers. In 1959 the Central Advisory Committee on Education published a Report, *15–18*, under the chairmanship of Sir Geoffrey Crowther. It was based on evidence collected from many organisations, including the Association of Assistant Mistresses. A memorandum from this association to the Crowther committee enumerates yet again the difficulties facing many adolescents in reconciling the demands of home, school and employer:

[The education service] should be so organised as to help give direction to adolescents, in connection with present and future plans for vocation or job, ability to cope with ordinary life in the home and family, the development of the interesting and satisfying use of leisure, of human relationships and spiritual and aesthetic values.¹⁰²

The Central Advisory Committee for Education collected the data for its Report, *15–18* in the second half of the 1950s. The submissions from thirty-nine organisations, with interests in employment and education, centred around two main issues, initially proposed in the 1944 Education Act. These were the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen and the provision of County Colleges as a means of further part-time continuing education for school leavers under eighteen. A consideration of the Report and its evidence is useful as it drew detailed comments from a wide variety of those with interests in the transition from school to work. The organisations consulted identified the needs of early school leavers which they thought required meeting. The demands for courses in County Colleges which would appeal to girls' domestic futures and to boys' technical or mechanical employment contributed to the fairly rigid divisions of adult gender roles expressed in the final report.

The evidence to Crowther illustrates how similar conclusions were reached from the different perspectives which Arnot outlined.¹⁰³ The recommendations were not unanimous in urging the raising of the school leaving age, neither were the reasons given by those supporting it. The Federation of British Industry saw no purpose in boys staying at

school when they could be embarking upon apprenticeships or taking up employment before sixteen, sentiments shared by the British Employers' Federation: 'it is in their own interests, as well as those of the community at large that the entry to employment should not be delayed'. The Women's Institute enlarged this to include children of both sexes: 'their energies would be better employed in starting on their trade or occupation'.¹⁰⁴

The Report and the accompanying surveys highlight the prevailing attitude to gendered and classed positions in the workplace and in education. The terms of reference noted the changing nature of society and issues of citizenship. Whilst promoting the 'needs of the individual', the Report, by its very title, considered adolescents as a clearly defined group with specific needs:¹⁰⁵

To consider in relation to the changing social and industrial needs of our society and the needs of its individual citizens, the education of boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 18, and in particular to consider the balance at various levels of general and specialised studies between these ages and to examine the inter-relationship of the various stages of education.¹⁰⁶

In the preface the authors explained that at times boys and girls were discussed separately, and in other places the masculine pronoun was used to describe both. Of the three surveys which accompanied the Report only one, the social survey, included girls in the sample.¹⁰⁷ In common with the authors of the social surveys discussed earlier, the authors of the Crowther Report did not consider the uneven balance of the surveys problematic. Girls were simply considered less significant in terms of vocational education than boys.

The concept of citizenship recurred frequently in the Crowther submissions.¹⁰⁸ When considered in terms of girls' understanding of their adult identity, citizenship can be understood as highly gendered in the way in which it served to marginalise girls from long-term employment, without denying them a place in the public sphere. The demographic trend towards early marriage and early childbearing (and the resulting withdrawal from paid employment) were part of the reason why the Report was commissioned and central to the considerations of the Crowther committee.

Although it appeared perfectly acceptable to prepare girls for their future roles as wives and mothers through the provision of domestic science courses, those who submitted evidence to Crowther were

concerned that schools should not become a training ground for paid employment.¹⁰⁹ At the same time it was clear that pupils themselves showed more interest in vocationally linked courses. The Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions, identified the 'powerful incentive value' of vocational courses. Secondary moderns, they observed, had recognised this, but grammar schools 'stand aloof'.¹¹⁰ This was especially true in technical schools who foresaw an increase in the number of girls who would become trained maths and science teachers:

The vocational element [...] gives a sense of purpose, direction and corporate unity to their pupils which stimulates them to work hard and to derive the maximum benefit from the whole of their school course.¹¹¹

The London County Council Report on 'Special Studies in Secondary Schools' observed that the girls' schools were limited in the occupational areas they covered, initiating studies in retail for those intending to go into shop work. This was endorsed as being of use to all girls 'as shoppers of the future'. The domestic and the workplace role were seen as complementary: 'there has been no sacrifice of subjects which are important for the education of persons and citizens'.¹¹² The authors of the Report concluded: 'There is evidence already among these girls of interest in school work arising from the use of the occupational motive'. The attitude towards needlecraft as a subject illustrates clearly the relationship between domestic skills and adult female identity:

[needlecraft] is a subject in its own right for a majority of girls [...] All these studies may centre around the idea of home-making and work in most subjects as well as in needlecraft maybe directed towards this natural interest [...] such studies will help girls to enter an adult life with poise and confidence.¹¹³

In contrast to this, the National Union of Women Teachers was concerned that all forms of training should be equally available for girls and boys: 'It should not be thought, as is too often the case now, that the needs of girls are met when clerical, domestic and needlecraft classes have been provided'.¹¹⁴

The evidence submitted to Crowther demonstrates the balancing act which policy makers performed. The tripartite system inevitably linked schools to the employment structure, and thence to the class and gender hierarchy. Pupils in grammar schools were more likely to

continue to higher education and enter the professions and pupils from secondary modern schools were destined to enter semi-skilled or non-skilled jobs. All girls were assumed to share a domestic destiny; the acceptance of the dual role gave them a foothold in the world of work which differentiated grammar and secondary modern pupils, but to a much lesser extent than their male counterparts. However, technological improvements which reduced the burden of housework would be more available to middle-class girls and so render them more able to re-enter the workplace at a later date. The notion of preparation for citizenship brought education into the public domain and also ensured that expected gendered adult roles were not compromised:

They will be conscious that secondary education has a purpose, for it will be ministering to their present needs as adolescents and their future needs as adult persons, as citizens and as workers earning a livelihood and contributing to the needs of the community.¹¹⁵

Although the dual role for girls was implicitly accepted in most of the submissions to Crowther, as noted earlier, the Association of Assistant Mistresses was doubtful that it was a trend with any longevity, while at the same time recognising that some girls would inevitably return to at least part-time employment.¹¹⁶ Increased time in education they argued, should therefore be spent on developing: 'independence, integrity, strength of character, wisdom, prepared to accept responsibility in public service and their private lives'.¹¹⁷

One of Crowther's concerns was the small number of girls in employment who opted for, or were offered, day release or evening courses of the type which were envisaged in County Colleges.¹¹⁸ This number fell even more dramatically when the figures for those attending shorthand and typing classes were removed. The Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education questioned the wisdom of making attendance compulsory once pupils left full-time school. Girls constructed themselves as adults, once they were earning: 'many [...] are contemplating marriage. They do not see the point of education unless it is strictly associated with work, adult responsibilities (including marriage) and self-chosen leisure pursuits'.¹¹⁹

In the submissions to Crowther, issues of citizenship and membership of a community were recurring themes. As Brian Simon noted, by confirming prevailing notions of community and gendered adult roles, the last years at school acted as a form of social control to prevent deviance from the norm of contemporary adult behaviour.¹²⁰ It became

important, in the face of potential teenage rebellion to confirm the established gender roles on which the welfare state was premised:

We would stress that during this period from 15–18 years a child should be maturing steadily, should be passing from adolescence to full manhood and should be developing into a valued member of the community who has a personal contribution to make to the welfare of society.¹²¹

Much of the evidence submitted to Crowther focused on young people who intended to leave school at fifteen or sixteen, although the Report also commented on grammar school education. As McCulloch has noted, the clear class demarcation between the occupations entered by secondary modern pupils and those entered by grammar school pupils meant that the conflation of class/ability remained.¹²² The Association of Assistant Mistresses were concerned that programmes in grammar schools did not always provide space for non-academic courses: 'An increasing number of girls need courses directed towards interests more closely associated with their own lives and which would offer an introduction in the society in which they will move'.¹²³

The publication of the Crowther Report in 1959 reflected contemporary concern over the adolescent population. The system of education which had been established ensured the maintenance of class divisions in post-war society, despite the rhetoric of 'parity of esteem' employed in discussion of the 1944 Education Act. The lack of technical schools, effectively divided the school going population into working-class secondary modern schools and middle-class grammar schools. For working-class children attending grammar school the home influence remained strong and the social survey, in volume two, of the Crowther Report, observed that children of working-class parents who attended grammar school were more likely to leave early than children of middle-class parents.¹²⁴ Most of the submissions to Crowther supported the final recommendations of the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen and the implementation of a system of County Colleges which would provide some form of continuing education for early leavers. Whether or not they agreed about the recommendations, those who gave evidence to the Central Advisory Council couched their submissions in terms of education as preparation for young people to play their part within the community. Assumptions about the gendered nature of this citizenship were often implicit in discussions over domestic science education and vocational courses. Assumptions about

class and concomitant employment were interwoven with gendered expectations. Vocational courses were viewed with suspicion, but any training in school which prepared girls for their 'natural' work was acceptable.

In the actual Report itself, gender differences were clearly noted, girls: 'must be treated even more completely than adolescent boys, as young adults'.¹²⁵ Anne-Marie Wolpe criticised Crowther for 'sidestepping the main issues concerning girls and their employment'.¹²⁶ Certainly the preoccupation of girls with their future domestic role was confirmed and recommendations hinged around providing a suitable gendered curriculum which would appeal to girls. This has also been severely criticised by Carol Dyhouse for its failure to come to terms with the realities of women's changing lives.¹²⁷ Crowther did however, recognise that many women would return to work after their initial duties of mothering were completed. The disjunction of these changes with existing provisions was highlighted and girls' membership of different communities noted:

This desire [for voluntary or paid employment] is in line with the economic and social needs of the community; it does not however fit in well with the organisation and conditions of employment, or, in some respects with the education for girls provided in secondary school.¹²⁸

Discussion over secondary education for girls during the late 1950s illustrates the highly complex intersection of class and gender within the formation of adult female identity. Crowther described the process of adolescence as: 'Coming to terms with one's new self'.¹²⁹ Griffiths concludes that the construction and maintenance of self is with and through others, but that it also takes place: 'in communities of others who may be chosen, or through processes of exclusion and inclusion, they may be imposed on the self'.¹³⁰ Sociological literature illustrated quite clearly how girls were excluded, to varying degrees according to their class, from consideration as full participants in the world of work. There was concern that the next generation would shirk their duties of citizenship and responsibility. Education, whilst providing the gateway to a new independence was also charged with the task of maintaining the status quo of the social structure and the hard earned post-war stability which was founded upon a traditional sexual division of labour.

Girls, as a group, were marginalised from the male model of vocational training and employment, yet the growth of the dual role in

response to employers *and* individual women precluded a complete separation from this model.¹³¹ What developed, as historians of women's education have suggested, was a clearly gendered educative process to adult roles. This resulted in the teachers' associations confirming the unchanging specific feminine aptitudes which women brought to society and the workplace in terms of citizenship participation and as employees. At the same time they also acknowledged the difference between individual girls who attended grammar schools and those who spent a shorter time in the secondary moderns.

In all the literature discussed there is a tension between the way that girls were discussed in terms of a homogenous group, destined for early marriage and motherhood, and the distinction drawn between those at grammar schools and those at secondary moderns. Girls from both types of school could be sure of finding employment of some description, yet their attitude towards it appeared to differ markedly. As Byrne observed, there were barriers of : 'stereotyped conditioning, under-expectation and male competition' to be overcome by any individual embarking on her professional career.¹³² The difference in attitude might well, of course, have been due to the difference in intrinsic satisfaction to be found in skilled or unskilled work. The institution of secondary modern schools ensured that girls designated 'less able' at eleven would be channelled into low paid, low status work. Whereas boys in secondary modern systems stood a good chance of entering apprenticeships, there was no similar consolation for girls, and, with little availability of GCE exams in the schools, girls were effectively barred from obtaining qualifications which would help them to progress in paid employment.

The Crowther Report laid such great importance on the gendered nature of schooling and work that they recommended:

The prospect of courtship and marriage should rightly influence the education of the adolescent girl. Though the general objectives of secondary education remain unchanged, her direct interest in dress, personal appearance and in problems of human relations should be given a central place in her education.¹³³

The next chapter considers the nature and availability of employment advice as girls' finally prepared to leave school and enter the workplace.

4

Advice Manuals and *Women's Employment*

[T]hey must take their future work seriously rather than rely on the mental reservation: 'Of course I can always get out of it when I marry'. Women would constitute a much more valued element in the labour market, and would, accordingly, have much better prospects, if more of them devoted themselves sincerely to their jobs for the better part of their lives, even allowing for an interruption of some years.¹

By the late 1950s, social insurance legislation confirmed Beveridge's assumption that adult women would spend a large amount of their time in full-time domesticity. Even those women who chose to continue in work once they were married could 'opt out' of the system, paying a minimal stamp and claim a reduced number of benefits through their husband. Despite this, Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein's research identified an increase in the 'dual role' model of women's employment. This model presupposed a much greater investment by women in their paid work than envisaged in the Beveridge Report. Significantly, it did not undermine the priority of the domestic role. Yet the concept of stop gap employment to fill the increasingly short period of time between school leaving and marriage became less acceptable. Careers advice placed emphasis on the process of choosing suitable paid work which could be interrupted, not terminated, by a domestic interlude. Such work was considered especially desirable if it could contribute to the caring or organisational skills required for domesticity. 'Career' becomes a gendered term if we think of it as describing an adult's progression through their working life. In the 1950s the male model of career might well have been an expected uninterrupted spell of paid employment in the same job

from school leaving and National Service to retirement at sixty-five. A woman's career incorporated both periods of domestic responsibility and paid employment but should nevertheless still be seen in terms of the whole of her economically active lifespan. This was reflected in the way that training was promoted in careers advice publications.

Following a discussion of the sociological literature on girls' attitudes to employment this chapter examines the way that the dual role model was presented to teenage girls from a number of sources of careers advice: factual information from the Youth Employment Service; advice manuals on choosing a job and 'being a woman'; and *Women's Employment*, a fortnightly publication from the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women with the Student Careers Bureau. Women's role in the labour market was constructed differently to that of men, but, as the chapter will demonstrate, girls' and women's participation in the workforce was seen as part of their duties of citizenship and social responsibility. In addition they were expected to derive intrinsic satisfaction from their employment *and* retain their feminine graces as befitted the ideal housewife. 1950s literature thus offers an alternative perspective to that of Celia Briar who, in the 1990s, identified the dual role as: 'just one mechanism by which women could be treated as marginal reserves in the workforce'.²

Jane Lewis highlighted the many factors involved in the changing pattern of women's work, all of which combined with certain expectations of gender roles which women might well have internalised.³ These multiple factors of educational achievement, economic demand, changing attitudes and reduced family size cannot be placed in a hierarchy and are well explained in terms of the web, with macro changes in the economy interacting with more intimate changes in family roles and expectations. While this chapter focuses on representations of paid work and job availability, it is useful to note how official figures support the gendered nature of occupational choice which has dominated research. The statistical tables in the appendix highlight how girls tended to be less interested in continuing education and went into traditionally female areas of work. Tables which show the age of the workforce demonstrate the dual role model, but in addition to the rise in employment participation between the age of thirty-five and fifty, there is a strong suggestion that many women did not return to the workforce, and devoted their adult lives to their domestic 'work'.

The threads of autonomy and citizenship underpin the analysis which explores the way that employment was presented to girls leaving school. The issue of their independent, or autonomous status,

is ambivalent. They were expected to make their choices as 'independent' young women, while still under the legal care of their parents and anticipating their eventual domestic role. The brief period of quasi-independence from parents or husband was framed more as a rite of passage than as a finite identity. Girls' control over their income as it reflected their independent status is complex. In practice, working girls living with their parents still conformed to house rules, as the final chapter illustrates. They were also expected to contribute a proportion of their income towards the family expenses which undermined the concept of their financial independence and their position as the 'new consumers'. The notion of the 'companionate marriage' assumed financial dependence on a male breadwinner, but advertising in magazines assumed that women would take the responsibility for domestic purchases. Supported by the gravitas attained by the acquisition of husband and family, the return to work for 'pin money' was also constructed in terms both of public duty and self-fulfilment.

Girls were frequently addressed both as individuals *and* as a group in the manuals and careers advice. Louise Tilly and Joan Scott suggested that, although there can be no universalising category of 'woman', employers designated women's place in employment in terms of their stage of lifecycle. This is a useful analysis in that it undermines a class divide and illustrates how advice books were able to address female school leavers as a homogenous group.⁴ The issue of social class underlies much of the discussion within this book. The supposedly class-less rhetoric often demonstrated a middle-class hegemony.⁵ Much of the careers literature appears to have been based on a middle-class assumption that women were able to choose whether they worked after marriage. It also assumed, significantly, that paid work would be automatically more fulfilling than domesticity. As Pamela Abbot and Roger Sapsford have observed, women have traditionally been marginalised by class analyses based on (male) head of household employment status.⁶ This is largely due to their peripheral or ambiguous relationship to the job-market. The situation is further complicated by the notion that World War Two acted as a catalyst towards a class-less society.⁷ If social class position is understood as just one of the threads of the female web of identity, it becomes clearer how class was related to decisions on career choice, but, equally, it was rarely *the* defining or limiting factor. Sociological sources from the 1950s offer an invaluable commentary on perceptions of the day as was illustrated in the previous chapter in the examples of the sociological literature which focused on school leaving

decisions by pupils attending the various types of secondary schools. Women's relationship and attitudes to the workplace were clearly of interest at a time of economic and social reconstruction.

The part played by gendered notions of citizenship in the choice of employment, is extended here, specifically in the section on *Women's Employment*. The newly established Youth Employment Service provided an official liaison between school and work. This, in turn, led to a proliferation of careers literature. *Women's Employment*, a publication of the Central Employment Bureau and a rather more prosaic publication than the career novels discussed in the next chapter, offered advice in the form of articles, a letters page and lists of training colleges and courses.⁸ It has hitherto been somewhat overlooked as a source for women's historians. The paper was certainly somewhat dour in appearance but it did comment on and illustrate the types of training widely available and it offers an overview of conferences and reports of interest to the female job-seeker. It boasted that it had:

[A]ll the most up-to-date information necessary on courses of instruction, length of training, fees and prospects of employment [...] The Bureau is in constant touch with all the leading educational organisations.⁹

The different sources all sought to incorporate the tensions within notions of female employment. The careers advice manuals and *Women's Employment* are discussed thematically and it becomes quite explicit in this material that the process of career choice was acknowledged to be highly gendered. The first theme is the antipathy towards the notion of work as a stop gap, which still held some currency and was noted by Ferdinand Zweig:

I met adolescents, who already had five jobs and more, who were making a sport of constant changes and leaving in batches with their friends. They pin all their hopes on the man who will be able to keep them and accordingly, pin all their concentrations on man-hunting.¹⁰

The second theme considers how, even for those girls who took their career choice seriously, the period of employment before expected marriage was presented not only as training for a profession or job, but also as training for adult status and their role as citizen. In the process of training, girls became women, as was shown by their appearance and

their attitude to relationships. Finally the texts are examined for the way in which they included marriage within the overall pattern of career planning. This could either be in terms of promoting a career as imparting the skills which would be useful in later life, like nursing; or, in terms of being a suitable job to combine with domesticity, like teaching. The strength of these two models may explain why there appeared to be only a limited number of possibilities, in contrast to the greater number of occupations which were theoretically available.¹¹ As a majority of those interviewed for this book attended grammar school, they were eligible for entry into an increasing number of professions as well as the possibility of continuing to higher education. However, they regularly offered the opinion that the training choice that they remembered lay between teaching, nursing and secretarial work.

1950s sociological literature

There was a growing awareness that women's wartime entry into the workforce was not a temporary aberration. Louise Tilly and Joan Scott have suggested that changes in the work patterns of married women, observed by Richard Titmuss, were a continuum from pre-war trends, speeded up by wartime opportunities, rather than the effect of the war itself.¹² Research into social trends was stimulated by an interest in the changes brought about by the introduction of the welfare state. Michael Young and Peter Wilmott's study and Pearl Jephcott's research also referred to the changing employment pattern.¹³ Although the debate over women's work was essentially a middle-class debate, this was often overlooked and the general term 'women', employed. Myrdal and Klein suggested that the dilemma of choice between work and family did not exist for working class women:

The woman who has to go to work in order to support her family need not be troubled overmuch about the psychological effects her absence from home may have on her children. She knows that if she did not earn the money she needs to feed them, her children would go hungry.¹⁴

As has already been noted, contemporary child care advice placed enormous emphasis on the importance of the mother's almost constant presence. It was therefore somewhat ingenuous of Myrdal and Klein to dismiss the likely effect that this literature could have on women or girls who knew that they were financially prevented from

following it.¹⁵ The pressure was consequently on girls, especially those who knew that they would have to continue in employment, to find work which could ultimately be fitted around domestic life. Ironically, as will be seen, more opportunities for this existed for middle-class girls who went to grammar school.¹⁶

Although many jobs were promoted in terms of the skills they engendered for a future role, there was also concern that skills learnt might be wasted. This was a common response from employers when taken to task over the lack of provision for day release or apprentice schemes for girls.¹⁷ It was also a theme taken up by Myrdal and Klein, Judith Hubback and Olwen Campbell.¹⁸

As early as 1952, Ferdinand Zweig noted the isolation of the housewife and the importance of the companionate nature of employment, which was confirmed at the end of the decade by Myrdal and Klein. Zweig's foreword to *Women's Life and Labour* demonstrates clearly the way in which women were defined as 'other'; his discussion, while sympathetic to the different situations in which middle and working-class women might find themselves, emphasised the differences between women of either class who chose to stay at home and those who chose to go to work. His opening remarks however gathered all women together as a race apart and about whom sweeping generalisations might be made:

Women simply love to be interviewed and feel a thrill whenever they come into contact with the public or with someone whom they regard as an exponent of the public. This is probably because their life is so much centred in their home and in purely personal relationships that they are thrilled by the attraction of the opposite extreme with which they are unfamiliar. First of all they cannot understand what, in their narrow life, can be of interest to anyone else...¹⁹

Zweig's concern in approaching the interviews for his research focused on whether the women would be prepared to talk to him. He began the interviews by asking women for their 'help' in his research. In his later discussion of these interviews he noted that the women invariably asked whether they had been any help. This seeking of confirmation is well documented in recent work on feminist oral history interviewing but Zweig read it as indicative of women's 'natural' instincts. He asked his readers 'Am I right in saying that the appeal for help is an appeal to their maternal instincts, always so strong in nearly

every woman?'²⁰ Women's reasons for being and staying in the workplace were also seen as different and the primacy of their domestic role remained unquestioned. Zweig offered unstinting praise to the women who successfully combined family responsibility with paid employment but did not suggest or identify any shift in the overall pattern of adult gender roles:

The inquiry revealed to me a whole world of distinct female values, and opened my eyes to the amazing endurance and struggle against the adversities of life on the part of many married women with families.²¹

The isolation of the domestic sphere was also frequently mentioned during the course of the interviews discussed in the final chapter. Domestic isolation and dissatisfaction was most clearly articulated in the United States by Betty Friedan.²² Judith Hubback concluded in her survey of women who had attended college that for the highly educated woman: 'an entirely domestic experience is too limited'.²³

In the 1950s, discussion within sociological literature over the reconciliation of career and domesticity was formulated in terms of one 'winning' over the other. With regret, women put their careers on the back burner in order to fulfil their 'natural' occupation. The phrase 'giving-up' work in itself suggests a degree of involuntary action and infers that not all women saw their adult role in terms of a seamless 'career'. This rather undermines any notion of autonomy, yet in terms of Griffiths' suggestion that women inhabit different, but overlapping communities; girls may have opted for a compromise between the demands of domesticity and work. Reconciliation between the two was usually formulated in terms of a demand for the provision of more part-time work.²⁴ As Jane Lewis observes, nowhere was there any suggestion that the notion of the sexual division of labour itself was at fault. Alva Myrdal was pre-eminently a social engineer and her preoccupations, like those of Beveridge, were the state and the nation. She focused on the way in which women could effectively perform their duty to family and society.²⁵ Myrdal's co-writer Viola Klein also defined the married woman worker primarily in her domestic role. As late as 1965 she suggested that although changes in domestic technology would make it easier for wives to work and husbands might 'lend a hand in the home', the dual role was the province of female, not male, workers.²⁶

It was noted in an earlier chapter that care has to be exercised in using social science interpretations of the welfare state for a historical

analysis; it is equally important not to impose retrospective late twentieth century feminist arguments onto the historical relationship of women to employment.²⁷ Although the notion of fulfilment through paid work was present in the literature of the 1950s, it is clear that women's sense of autonomy was also to be found in the *combined* roles of worker, wife and mother. This was also reflected in the practical and fictional advice to girls. The inference was that work and home were complementary and could easily be woven together into the web of adult identity. The re-weaving required by the change of status between being single, married and a mother needed only a re-organisation of the existing strands not the complete destruction of the web. This was in direct contrast to Beveridge's model of marriage in which the individual became a 'new person'.

The discussion which follows highlights the gendered nature of career choice in the late 1950s. It would have been short-sighted for girls to make plans for their careers without including probable marriage and domesticity. In many cases this would have resulted in taking jobs indiscriminately; the expectation of domesticity was precisely the motivating factor in the decision to consider work as a stop gap and not to embark on lengthy training. Zweig identified the informal training for 'life' that occurred in the factories. He noted that the regime of the factory was similar to that of the school in the regime of bells and uniforms, breaks and teams resembling classes. The workplace provided an introduction to the gendered citizenship of 1950s society:

I have no hesitation in stating that factories are the most important schools for education in citizenship and that much more attention should be paid to this aspect of factory life. From here girls get all the values, standards and models for their judgment and behaviour, developing a marked uniformity of outlook on nearly all aspects of life.²⁸

A girl's status at work was affected by her progress towards marriage as much as her aptitude for her job, once she had completed the informal education into 'the secrets of life, courtship and love'²⁹ Zweig suggests that her social status would be confirmed by the ring on the finger:

When she has reached the stage where she can display an engagement ring, her prestige is nearly at the peak and the ring is passed from hand to hand with words of appreciation and vicarious enjoy-

ment of the great event. When the greatest event happens and the girl marries, a collection is always taken and a present given with lots of fun and a giggle.³⁰

The workplace in Zweig's analysis provided the backdrop for the further education of the female citizen but not the prime site of her activity and her expected role.

Girls' process of choice was therefore substantially different from that of boys. Boys' choices were also highly gendered; at school their choice was influenced by the expectation that they would eventually become a main breadwinner. Where the main activity for girls in their late teens was as workers, a majority of boys had to allow for a period of National Service which deferred entry into the workplace or delayed their transition from apprentice to full-time worker. As the young men returned to, or entered, the workplace permanently, so young women began to leave it for the delights of domesticity and motherhood. Once in an established job, domestic priorities took second place for boys and it was progress in the workplace which confirmed that the young male had graduated from adolescent into mature male.³¹

Youth Employment Service and advice manuals

Careers' advice for school leavers came of age in the 1950s. The Youth Employment Service had originally been conceived at the beginning of the century '...to lead all boys and girls who are physically fit towards some employment likely to bring them a livelihood and prove congenial to them'.³² It assumed that both sexes would need to undertake paid employment on leaving school. Those involved in the transition between school and work were thought to need a different form of service from that provided by adult Employment Exchanges. The Education Choice of Employment Act, in 1910, stated that: 'the employment of juveniles should be primarily considered from the point of view of their educational interests rather than their immediate earning capacities'.³³ Discussions in 1918 in the Ministry of Reconstruction Report 'Juvenile employment during the war and after' over juvenile employment placed more emphasis on finding suitable employment for boys and the extension of juvenile employment committees. The young age at which most teenagers left school meant that the relationship between education and employment in the middle teens was a difficult one. In 1941 Local Education Authorities encouraged boys and girls over 16 to join a 'suitable' youth organisation

which would help the war effort *and* help to develop their talents. Even after the 1944 Education Act which raised the school leaving age, a majority of children left school at fifteen without taking any formal qualifications (see appendix 1.1, 1.2).

The Ince Report of 1945 on Juvenile Employment created a central administration, staffed jointly by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, responsible to the Ministry of Labour and National Service. This Report made provision for vocational guidance before school leaving and the registration of every school, independent or state, with the Service. The Service provided talks and visits in collaboration with the schools and an individual interview with the Youth Employment Officer in a child's final term at school.³⁴ School records could be made available to the Service which involved teachers in the process of vocational guidance as they considered their pupils' prospects. The Officer would then place the young person in work and maintain contact until they reached the age of eighteen. The Youth Employment Service, although technically available to all schools, was largely geared towards finding apprenticeships and local unskilled and semi-skilled jobs for secondary modern leavers. One of the women interviewed for this book, recalled that her headmistress had been so angry with her for finding a job before meeting the Youth Employment Officer that she refused to provide a reference.³⁵ The situation was different in grammar and technical schools from the secondary modern schools:

In technical schools [...] the advisor must be ready to help the boy or girl who does not wish to follow a career in the occupational groups towards which the school's bias leads [...] In the grammar schools the advisor often adopts the role of supplier of information. Much advice is given incidentally as part of a statement about a career in which the youngster is interested. These young people being older are rather more confident and many enjoy discussing their plans in quite an adult fashion.³⁶

It is significant that Heginbotham used the phrase 'in an adult fashion' indicating that grammar school leavers had not yet achieved that status; the immediate entry into work was a specific stage between childhood and adulthood. With the raising of the school leaving age, school leavers in the 1950s were no longer children, but, compounded by the twenty-one age of majority, the perception of them as set apart from the rest of the population persisted. The County Colleges, which

never materialised, were intended to support this period of transition by providing a variety of social and vocational skills as preparation for full citizenship.³⁷

Towards the end of the decade the focus of the Youth Employment Service was on the problem of 'the bulge', the influx of teenagers into the job market as a result of the increase in population immediately after the second war which was expected to peak in 1962. A Report on the Youth Employment Service 1956-9 was published in the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* and in addition to demanding better training for Youth Employment Officers forecast an increase in youth employment at the expense of 'groups as married women and older people'. This generated a termly *Careers Bulletin* for schools, but implicitly if the prospects for married women's employment were reduced, the incentive for girls entering the workplace to consider a dual role model was compromised.³⁸

Pressure to regard employment as secondary to the role of mother was, perhaps unsurprisingly confirmed in a 1957 pamphlet *Careers for Mothers* produced by *Parents* magazine. The subtitle 'a complete guide to part-time work' immediately reflects the Beveridge model and demonstrates prevalent attitudes in the face of expanding opportunity. The advice was uncompromising 'The family life should be your first consideration and no part-time job should be taken which demands more of your time and energy than the family can spare. Meals should not be skimped nor bedtime rushed nor the day begun without sight of mothers'.³⁹ The message to women was resoundingly that 'family comes first' and inevitably the litany of suitable jobs included Froebel and Montessori courses, baby minding, running a nursery, fostering or taking in paying guests. Interviewing for social surveys was an alternative suggestion or light factory work. For those trained in clerical work a return to secretarial work part-time was a possibility but the author warned 'Shorthand is difficult to master after the age of 25'.⁴⁰ Trained teachers might take on marking exam scripts and nurses could do a few shifts to fit in around the family. For girls making their post-school training decisions the future in terms of paid employment, even part-time did not appear very exciting.

There was a great deal of official material issued on careers which was widely available. The Central Youth Employment Executive published *Careers for Men and Women* and *Choice of Careers* in addition to a range of pamphlets on specific occupations.⁴¹ Two commercial authors, Jeanne Heal and Eleanor Brockett, leapt to give advice, specifically for

girls.⁴² Jeanne Heal's book was part of the Bodley Head 'Careers Books for Girls' series and, after an introduction, comprised a series of interviews with women who were employed in a variety of professions.⁴³ Presumably the book would only have been read by a girl interested in choosing a career and yet the first lines reflect the notion of the stop gap identified by Zweig:

Since it is agreed that most girls want a husband and a family and regard a job as a stop gap between leaving school and getting married, what is the case for women entering the professions?⁴⁴

Having set out the case for women as a group, Heal turned to woman as an individual:

But, obviously like most women, I look on the whole question from an intensely personal point of view. To me the basic feeling of being independent, of being able to earn my own income even given the nicest husband in the world to keep me, is an absolute essential. But I know that my outlook is very far from typical. I know that most women prefer not to have a job, and I know that there are intelligent reasons why being a housewife and mother can be the most satisfying whole-time job in life.⁴⁵

Whilst setting out the norm and locating herself on the margins, Heal left the reader in no doubt which was the more level-headed option. Nevertheless the ambivalence which she expressed may have reflected commonly held sentiments. Her arguments for professional training were put forward to Miss Avent of the Youth Employment Service for official sanction.⁴⁶ Heal suggested situations in which a girl might not marry, might become widowed or divorced but also presented the argument: 'isn't it better for her self respect for a woman to know that she can earn a decent salary?'⁴⁷ Within the space of a page, Heal changed from locating her opinions as personal and not in harmony with the majority to making suggestions for 'all women'. Miss Avent's response was to identify differences amongst women; there were some who would have to work all their lives: 'This is the strongest possible argument in favour of choosing a job with a future rather than a job with simply a present'.⁴⁸ Miss Avent identified the likely influences of family and friends in decision-making, but also noted the yearning towards fairy-tale glamour jobs.

Jeanne Heal's book dealt largely with traditional female careers, but she debunked the idea of glamour for an airhostess, a popular contemporary representation of an exciting women's job. Instead she emphasised the hard work involved. Each career was covered in terms of opportunities and training, and the observations were heavily gendered. The section on advertising promoted women's role as consumer: 'After all, most day-to-day products are bought by women, so it is only common sense for women to write and design advertisements'.⁴⁹ It was made clear that women would struggle to get to higher positions in architecture and banking and that the advice offered reflected realistic prospects in specific occupations.

Heal advocated a career in terms of both necessity and enjoyment, but the spectre of motherhood was never far away. Domesticity was promoted, not in romantic terms but as work, a notion which permeated much discussion on women and employment throughout the 1950s:

This new attitude to professional women may well make it worth their while to learn a profession really thoroughly before going into the second job of marriage, and certainly before going into the third job of motherhood.⁵⁰

Some professions were made to sound interesting precisely because they enabled all three jobs to carry on simultaneously. For example dentistry:

[I]t's possible for a woman to marry and carry on this profession very successfully with the running of her home. She can get a post say as a school dentist where her hours will be absolutely fixed, or she can arrange to work mornings only, or afternoons, or a limited amount of days a week.⁵¹

Eleanor Brockett also framed her advice within the dual role model. It was 'natural' for a girl to want to marry and have children.⁵² However, she was aware of the pervasiveness of the stop gap model:

The idea that it does not matter greatly what career a girl embarks upon as it will in any case meet with an early death through marriage still persists [...] the underlying attitude of many parents is still that any long-term course of specialised training or, indeed, any higher education for a girl will probably be 'wasted'.⁵³

She drew a contrast between the attitude of the parents and that of the girl herself:

If, therefore she does not regard her career only as something to occupy the first few years after she leaves school and university, she must visualise it as work that will be continued through her life and which will have to take account of the life she hopes and expects to have as a wife and mother.⁵⁴

Brockett also drew on the concept of duty; girls owed it to society and their parents not to 'waste' their training. If 'duty' is included in the concept of the construction of the self it would appear as yet one more restriction on the autonomous choice of the individual. Beveridge's suggestion that women might decide to return to the workplace only in order to earn pin money, arguably awarded them greater freedom of choice. However, if female autonomy is understood in terms of Griffiths' analysis of being framed within overlapping communities, the concept of maximising the duty performed towards both family *and* society as a whole, confirmed, rather than restricted their adult autonomy. Brockett echoed Hubback's call to educated women to take note of their sense of public responsibility by engaging in socially valuable work outside the home in either a paid or an unpaid capacity:

It may not then be a matter of choice entirely, whether the object of adding some extra weight to the family income or finding an outlet for an ability and freedom from frustration, but it may also be a matter of duty.⁵⁵

Brockett patently invoked the complex way in which the formation of adult self necessitated the inclusion of multiple female identities. It is significant that the 'self' as individual is listed last in the following quote:

Meanwhile the woman herself must come to terms with the 'disability' of conflicting loyalties and the schoolgirl must be educated to have foreknowledge of the dilemma which may well face her on maturity. She has to be a wife, a mother, and herself.⁵⁶

Judith Hubback devoted an entire chapter to the conundrum in her research into 'wives who went to college'.⁵⁷ Hubback also highlighted

the relationship between the individual and the demands on women as a group:

What is needed is to work out the individual combination or compromise which achieves the best possible relationship between the three sides of a married woman's life, the woman as wife, as a mother and as an individual. No-one can do this piece of work for another woman, for each must find her own compromise [...] to come to certain conclusions. And these conclusions can only be temporary ones, because the years will not stand still, and what works at the age of twenty will no longer be satisfactory at forty.⁵⁸

Brockett assumed that a girl would incorporate domestic plans within her identity. For that reason she discouraged catering (unsociable hours) but again presented dentistry in a positive light. But it was not only the suitability of the hours, it was the training which the caring professions gave for life which Brockett found particularly attractive; trust, confidence and personal integrity were some of the qualities she mentioned which were 'essentially feminine'. Unsurprisingly, Brockett favoured teaching and nursing of all kinds as suitable employment. She described in detail careers in Engineering and the Services,⁵⁹ but warned that the training in engineering was long and noted that girls were not always welcomed by employers. A different perspective on the lack of interest shown by girls in engineering as a career was given to the Assistant Mistresses' Association and, as was discussed in the previous chapter these perceptions laid the blame for lack of females entering engineering firmly at the door of the girls themselves and their idea of engineering as a 'dirty job'.

Brockett's observation on the lack of openings in engineering was however confirmed by the 1959 Ministry of Labour commissioned survey into the employment of women scientists and engineers. The data was drawn from industries with two hundred or more employees and showed that 76% of establishments employed no women scientists and in total there were 15,972 males to 378 females employed. Employer attitudes to female staff included concerns that female staff would leave for domestic reasons, that there were problems with women in positions of authority over male colleagues and that many conditions were indeed 'rough, dirty and physically hard' and therefore unsuitable for women. These opinions were less prevalent in industries which did employ women but do reflect overall attitudes

even at the end of the decade and does confirm the gendering of many occupations in practice if not in theory.⁶⁰

Worthy of a brief mention in this section is the proliferation of books advising young housewives how to run their homes efficiently. This is examined further in the chapter on the women's magazines but in addition to the weekly articles on housewifery there were some publications which sat alongside the careers advice books. *The Ambitious Girl* was first published in 1943 but reprinted twice in 1944 as part of the *Charter for Youth* Series. The book set out to guide a girl in the decision making process of career choice in a post-war world. A number of professions were covered including accountancy, dietetics, nursing (medicine very briefly with a caveat as to the amount of training involved), publishing, teaching and stable management. The introduction to the book admonishes 'young people of today' for a lack of ambition:

By ambition is not meant just for the making of money for its own sake, or the desire for fame. It is the sincere resolve to do one's best in whatever job one has taken up, and to rise to the top of one's particular tree, or at least climb some of its branches.⁶¹

This opening statement allowed the Countess of Roseberry to divide women's work into two clear categories 'the job at home within the family, before and after marriage, and the job outside, earning for independence'. With foresight into the increasing availability of labour saving devices the book suggested that combining domesticity and paid employment was a possibility, indeed training for work in terms of cookery and nursing would provide long term domestic skills. The overriding link between the domestic and the public world of employment was described as 'one of woman-kind's most natural and even desirable ambitions, that of trying to look her best'.⁶² The chapter is the same length as those which describe the details of the different careers but it is significant just how much emphasis was laid on correct appearance, good grooming and clean clothes on even the tightest budget:

In conclusion let us quote Juvenal: *Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano* ('Your prayer must be that you may have a sound mind in a sound body'). These are true words. Mind and body are dependent on each other, just as the face reflects and is often a key to the character.⁶³

That this was considered especially appropriate advice for girls confirmed the gendered nature of the adult role.

Housekeeping manuals like Elizabeth Craig's left little time for the young married woman to contemplate paid employment. The timetable set out for a housewife's day, even in an (as yet) childless marriage in a rented flat was daunting:

7 am Draw curtains, Open windows. Clean dining room and living room

8.15 Prepare breakfast

8.30 Serve breakfast

9.00 Turn down beds, clear away breakfast things, wash up and return everything to its proper place...Tidy kitchen.

10.00 When you do your own shopping limit yourself to perishables only to save time except Friday and Saturday, when all groceries and other stores to be purchased.

11.00 Make beds. Clean bedroom. Staircase if you have one, and hall and passages, bathroom etc.

12 noon prepare midday meal...[detailed instructions for preparing, washing up and clearing away]

3.00 Clean kitchen premises, set and cover tea tray, wash out tea cloths and finish any odd jobs, prepare everything as far as possible for the evening meal.

Note: spend 30 minutes attending to your toilet, your hair and hands, changing your clothes, looking over your wardrobe and seeing to immediate necessities.⁶⁴

The housewife had from 4.30 to 6.00 pm to 'entertain or rest' at which point the round of cooking and clearing up started again until 9.00. The routine had to fit around children as they added to the family circle and it is hardly surprising that the prospect of combining paid work with domesticity was most often described as a part-time activity.

Although Brockett and Heal purported to write impartial advice books, they were subjective in their approach. Brockett highlighted the complexity involved in combining work and family, but put the onus onto the individual: 'They must themselves come to terms with their dual role and recognise in themselves their own conflicting demands'.⁶⁵ *Women's Employment* sought to offer advice to all women seeking employment although it was implicitly the parents of the school leavers who were the target audience. This again confirmed the assumed immaturity of the teenage school leaver and the lack of

confidence demonstrated by influential adults in the teenagers' ability to make an informed choice.

Women's Employment

Women's Employment was published fortnightly from 1899 until 1974 by the Women's Employment Publishing Company, part of the Central Employment Bureau for Women. They also published guides to careers for girls and 'Hints on How to Find Work' and 'Open Doors for Women Workers'.⁶⁶ It was priced sixpence and each edition of approximately thirty-two pages followed a similar layout. Whereas the girls making the career decision were the target readership for the career novels discussed in the next chapter, *Women's Employment* aimed at a wider readership which seems to have included parents and teachers.⁶⁷

There was one general article, book reviews (not necessarily career-oriented), letters answering queries from readers,⁶⁸ an employment page and then several pages of factual information entitled 'Where to be Trained'. Although it was called '*Women's Employment*' it is clear that it expected the majority of its readers to be considering their first steps in the market place. It was the gendered nature of the careers' advice which was the salient feature, not the age group, nor significantly, the social class, as the whole spectrum of the job market was covered.

As a publication, *Women's Employment* presupposed that girls were looking for a career, yet it implicitly wove the thread of domesticity through the advice given and the editorial material. The advice catered both for middle-class girls who were going to give up work, temporarily, on marriage, and for those for whom staying at home was not an option. There was a heavy emphasis on the immediate period after school leaving as a training ground for adulthood, hence there were articles on citizenship. There was little intimation that employment should be considered a stop gap or an isolated period in a woman's life. In May 1956, one of the lead articles focused on the report submitted to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women: 'Opportunities for Girls in Vocational and Technical Education'. The editorial focused on changes in the traditional domestic and dressmaking areas of women's employment, but it also expressed concern at the prevailing attitude of the girls themselves. They were criticised for accepting the stop gap model when opportunities and attitudes to employment were changing rapidly.⁶⁹

Citizenship was a recurrent theme in *Women's Employment*. It was, however, a gendered citizenship which is consistent with Griffiths' discussion of public autonomy and public life.⁷⁰ The pages of *Women's Employment* demonstrated that women, as a group were part of the workplace, the public sphere, and were there by choice and by right. They were entitled to full participation in citizenship, but it was a gendered citizenship located *within* a framework of communities which also contributed to the community as a whole.

A review of a United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Educational Abstract highlighted an awareness of the gendered nature of citizenship, it asked: 'Why should girls rather than boys be singled out for citizenship education?'⁷¹ The pamphlet focused on women as a group, making the sweeping generalisation that:

Women participate less than men do in community life and political and public affairs; they show less interest in these activities and less readiness to become involved in them; they are generally less well informed and thus less prepared to decide independently and critically than men – for example when they are called upon to vote.⁷²

The reason for concern over this state of affairs was given as the changing nature of the role of women, reflecting Myrdal and Klein's findings. The way that the change was expressed illustrated very clearly the intricate processes in which these roles developed:

[S]tructures are not fully consolidated, anxiety, uncertainty and controversy about what the role of the woman should be are still characteristic of the world in which young girls grow up. This too calls for a special effort to educate girls to play their part as citizens.⁷³

This echoed the sentiments expressed in *Citizens Growing Up*, a Ministry of Education publication, over the need for specific education for the adult public role.⁷⁴ The reviewer in *Women's Employment*, quoted the author of the UNESCO pamphlet, who located adolescence as the vital time when the conditions for the weaving of the adult self were created. The pamphlet also anticipated ultimate changes in social as well as individual circumstances:

It will be the task of the educator to make them understand the civic aspects of their present and future role as women, be it as housewives and mothers, at work, or a combination of both.

Throughout the articles and letters in *Women's Employment*, the school leaver was bombarded with advice and information in order for her to make an informed 'autonomous' decision as to her future as a citizen.

A small educational institution at this time was the House of Citizenship. This was a rather up-market secretarial college (£120 a term) which appears to have taken its role in educating the women of tomorrow seriously. Its intention was much broader than the preparation of middle-class girls for a brief secretarial job, prior to domesticity. The House of Citizenship was promoted within the pages of *Women's Employment* alongside advertisements for Assistant Housemothers (£385 p.a.) and resident school cooks (£6. 16. 9d for a 44 hour week):⁷⁵

The training at House of Citizenship, which is for girls over the age of seventeen, consists of a basic course in Citizenship combined with either secretarial subjects or with a non-vocational course in literature, language and an appreciation of the Arts. By Citizenship is meant the study of national, international and Commonwealth affairs, public speaking and a great deal of English style.⁷⁶

The author of the piece does not elaborate on what form this 'English style' might take, but there is a resonance with the assertion in the Beveridge Report that part of women's role was to transmit British ideals to future generations.⁷⁷ While overtly educating for 'citizenship', the House of Citizenship was clearly also grooming the intelligent (middle-class) wife and mother:

I have dwelt on what citizenship means for the girl who is going to marry, because marriage is the most important of all careers, and one followed by the majority of House of Citizenship graduates within ten years of leaving.⁷⁸

It saw itself as combining the 'virtues of the University and the "Finishing School" and to give "education in the round"'.⁷⁹ There is a marked similarity with the advice previously discussed given by the Countess of Roseberry in her book on *The Ambitious Girl*. Whatever the social class, careers advice for girls combined the intellectual and the physical, 'Grooming of mind and body are not incompatible. Why cannot a girl have a good brain, and be taught to use it for intellectual pleasure and profit, and at the same time be charming, gentle and attractively turned out?'⁸⁰ Dorothy Neville-Rolfe, principal of the House of Citizenship observed that despite changes in social expecta-

tions and changing morals young women should face the challenges of the post war period sensibly. In order to take up the responsibility of citizenship they should take their lives and their intellectual development seriously. Neville-Rolfe was dismissive of girls who blamed feminine weakness or complained of feeling tired. If they were to take their proper place in society she argued (although she could not resist a slight disparagement of the male species) '[Girls] have to realise that at work men do not like faintly ailing females, and that it is the prerogative of the boss to make out that he is at death's door when he has the common cold.'⁸¹

Although attendance at the House of Citizenship would have been unlikely for a majority of the readers of *Women's Employment*, a full-page article kept the issue of full citizenship and a public role under consideration. At the other end of the scale, the paper also ran an article on the 'Houseworker', by the chief officer of the National Institute of Houseworkers, who laid special emphasis on the skilled nature of this work. The length of training varied from eight months to thirteen weeks depending on the age of the applicant. The older the applicant, the less time she was expected to spend in training; there was clearly an assumption that women would have gradually picked up transferable household skills during their adult lives.⁸² The two way process of skills learnt at work being useful for domestic purposes was reversed; skills learnt in the private arena could also be put to use in paid employment.

The issue of maintaining the appearance of femininity while engaged in paid employment underpinned much of the advice in *Women's Employment*. The National Institute of Houseworkers made great play of the 'attractive' turquoise blue overall with cream collar and cuffs, which its graduates were entitled to wear. Even girls engaged in horticultural training were expected to dress in an appropriate manner for their sex. The advertisement for Studley horticultural college noted: 'Slacks, shorts or other trousers will not be permitted'.⁸³

The dual nature of woman's role was a recurrent theme in *Women's Employment* during the late 1950s but it was a dual role in which domestic duties were paramount. In January 1957, the main article focused on the possibilities for part-time employment for women. Janet Marcham identified the demographic changes which, in conjunction with increased sharing of domestic chores, meant that women were returning to work by their mid to late thirties.⁸⁴ Her article was phrased largely in terms of part-time employment as desirable only where full-time employment was not possible, an issue also

raised by Judith Hubback.⁸⁵ This was in contrast to the idea that married women should not contemplate employment at all, or possibly only part-time. Although she acknowledged the Beveridge model of part-time employment for pin money, Marcham's view was that employment served a far more important purpose than mere income generation. Participation in paid employment, wherever possible, was a duty which women owed to the community. In addition: 'The pleasant feeling of a certain financial independence is also not to be discounted, nor the opportunities for outside interests and contacts'.⁸⁶ This sentiment was shared by several of the interviews discussed later in the book.

Women's Employment presented paid employment as something intrinsic to the formation of woman's adult identity and growth as a citizen. Even something as apparently mundane as dry cleaning took on a higher status when regarded in this way:

You are doing something that directly contributes to the well being of your fellows and to the good of the community as a whole. For by keeping clothes and household furnishings fresh and smart, dry cleaning helps people maintain their health, their morale and their personal appearance.⁸⁷

Physiotherapy 'is not simply the employment of practical skill and efficiency, but is one of service to the community and devotion to an ideal'.⁸⁸

The temporary retreat into domesticity consequently became more problematic if so much personal development and satisfaction were to be gained from employment. There was a tricky balancing act to be performed by advisors and girls alike. Girls had to fulfil their womanly destiny as prescribed by Beveridge, but, having invested time and emotion in the workplace, the experience of employment remained an integral part of their adult identity.

In answer to a young married graduate asking about part-time work 'with people', the letters page suggested some kind of part-time social work in the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) or Family Welfare Association, drawing on the well established model of middle-class married women's philanthropy. Although focusing on paid employment, the publication also supported and promoted voluntary work for women who did not have to earn their living. Girls making their career choices could plan how their career might develop as their life circumstances changed. Articles on the Women's Voluntary Service

(WVS) and the Moral Welfare organisation blurred the boundaries between the domestic and workplace identities of adult women. The role of the WVS has recently been discussed in more detail by James Hinton who highlights the ambivalent nature of work which was both voluntary and yet organised by a central agency with paid employees.⁸⁹ Once married, these forays into social welfare used skills learnt in the workplace and women's 'natural' instincts as carers. By the late 1950s, professions such as teaching were actively recruiting married women to fill the vast number of vacancies. The reply to the query above added that there was also the possibility of market research, or, if she had secretarial qualifications, offered the opinion that there would be no shortage of part-time work.⁹⁰

Traditional female careers for women were considered by *Women's Employment* as suitable for integration with family responsibilities, or for their intrinsic caring qualities. Secretarial temporary work was promoted for the way that it could fit in with domesticity: 'A week off here and there if things get out of hand at home can always be arranged'.⁹¹ The publication also mentioned less traditional jobs for women, although they emphasised their compatibility with the female role rather than the pioneering nature of the work. Engineering for example was of particular interest to women because:

Who is more interested in the problems of ventilation in homes, schools, shops, factories, and public buildings than a woman? Who is more vitally concerned with new and better ways of heating her home than the housewife?⁹²

Those who were concerned that engineering was a long training were reassured by the presentation of the dual model: 'It is a career that need not end with marriage, can be carried on while acquiring a family, or gone back to when the children have reached school age'.⁹³ This was also the promotional angle taken in *Anne in Electronics* discussed in the next chapter. Unfortunately it was also exactly the reason given by employers in the *Ministry of Gazette* survey for *not* employing more young women.⁹⁴

The editors of *Women's Employment* confirmed the impression given by Myrdal and Klein that the late 1950s was a period of transition both in patterns of employment and in the attitude towards women and work. Viola Klein noted the changing emphasis away from domesticity for women. The attitude in *Women's Employment* towards the place of domesticity in adult women's lives was similar to that observed by

Klein, it was an integral part of what a women 'did' but only a small part of who she 'was':

[D]omesticity is no longer a chief virtue. Not that a modern woman is not expected to run a house efficiently – the standards of cleanliness, hygiene and culture, have, on the contrary, constantly gone up – but rather she is expected to be capable of doing housework with her left hand, so to speak, and must never be monopolised by it.⁹⁵

By the late 1950s, the changing attitude towards married women's work was more conducive to long-term planning. This was also partly due to the manpower shortage which needed married women's labour in professional, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. Attitudes towards careers which required a long-term training were also changing. Engineering appears to have received more coverage than other branches of science in careers advice, perhaps because of the activity of the Women's Engineering Society. However, writing of food industries and technical work for women science graduates, Professor R. H. Hopkins noted how the number of women employed in laboratories was on the increase:

One advantage to a girl taking a degree such as the above, is the general usefulness of the subjects studied and of subsequent industrial experience in the food industry to her in the domestic sphere. For instance, a girl who marries should find her early experience involving bacteriology, hygiene, the science of nutrition, and so forth of great value in the home.⁹⁶

The sociological surveys, advice books on career choice and home-making and *Women's Employment* all demonstrate the difficult relationship between old values of domesticity and new employment opportunities for women in the 1950s. In a post war welfare state which assumed a norm of married couple with non-working wife and breadwinner husband, traditional gender roles seemed firmly established. Demographic changes in terms of early marriage and motherhood further confirmed that woman's place was in the home. Housekeeping manuals prescribed detailed routines for the young married woman and part-time work for pin money prescribed the future of the girls who left school and entered a factory job with the aim of growing up and getting out. Changes in educational and employment opportunity for girls altered the balance of the sexes in

the employment structure and it is in the decade of the 1950s that we can most clearly see attempts to re-align traditional gender roles to incorporate the dual income family which briefly became the norm.⁹⁷ By looking at the wide variety of advice and expectations available at the time we might rephrase Harold Macmillan's famous phrase of the 50s 'You never had it so good' into one directed at girls as 'You never had it so complicated'. The next chapter considers how the genre of the career novel for girls tried to reconcile expectations of becoming a wife and mother with the expansion of employment training and opportunities for girls between 1950 and 1960. If girls were to be encouraged to take their 11+ and achieve better marks than their brothers, proceed to grammar school and to be encouraged to stay in education past statutory leaving, some sort of reconciliation between the role of housewife and worker had to be on offer. Romance in the workplace might be one way to negotiate this apparent divide.

5

The Career Novels

The career novel genre flourished briefly in the decade from the early 1950s. By the middle of the 1960s it was redundant as teenagers stayed longer at school and opportunities for entering university increased after the Robbins Report in 1963. The age of career decision making was lengthened from the minimum school leaving age at fifteen to as old as twenty-one or twenty-two for graduates. This age span of six years did not form a coherent enough market to sustain the genre. Changing moral codes also meant that the idea of marriage as the holy grail for female school leavers was diminishing and the persona of the career girl (as is noted in the following chapter on magazines) who combined home and family was increasingly accepted.

This chapter considers the criticism that greeted these novels in the educational press and in more recent literary reviews of teenage literature. That their literary style was unremarkable or even mundane does not detract from their interest to the historian. The way that both the careers and the contemporary debates around issues of women and work are presented provides a useful insight which might not be found elsewhere. They are a prime example of the way that leisure reading provided informal education to a substantial readership. The relationship between the idealised stories and the lives of the women who produced them is interesting and a biographical case study of Evelyn Forbes who wrote *Brenda Buys a Beauty Salon* concludes the discussion.

Once National Service was abolished, boys and girls entered the job market at the same age and as more professions opened their doors to both sexes the specificity of the girls' or boys' career novel lessened. A fictional tale which contained some details about a profession or job combined with training advice under the cover of a fairly thin and predictable plot would have appeared rather outdated and perhaps

somewhat patronising to a generation who invented the 'swinging sixties'. For their older siblings the popularity of the career novel was as far reaching as was its geographical spread in terms of its audience. Bodley Head and Chatto and Windus were the main publishers of career novel series although other publishers like Manchester based World Distributors dipped their toe into the water with the *Sara Gay Model Girl* series. The novels provide an interesting insight into the debates over women and the workplace as they were written by a number of authors, often under an overall series editor, but a recurrent theme is the juxtaposition of eventual domesticity with increasingly varied job opportunities. Each novel therefore draws on the professional writing or skills-based expertise of the author and fits the demands of the series as a whole. Evelyn Forbes who wrote *Brenda Buys a Beauty Salon* was herself beauty editor of *Vogue* and a well established freelance journalist rather than an established children's author. Extensive correspondence in the Chatto and Windus archive allows for a discussion not only of the content of the novels but the business and rationale of their production.

This correspondence gives details of the rationale behind the commissioning of different topics for the novels. Publisher, editor and distributors devoted much attention to the genre; they discussed the market for the novels and the type of careers and jobs that should be covered. The detailed correspondence and concern demonstrated over getting the information correct about each occupation illustrates the lucrative nature of this particular venture for the publishing houses. They also became involved in the minutiae of the character descriptions once the first draft was submitted, ensuring that the books would appeal to as wide a group of readers as possible. As the books were destined for school and public libraries, great care was taken that the content did not offend parents or teachers who were regularly asked for their feedback. In their responses to authors they offered advice, requests and suggestions. The career novels provide us with a fictional cameo of the transition from schoolgirl to adult but, as with much successful fiction, the market would only sustain stories that portrayed a world which was not only desirable but also attainable.

The novels covered a wide variety of careers similar to those in the advice manuals discussed in the previous chapter. The fictional career stories made less of the dilemmas of career planning than was discussed by the educational associations, but they still had to contend with the issue of domesticity which was usually presented in the more palatable guise of romance. The novels did not set out to create a

fantasy of the life of a single career woman as the later discussion on *Kerry Middleton Career Girl* demonstrates. Angela Mack, who also wrote a non-fiction careers' book on secretarial work, drew on her personal experience to write *Pan Stevens – Secretary* and *Outline for a Secretary* although she also ventured into *Continuity Girl*. Their heroines worked hard at their chosen training and took their work seriously; without exception the girls were pretty, if unsophisticated, like *Jill in Social Work*, and their ultimate walk up the aisle was never in doubt.

The idea for the career novel in Britain was imported from the United States. In an earlier chapter I discussed the work of Betty Friedan and her analysis of the problem without a name, that of young suburban women negotiating the conflict between expectations of traditional housewifely roles and the lure of the market place. Although this book is primarily concerned with interrogating the relations between gender and work in Britain there is clearly a marked degree of similarity with issues on the other side of the Atlantic.¹

The novels published by Chatto and Windus and Bodley Head offered more specific advice than that in the more general *Kerry Middleton Career Girl* which although first published in Britain by Wright and Brown in 1960 was published the previous year by Arcadia House.² There was no attempt to anglicise the dialogue or to make it clear that the novel is set in the United States rather than England. However 'Magnolia City' is famous for its Dogwood trees and the characters had an unmistakeable vocabulary that reflected the American, not English background. The focus of the novel was career girl Kerry, so set on emulating her boss Helen that she failed to see how work had hardened her. Although we might expect the denouement to see Kerry brought to her senses and giving up her career for love there was a slight twist which demonstrated changing attitudes as, although she did realise the disadvantages of single career woman status, she also took on a job to allow her fiancé to finish his training. The British novels discussed here while showing some allegiance to the format included much more practical advice on employment and early career experiences.

The typical career novel heroine was a young girl on the brink of leaving school; the story followed her from her career decision, through training, into work and usually ended with the promise of marriage. Most of the career novels focused on traditional female careers. The exception, *Anne in Electronics*, was the first in a proposed sub-series of technical novels which was not continued after the death of the editor. The leading publishers Chatto and Windus and Bodley Head kept each other advised of topics in preparation, having

both realised the potential of the market at the same time.³ The novels were written by a wide variety of authors under the close guidance of a series editor. As already noted some of the authors were experts in their field, others were already established children's writers; Lawrence Meynell wrote on nursing, travel agency and the theatre, and, under the pseudonym of Valerie Baxter, covered the career of policewoman, assistant ship's purser, author and book-seller.⁴ It is interesting that the publishers decided on a female pseudonym for Meynell which suggests that the representation of the author as an expert practitioner and someone with personal insight into the dilemmas of female occupational choice was considered to be important. The correspondence between series editor and publisher at Chatto and Windus indicates that this was not always a successful strategy as the less experienced authors had more problems with deadlines than the regular writers.

The novels were targeted at the fourteen to sixteen age group, 'overtly at those girls in their last year or two at school who are looking around for something to do' and were widely distributed into libraries and schools.⁵ A vast majority of this age group left school rather than staying to the age of eighteen and into higher education in the years up to the mid 1960s. The Chatto and Windus editor, Mary Dunn, was married to a supplier of library books who undertook readership surveys on behalf of the publishers and it appears that, once again, social class was perceived to intersect with gender in the choice of careers:⁶

Are the greatest number of our readers likely to be second/third year secondary girls, 16 or 17 year old grammar school girls or 16 year old boarding school girls?...As Mary will tell you, our target to date has been roughly the 15 and 16 year old who doesn't come from a very cultured background and isn't normally much given to reading. But I am not sure that is our principal market, and if there is another I would like to know what it is.⁷

Manchester Public Library responded to the survey:

Our junior readers come principally from the secondary modern school. From the grammar school, girls of the ages mentioned are either reading books relevant to their studies or adult works...bearing in mind the limited public, might I suggest that some, at least, in the series might deal with jobs as well as careers? The shop girl, the

factory worker, machinist and so on, so often come from these schools and there is a need for these jobs to be put over attractively.⁸

That there was some 'need' for the less glamorous jobs to be promoted reflects the sentiments expressed in the interviews and in the sociological surveys over the ease with which young people could find employment at this time. By 1957 Mary Dunn was writing to Nora Smallwood that grammar school teachers in Wolverhampton were requesting books which included university backgrounds as 'their pupils adored the career books'.⁹ It would appear, certainly as the series became established, that the books appealed to a wide variety of readers, although many of them might well have been reading the books for the romantic frameworks rather than the more prosaic advice content. Wright and Brown, while using the idea of the career girl as their topic placed *Kerry Middleton* on their Romance list.¹⁰

Topics ranged from model to engineer and included, as might be expected, nursing, teaching and catering, although not dentistry! That they were successful and widely read is indicated by the number of titles published in print runs of 6,000. *Young Nurse Carter*, the first in the Chatto and Windus series was an immediate success and was reprinted. The novels were exported as far as Australia¹¹ and New Zealand.¹² Although written under the guise of fiction, the publishers were keen 'for the series as a whole to be a practical contribution towards solving the ever recurring problems of a young girl's career'.¹³ It was apparent that the notion of career choice as a problem was acknowledged at the time, and not only with the benefit of hindsight. What is not clear is the exact nature of this problem. It may have been the lack of careers advice, although this was supposed to have been provided in schools by the Youth Employment Service. If it was the perceived clash of interests between dedication to work and the lure of full-time marriage and motherhood the fictional setting enabled these problems to be worked through, or at least addressed, albeit in a somewhat superficial way.

A few career books for boys were tried following the success of the girls' series but they did not take off in terms of sales in the same way. This may indicate the sense of expanding opportunities for girls in a way that was less pertinent for boys who had always had a variety of jobs from which to choose and did not have the added problem of domestic distractions. Titles for boys from Chatto and Windus covered very stereotypical masculine careers; D. J. Alcock, *Sam Dykes, Marine Engineer* (1959); Bruce Carter, *Tim Baker, Motor Mechanic* (1957),

C. H. Doherty, *Brian Decides on Building* (1960) or Norman Longmate, *Keith in Electricity* (1961). Lawrence Meynell who also wrote some of the girls' career novels covered the topics of hotel and catering, vet, architect and policeman.

These books have been largely ignored by literary critics and women's historians, dismissed as teenage romance in which the career was promoted for its potential for meeting Mr Right.¹⁴ Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig have suggested that these books were: 'no more than fictionalised handbooks in which the soft sell, the job's provision of matrimonial opportunities, is supported by the technical facts of each occupation'.¹⁵ They also concluded that the books promoted the stop gap attitude towards employment:

[A] girl's job expectations will be satisfied by a little money for titivation, a little leisure, to display its effects, and the opportunity to retire gracefully into marriage after no more than a year or two of work.¹⁶

This was also the opinion of contemporary reviewers. Lesley Scott-Moncrieff writing in *The Tablet* admitted that there was some useful information and she noted: 'There is a warning about the kind of horsewoman we must *never* become, or we might not get married'.¹⁷

Before taking these criticisms too seriously and dismissing this genre it is worth noting that in addition to their place in school and public libraries and their popularity with careers teachers the books were also reviewed positively in the *Journal of Education*. This suggests that they were well regarded by the education authorities.¹⁸ One reviewer commented:

These books clearly strive to give an authentic account of the qualifications required and the courses offered in training, as well as to give some feeling for the qualities of personality which the work demands.¹⁹

As employment opportunities for girls were apparently growing so quickly it may well be that these novels filled a gap in trying to offer some notion of the experience, or the likely job satisfaction, before there were enough young women employed in these professions to give talks or offer advice on each occupation to the next generation or cohort.

The *Journal of Education* reviewer suggested that one of the chapters in *Shirley, Young Bookseller* would make 'interesting material to read and

discuss with a class', although s/he expressed some doubt as to whether it might daunt a secondary modern pupil reading on their own.²⁰ Another considered the novels on their literary merit, suggesting that they would make suitable reading for thirteen-year-old grammar school girls. In reply to Andrew Shirley's survey, as director of a library supply company, Hilda McGee from Manchester public library noted that the books were mainly borrowed by secondary modern school readers.²¹ Correspondence was also received from the headmaster of a technical school in Devon.²² They appear therefore to have had a wide-ranging and appreciative audience.

The reviewers criticised the bland lives led by most of the heroines in the books:

The authors seem to be hampered by an idea that the chief characters ought to be 'average' or typical. They come from 'nice' middle-class homes, where Mummy and Daddy live happily.²³

It is interesting that this aspect which, to a present-day reader, makes the books somewhat *exclusive* should also have been picked up by a 1956 reviewer and viewed as making the books *inclusive* or 'average'. The heroines do not reflect the type of girls who were the subject of Michael Carter's research although apparently they formed a substantial part of the readership. Yet again the hegemony of middle-class values seems to be confirmed; the books, while criticised for being middle-class, were read by readers from all social classes and all levels of ability. In the novels which covered professions such as nursing, other medical auxiliary jobs were mentioned so that girls who might not aspire to nursing training might still be made aware of the possibilities of employment in a hospital setting. In the introduction to *Jean Tours a Hospital* Doreen Swinburne added 'for those readers, or their parents, who wish to know more precisely the present conditions of training I append this note'. In addition to details about nursing entry at eighteen she included a section on assistant nurses who 'find the State examination too difficult [they] can now take a one year course of training on simpler lines followed by one year's nursing practice under supervision, in order to become State Enrolled Nurses'.²⁴

As already noted, class difference was often subsumed under an assumption that the middle-class lifestyle promoted in women's magazines of the period was the norm, even if girls were officially classified as 'working-class' by the occupation of the head of the household. In order to make the information contained in the novels relevant to the

majority, authors utilised a monolithic image of the 'typical' or possibly 'ideal' teenage girl in her progression towards adulthood. Several of the heroines, like Monica the travel agent, were located within upper middle-class backgrounds, but as the correspondence above indicated, this strategy was apparently acceptable to the readership. The heroines of the career novels came from the whole spectrum of educational background and ability; secondary modern, grammar and boarding schools, although their homes, their characters, their aspirations and their values were remarkably similar, as was their propensity to fall in love and become engaged to upwardly mobile young men.

Carpenter and Pritchard were scathing about the merit of these novels:

The career novel for girls might be regarded as a reflection of the growing independence of women during the twentieth century were it not for the fact that [...] it is usually a mask for a romantic story.²⁵

Marcus Crouch also displayed a degree of cynicism: 'It came not from the spirit of the times, but from a deliberately adopted policy of certain publishing houses'.²⁶ It is unlikely, however, that a publishing house would have continued with an idea which was *not* catching or reflecting a contemporary demand. Additionally if the novels were simply a vehicle for romance it is strange that they flourished so briefly; it might have been expected that once more careers opened for women the potential for these romances would increase rather than diminish as was the case.

Winifred Whitehead suggested that the career novel: 'offered an account of the real world about which the young girl is becoming increasingly curious'. Again the notion of career choice was presented as a 'problem':

[I]t deals in a reassuring way with problems which will soon have to be faced; it contains a sufficient amount of story telling interest and it deals with 'love' in a sensible and unromantic way unlikely to embarrass the most scornful and suspicious adolescent.²⁷

Middle-class female school leavers at this time of transition were unlikely to have had mothers with whom they could discuss the entry into work. Readers belonged to the first generation where it was assumed that *all* young women would go into some kind of employment. The sort of discussions to be found in the books about the experience of starting

work are similar to those today that maybe the subject of informal inter-generational conversations. Parents did not seem to be taking their daughters' career choices as seriously as they should. Whitehead noted;

Presumably it is still true that many girls and their parents too, look upon a job only as a stop gap before marriage. Therefore they tend to accept passively the first thing that offers, without considering seriously any of the questions (what are the prospects? What further training will give the most valuable start to a career?) which would seem of first importance to their brothers or sons. To such girls the career novel may give just that emotional stimulus that is lacking in the home environment, awakening the imagination through a sympathetic identification with the heroine's day to day problems and experiences in entering upon her career.²⁸

Lawrence Meynell spent some time setting the social context of the travel agent book which is distinctly upper middle-class, but reflected the concerns of the *Journal of Education*. Coming from a family background where Mummy's days were spent at bridge parties, and her best friend was 'deb of the year', Monica would not have been expected to go out to work in a previous decade. Significantly it was Monica's father who was more supportive of Monica's desire to get a job than her mother, he 'had kept his mind reasonably youthful and in most things could be relied upon to see the youthful point of view', 'When I am out [of war office job] things aren't going to be easy. When you are over fifty jobs aren't easy to get, obviously and my pension will only just about keep Mummy and me if we are careful' and he was supportive of Monica's desire to 'earn her own living'.²⁹

Monica and her parents lived in London and Monica had been sent to a 'highly select secretarial college in South Kensington'. Monica built up the experience that led her to take up travel agency in a way that was only within the reach of a certain social class. By attending the Sorbonne for six months to improve her French she learnt to mix with other nationalities then stayed with friends in Italy for several months. Monica was just the type of girl who would have attended the House of Citizenship discussed in the previous chapter. What could have been portrayed as a rather frivolous use of time was put to use when she not only found work as a secretary in a travel agency but, perhaps unsurprisingly after several twists and turns, the book ended with Monica engaged to a young man about to set up his own agency. Her life was not destined to follow the same path as her mother's

though, and the concluding scene in the novel saw the couple planning to open 'Mr and Mrs P. Waite. Personal Travel Agents'.³⁰ Although the central plot of the novel is far fetched, the sense of transition of female patterns of employment from one generation to the next is striking.

Claire, Sheila's friend in *Sheila Burton Dental Assistant*, faced similar problems in conforming to her mother's outdated ideas 'my mind goes round like a squirrel in a cage trying to sort out all the things I would like to do and all the things I wouldn't and all the things I know my mother wouldn't approve of'.³¹ The author took time to emphasise the gap between generations; 'She [mother] still lived in the atmosphere of her own girlhood: dreaming for Claire of the regimental balls and seasons in Malta which she had known and not really wanting her to work at all'.³² Sheila's final choice of work did however reflect a gendered approach to employment. Her brother followed in his father's footsteps and became a medical student, but Sheila says 'I want to be finished and out in the world earning my living much sooner than that'.³³

A majority of the novels did have a heroine with whose social background the 'average' (middle-class) reader could identify; she also usually exhibited the schoolgirl's adventure story qualities of pluck, independence and loyalty.³⁴ Her independence was mitigated by her respect for her parents and her friends and her choice of career was framed within the expectations of her school, family and opportunity. She moved from a protected world into a new community of college and work. The novels dwelt at length on the appearance of their characters; their dress sense and poise developed during the course of the story as they progressed from girl to woman.³⁵

The novels set out the transitional pattern noted by Myrdal and Klein where careers assumed an importance and were part of the web of adult responsibility, but never replaced the domestic component. The following quotation illustrates the attempt by Anne (in *Outline for a Secretary*) to include both the notion of career and domesticity in her web of identity. She did not appear to envisage returning to paid work after marriage, yet clearly accords the employed years more weight than the girls observed by Zweig:

I hate the type who only want to fill in time until they get married, and collect their pay packet at the end of the week, having done the minimum of work and that shoddily [...] After all, every career girl plans to get married in good time [...] how much more satisfying to

feel for the rest of your life that you made a small success in your career, however short time it lasted.³⁶

It is perhaps significant that Anne described herself as a career 'girl', even having completed her training for her adult role in the workplace, her employment status was not that of a fully mature career 'woman' with the long term commitment to a career structure that the term implied. There were two types of single women presented in the pages of the career novels; the long term spinster, with no prospect of marriage and the 'heterosexy' heroine and her contemporaries who, although not working as a stop gap, were nevertheless clearly not destined to remain single.³⁷ Liladhar and Kerslake have identified how older spinsters were constructed in the library novels as 'other' to the young heroine. The implication in most of the novels was that the central figure was on a different career path from the possibly off-putting image of the older single woman in the workplace. Indeed, when Kerry Middleton finally accepted the faithful Bill's proposal of marriage, which she had rejected throughout the novel in favour of her long term work plans, she stated 'I think it was Miss Fannie [the single senior secretary in her office] and the way she lives that woke me up to the fact that loving somebody and belonging to him is the best career any girl could ever want.'³⁸

The heroine of *Anne in Electronics* on a weekend home met an old friend who had taken secretarial training and commented on Anne's work in a factory. Her objections to the job were not the content of the job itself, which was apparently irrelevant, but the opportunities that it held for meeting a suitable (white-collar) husband:

I'd hate it [...] As soon as I finish secretarial school. I'll have a job in an office for a few years. That way I'll have a chance to meet the right sort of man and get married. That's what I think is important. What chance will you have of meeting the right sort of man in a factory?³⁹

Anne, of course, did meet the perfect man, and intended to combine work with marriage, with his full approval. On the eve of her wedding she reflected on her friend's comment:

The girl's picture of life had been like a magazine story – job in an office, meet a handsome young man, marry and settle down. The life this girl idealised would never have done for Anne. She would have been bored to tears in no time.⁴⁰

Anne's decision to take on an apprenticeship rather than go to university was presented in terms of it being a practical approach to the job, and not a second best. Underlying her decision is the relationship of her career to that of her brothers, she told her parents 'I know you think I've done this as a sacrifice to make it easier for you and Daddy to send the boys to school but honestly I'd have wanted to do this even if I hadn't got two young brothers who *required* expensive education'.⁴¹

The authors undermined the idea of the stop gap without losing sight of the ultimate goal of domesticity. Girls were portrayed making independent decisions on their future which included marriage within a life plan rather than as a prime target. Skills learnt in the workplace could be transferred to the home, making training a sensible, not wasteful, undertaking. When Mary Dunn presented her story line for *Cookery Kate* she wrote to Nora Smallwood: 'I should then probably (for a change) end the book by getting the heroine married, showing that a cooking career is never wasted, even if abandoned as a profession'.⁴² The girls in the novel who simply attended the Brides' course at the polytechnic that Kate trains at were treated unsympathetically, but it does demonstrate how important the skill of cooking was considered to be in becoming a properly qualified housewife; 'It was mostly attended by blissful fiancées making such play with their modest engagement rings and already assuming towards the other students the superiority of the married woman'.⁴³ The sequel to *Young Nurse Carter* was explicitly written with the purpose of showing girls that: '[E]ven when they are married they will always have a profession that will be interesting with good earnings'.⁴⁴ It was also commissioned for the somewhat less altruistic motive in that the first Nurse Carter book had been a runaway success and it was hoped that a sequel would do as well.

It was not only the training for specific careers that was covered by the novels. The heroines 'grow up'. This was explicit editorial policy, as Nora Smallwood at the publishers wrote to the series editor Mary Dunn: 'The development of character should be shown indirectly and be the outcome of the girl's experience and reaction to the work'.⁴⁵ Many of the novels emphasised the variety of the people that the girls from fairly sheltered backgrounds would meet in the course of their training. Jill, who eventually took up social work, was a heroine who was described unfavourably as rather gauche even by her parents. On joining a youth club she was told 'grammar schoolgirls don't always mix well in clubs like this, but you'll be leaving school soon and if you can get along with the other young people you can stay'.⁴⁶

Needless to add Jill did eventually make friends and stay but not before she had learned that formal education was only the beginning of learning to be part of the adult world. The workplace and training for it acted as a form of further education into the role of the adult woman, a feature of factory life also noted in Zweig's research and discussed in a previous chapter.

There was frequent reference to the changing nature of the times and the different world of the girls from that of their parents. Demographic changes meant that it was extremely unlikely that girls would not marry, this meant they had to devote less time and energy to husband hunting. Combined with increased educational and training opportunities and the shortage of labour, this changed the way that women's relationship to paid employment was perceived.

The role of mothers, as domestic role-models for their daughters in the career stories, was significant. None of them had paid jobs, they were located firmly within the house, advising on personal grooming, buying the tweed interview suit and worrying over their adventurous daughters. The later Shirley Flight (air hostess) novels were simply an excuse for a female heroine in an adventure story but the first in the series does make some attempt to describe the training. The reaction of Shirley's parents presumably was not dissimilar to that which might have been expected in the early days of commercial flying. Interestingly there was never any suggestion that Shirley might want to pilot the plane rather than serve the drinks. Father offered the opinion when the acceptance letter arrived, 'Why this is splendid girlie...Why bless my soul, as there is no more advantage these days in being born one of the strong and silent sex, this letter makes me wish I was young again, and of the opposite sex!'⁴⁷ Shirley's mother on the other hand collapsed with 'strangled sobs' concerned at the safety angle, she was reassured by her husband 'we're going to be ever so proud of our flying girlie'. Only Sheila Burton's mother referred to her own days living in a flat before settling for the role of full-time wife and mother. She was also one of the most efficient mothers: 'always seeming to know exactly where the thing that any of them wanted was at any given moment, able to provide food and coffee for any number of people at any hour of the day'.⁴⁸

There was a strong emphasis on the importance of appearance which was an integral part of the construction of adult 1950s femininity.⁴⁹ Young women's appearance was also in a period of transition; the influence of Rock and Roll and youth culture offered an alternative image to that of the 'Junior Miss' so beloved of dress

patterns and women's magazines.⁵⁰ The group identity of the 'teen-ager' was no longer that simply of an apprentice adult. Sheila Rowbotham's beatnik look of black sweaters, high heels and heavy make-up was not one which the earnest school leavers of the career novels even contemplated but it does reflect the growth of a distinct youth culture.⁵¹ Although Jill's somewhat dowdy schoolgirl appearance with flat shoes was contrasted unfavourably with Joan's 'spikes' the emphasis on appearance in most of the novels was on being 'neat'.

It is clear that the novels were written as prescriptive literature for what should be, rather than what was. The professional authors used the novels as a vehicle to educate girls into the importance of grooming and neat appearance. We might identify these as the values of a previous generation. The female authors belonged to the generation of women who might have spent time in unflattering uniforms, struggled with clothing rationing and welcomed the New Look. Evelyn Forbes who wrote the *Beauty Salon* career novel was herself a freelance journalist. Her granddaughter remembers her as a woman who even in her nineties 'put on her face' each day and was keen to pass on the importance of good dressing to the younger generation.⁵² As more women entered the workplace they had to conform to ideals of femininity and look the part of the professional.

All the heroines dressed conservatively, with the emphasis on good grooming, symbolically leaving their school uniform behind. For those going into nursing or the Services, the attractiveness of the uniform was a selling-point.⁵³ In the 1950s, school uniform was often worn up to the time of leaving school even in the sixth form, consequently the overnight transformation from schoolgirl to young worker was all the more apparent: 'Trimmed up mentally and groomed physically, Valerie would look a different proposition from the schoolgirl who stood with one foot turned over and her fingers twisting uncertainly'.⁵⁴ Valerie was destined to be a model, but the 'natural' days of childhood were past, she had to work hard to achieve the femininity required of the adult woman. The advice to Valerie on her potential as a model came from her glamorous aunt, not her housewife mother:

[W]aist's perfect, but you've still got too much schoolgirl fat on your hips. You can get that off with a few less buns and by wearing a proper corset belt. And your bust's in the wrong place, dear – a good light bra will lift that.⁵⁵

Modelling was presented in *Valerie Fashion Model* as a serious career, the glamorous side to the work was played down. The World Books model heroine Sara Gay did travel to the exotic locations of Monte Carlo and New York, but still looked forward to returning to London offering the opinion that English boys might make bad boyfriends but they made good husbands.⁵⁶ Clothes and the 'natural' advantage of youth were frequent themes in the books which warned against wanting to grow up too quickly. The glamour of older women was detailed in full in the description of a party attended by Sara Gay and her friend. It was Sara's identity with the readers, not the unattainable sophistication, which was confirmed in her reflection 'was there any middle aged woman who would not eagerly have exchanged her diamonds for the youth and figure which she possessed?'⁵⁷

Many of the books gave indirect advice on what to wear for interviews which demanded conformity to the demands of the well-groomed adult:

Mother I am glad you made me wear this hat and suit. One or two of the girls looked awful. One had dirty hands with bright red nails, long earrings and no stockings. Jean looked nice, she wore her blue coat with the velvet collar and her velvet beret.⁵⁸

These descriptions were remarkably similar to the advice given by the Countess of Roseberry ten years earlier and discussed in the previous chapter. The Countess also gave advice on attending interviews:

Everyone who has had experience of sitting on selection committees knows how much interest the members pay to details such as tidiness, style of hairdressing, suitability of clothes and the way a candidate sits and moves.⁵⁹

The difference in appearance was a marker of public status, not of age or ability. Jill, (in social work) was a sixth former and A' level candidate. Yet she was portrayed as naïve in comparison to the girls at the local youth club, who had already left school. Even though a majority of them had low-status jobs, their 'settled hairstyles' and high heels added another thread to their adult identity.⁶⁰ They were established as paid employees and Jill was still a schoolgirl; their next stage was the engagement ring which in turn took priority over the employed status. This was an issue which we have already seen also concerned the teaching associations in their drive to persuade girls to stay at school for sixth form work. There was a clear linear progress towards adulthood which had to include a spell in paid employment.

Many of the heroines intended to carry on work after marriage, or at least return to it after childbearing. Jeanne Heal and Eleanor Brockett had endorsed Beveridge's observation that not all women were destined either to marry, or to stay married. None of the heroines of the career novels faced divorce or widowhood, but Caroline Carter returned to nursing after an unexpected change in circumstances when her husband was posted overseas. This was dealt with as an individual circumstance, not a change in the norm and it is significant that the husband was conveniently removed on business so that Caroline did not have to juggle her wifely duties with the demands of her career:

Caroline was prepared, and gladly prepared to agree that the natural fulfilment of any woman was to be happily married and to produce a family; but next and very close to that she knew, that as far as she was concerned, the business of devoting herself to the assistance of others would always be the most significant thing in her life.⁶¹

Fortunately for Caroline a child minder appeared, conveniently in the form of her jobless single sister-in-law and she was able to return to nursing earlier than she had anticipated with the thorny issue of child care dealt with as quickly as possible.⁶²

Lorna Lewis addressed the issue of married women working in *Judy Bowman, Therapist* as an answer to concern voiced by Judy's father that the training would be a waste of time and money. Her parents stipulated to Judy (and therefore to the reader):

If she started the training course she should finish it. So many girls started training and didn't like it or got married, or threw it up for some other reason. An expensive training course shouldn't be thrown away. With a specialist training course behind her, a girl could return to her profession later on if she wanted to, or even do part-time work after she was married.⁶³

Hospital life was frequently presented as a glamorous background for romance, *Emergency Ward 10* one of the earliest television soap operas tapped into this concept. The novels which dealt with hospital and medical life were at pains to present at least some view of the problems that might be faced for those who had to choose between medical careers and marriage. In *Judy Bowman* the reader is told 'Quite a lot of young marrieds carry on with their Occupational Therapy jobs at least for a time; while a certain number were already coming back into the profession, having had their children and got them safely packed off to

schools for a good many months of the year'.⁶⁴ Not all the careers were promoted as compatible with domesticity; modelling, ship's officer and the Services were presented as careers which could be enjoyed for a while and then the skills learnt transferred to marriage, motherhood and later paid employment.

A plot-line used by several authors to get around the problem of incorporating romance for the heterosexy heroine was the 'disappearing boyfriend'. Caroline's husband disappeared off to Africa; Anne's fiancé went abroad, but 'writes regularly'; Margaret Lang's boyfriend rushed off to Canada for a year, Sheila Burton's Michael set off for Hong Kong and Jean's fiancé exited on a Fulbright scholarship leaving her to look after his mother.⁶⁵ This device was usefully employed by different authors so that having confirmed first their femininity, and second, their successful engagement, the girls were then provided with a breathing space in which to establish themselves in their job. *Marion Turns Teacher* ends: 'He was going abroad and she was going to find her feet in a new profession'.⁶⁶

The career novels centred on the young girl entering her first job. Older women appeared in the full-time domestic role or as established career women. Aunts were characters through which authors could present the established career woman without complicating the issue by giving jobs to the domestically fulfilled mothers.⁶⁷ Aunts, like the 'disappearing boyfriend' offered a way out of the dilemma for authors faced with promoting women's professional employment *and* supporting the notion of full-time motherhood. They were the sensible advocate for training in case the traditional role of wife and mother did not materialise. *None* of the career novels presented a heroine with a working mother, even though the central character was always, by the nature of the books, on the verge of leaving school. The professional child-free relatives and friends also provided the author with a character who could do more than simply offer the practical aspects of the job under discussion. Aunt Sophie in *Marion Becomes a Teacher* was an HMI, so clearly had risen to the top of her profession and therefore her advice to Marion had a certain gravitas. The fictional stories did more than simply provide a convenient vehicle for the careers advice, they provided the scene for elaborating on some of the experiences a trainee might encounter. The context of the books offered the reader a brief history of the profession, while at the same time reflecting some of the contemporary debates over the relative status of the female professions. The teaching novel addressed some of the problems that were beginning to become apparent in the vast divide between secondary

modern schools and grammar schools. Sentiments expressed by the teaching associations at their conferences were clearly of a wider concern:

Well we can't all be university graduates...and as you know the country really does need science teachers. It's quite as important in modern society as nursing. The subjects you have [French, Biology, Geography, Art and English O'level] will be a very good range of subjects for a Training College Course. If you can't do a university degree and teach, you could use your aptitude to good advantage in a Training College. You could do Biology as a special subject. You might then be able to teach it in a Secondary Modern school or help some future genius off to a good start in a junior school.⁶⁸

Marion turns Teacher described the life of a 1950s Training College in much more detail than we would glean from official records. Although obviously a fictionalised and slightly glamorous account of life at 'Hartsdale' the very different environment of the Training Colleges from Universities was clear. 'Locking up' time was 10.30, with much shinning up drainpipes and in windows to accompany it. Marion was grounded in college for a fortnight after one escapade with the admonition from the Principal (a short woman with grey hair) 'I have to make sure that every student leaves here suitable in character for a great profession'.

Louise Cochrane created her heroine Marion as an enthusiastic but slightly naïve trainee teacher; her first teaching practice ended in chaos as she failed to take the advice of experienced teachers and lost control of the class, so the novels did not paint an entirely positive picture of being a working girl. Neither did Cochrane shy away from introducing the debate over changes in secondary schooling. Older mature students were introduced into the book; a manageress of a laundry, a mother of two children and a secretary provided examples of the variety of backgrounds to be found in teaching. An ex-secondary modern pupil was upset when she overheard Florrie's observations on secondary modern girls as 'a class of dimwits who comb their hair and paint their nails while you're supposed to drum something into their thick skulls'. Marion leapt to the defence of the secondary moderns 'They've as much right to education as you or I ...education that prepares them for life whether they are good enough to go to grammar school or not'.⁶⁹

The final section of *Marion Turns Teacher* was devoted to a debate at the Men's College 'Is the Married Woman's Place the Kitchen or the

Classroom?’ This gave the author the opportunity to raise the debates and concerns over married teachers. The speaker from the men’s college ‘painted a gruesome and highly ridiculous picture of homes where women rushed off leaving washing up to their husbands, and who corrected exercises in the evenings when their mates wanted to go to the pictures’.⁷⁰ Marion took up the women’s angle but realised that she was being ‘too intense’ and so in order to make her views clear opted for a more light hearted approach (an interesting insight in itself into the psychology girls might want to employ to get their voices heard):

Schools are shouting for science teachers to help train a new generation to understand and contribute vigorously to solving our problems. Surely women graduates who can teach science are wasted when they spend their time scrubbing floors? Besides clever men like yourselves can devise wonderful new shiny gadgets to ease the problems of housekeeping. Surely trained younger women should not sit about lazily while all the extra work of our time is done by men?⁷¹

Marion added that there were economic advantages of a working wife, especially as most of the trainees would marry men who ‘were not likely to be millionaires’. She also made her priorities clear ‘I’d never put teaching first, I’d prefer marriage’ and then said she would go back when the children were older, again offering a notion of career in terms of being usefully employed in paid or unpaid work.

This chapter concludes with some reflections on the career pattern of one of the authors, Evelyn Forbes, who wrote one of the early novels, *Brenda Buys a Beauty Salon*, in 1954. Evelyn Forbes’ own career demonstrated a considerable contrast to the traditional role set out in the novels and in women’s magazines as she worked from the time when her children were very young. Yet at the same time as Beauty Editor of *Vogue* she also appeared as a glamorous role model. She did not fit either the template of the young heterosexy heroine but neither did she fit the efficient but rather sterile life of the older spinsters in the books. She was married and had four children and through force of circumstance became the main breadwinner, taking on the chief responsibilities of running the house and being a mother to three sons and one daughter. Born in 1899 she wrote medical columns and beauty columns for the popular press based on her life experience, not on formal training. Her unpublished ‘Reminiscences’ offers an insight

into attitudes to women's working role in the 1950s. She is an interesting figure in that although she led a somewhat unorthodox life in terms of career and family she complied with the demands of representing a sophisticated femininity which we associate with the 1950s woman. There is no indication as to why Evelyn Forbes wrote 'Reminiscences' but they are interspersed with advice for would be journalists in the same sort of format as the career novel, except that this is the career autobiography.

Evelyn Forbes was born in Scotland but spent time in Assam in India where she was witness to an uprising and killed a tiger (so family history has it). During World War 1 she was in the MI5 section of British intelligence and during World War Two she wrote a syndicated column 'Food Facts' for the Ministry of Food.⁷² Her background of family servants indicated that she came from an upper middle-class family as did her education at boarding school. From early on she remembered handing out beauty advice gleaned from old fashioned recipes and hearsay. Her formal education and training were awarded only brief mention in her *Reminiscences*, she casually included the information that she 'had the chance of going to Oxford but I refused it' in favour of joining MI5.⁷³ Her writing career began after she had been secretary to a 'literary man' and her first novel, 'Corners' won first prize in a first novel competition. Her journalistic entry into beauty writing began when a friend on the *Hull Daily Mail* asked her to write a beauty column. In the Chatto and Windus correspondence it is clear that social networks played a considerable part in discussions about which novels to publish and what titles and authors to commission.

Forbes embarked on an extended visit to Kenya where she had 'innumerable but quite innocent romances...went on safari across the Athi plain, saw [her] first wild lion...rode racehorses in Nakuru, went to dressing gown parties in Rumruti, joined the governor of Uganda's party and went right down the West Coast of Africa'.⁷⁴ She then married a tea planter and went to live in India. During her time in India she undertook a correspondence course and broke off the narrative to offer reflections on the utility of such courses 'you are told how to set up a manuscript and how to approach editors and so on'. She concluded this section of her memoir with a statement that could have come straight out of one of the career novels 'Wherever you are, there is some knowledge to be found out about the things which appeal to you and a journalist must never miss an opportunity of adding this to her bag of tricks'.⁷⁵

This privileged lifestyle came to an end when they returned to England and her husband was unable to find adequate work. She left her children in 'a nursery residence' to live in a one bedroom flat in London where she wrote for women's magazines on many different topics 'I cried every time I saw a pram'. 'Women journalists have the reputation of being tough. Business women are often accused of being hard on other women. That was not my experience'.⁷⁶ After only a year she was earning enough to move to a larger flat, be joined by the children and pay a nanny. At one point she answered beauty queries for *Woman*, one of the magazines discussed in detail in the following chapter. Forbes demonstrated remarkable insight in her reflections on married and single women; 'A married woman, particularly one with children has to be twice as punctilious about her work as a single woman'.⁷⁷ She described the work of a Beauty Editor in detail, again in a similar style to the advice given in the novels. Throughout the 'Reminiscences' she offered advice to an unseen reader who might wish to learn from her experiences 'If indeed you are a beauty editor, you will love every minute of it even if it is the hardest job of work you have ever done'.⁷⁸ She noted how she was asked to open Beauty Salons as part of her job and to make speeches at women's group 'I would advise any ambitious beauty journalist to take a course in public speaking'⁷⁹ and 'remember to wear comfortable low heeled shoes 'for visits to cosmetic factories. Her expertise on Beauty Salons for the *Brenda* book was obviously gleaned on her numerous visits to different salons in the course of her editing work. She was a prolific writer 'Before the [second] War I was writing regularly under eight different names for eight women's magazines' these included *Housewife* and *Good Housekeeping*. After she retired from *Vogue* she returned to freelance work. It was during this period that she wrote *Brenda Buys a Beauty Salon* clearly using all her years of experience to tell young readers about the business and the beauty side of the business. She spent several pages of 'Reminiscences' explaining in detail how to set up a company and pay a salary. It is difficult to see why she wrote these 'Reminiscences' unless it were for some future plan for careers advice, 'Provided you have GCE O'level passes in English language and English literature and one other subject this is a good way to start [as an apprentice journalist]' and she continued giving advice to the invisible reader on pay and unions, including useful addresses to write to. 'You may think I am being unduly pessimistic...I have also had my ups and downs and I want you to prepare for them wisely'.⁸⁰ The 'Reminiscences' are unfinished, but they are a useful insight into

the difference between a career as it had been experienced and the careers advice to the next generation that it generated.

The career novels may have been dismissed by their 1950s critics but as historical material they offer an alternative perspective to the variety of careers available for girls at the time. They described the training in detail and discussed popular opinion on girls' entry into work. That practice did not always reflect the seamless dual role model presented in the novels was amply demonstrated by the women who wrote, published and edited the series. The prevailing assumption was that girls had few places to turn for careers advice, that they should take their career decisions seriously, never lose sight of the importance of the domestic role and pay due attention to the business of being female which is the focus of the next chapter.

List of career novels for girls

This list has been compiled from the British Library Catalogue, the Bodley Head archive at Reading University, the information in the novels themselves and a list from the New Chalet Club Career Story Conference held on Saturday 20th March 1999. It is not exhaustive but illustrates the distinctive and comprehensive nature of this genre in the 1950s.

Bodley Head

Mabel Esther Allan	1955	<i>Judith Teaches</i>
Anne Barrett	1956	<i>Sheila Burton Dental Assistant</i>
Ann Barton	1955	<i>Kate in Advertising</i>
Valerie Baxter	1954	<i>Jane Young Author</i>
Valerie Baxter	1954	<i>Elizabeth Young Policewoman</i>
Valerie Baxter	1956	<i>Shirley Young Bookseller</i>
Valerie Baxter	1957	<i>Hester Ships Officer</i>
Elizabeth Churchill	1956	<i>Juliet in Publishing</i>
Shirley Darbyshire	1955	<i>Sarah Joins the WRAF</i>
Monica Edwards	1954	<i>Joan Goes Farming</i>
Monica Edwards	1956	<i>Rennie Goes Riding</i>
Elizabeth Grey	1958	<i>Pauline Becomes a Hairdresser</i>
Elizabeth Grey	1959	<i>Pat Macdonald Sales Assistant</i>
Elizabeth Grey	1961	<i>Jill Kennedy Telephonist</i>
Pamela Hawken	1952	<i>Air Hostess Ann</i>
Pamela Hawken	1954	<i>Pan Stevens Secretary</i>
Pamela Hawken	1955	<i>Clare in Television</i>

Josephine Kamm	1953	<i>Janet Carr Journalist</i>
Josephine Kamm	1955	<i>Student Almoner</i>
Lorna Lewis	1953	<i>June Grey Fashion Student</i>
Lorna Lewis	1955	<i>Valerie Fashion Model</i>
Lorna Lewis	1956	<i>Judy Bowman Therapist</i>
Joan Llewellyn Owens	1954	<i>Sally Grayson Wren</i>
Joan Llewellyn Owens	1957	<i>Margaret Becomes a Doctor</i>
Joan Llewellyn Owens	1958	<i>Sue Takes Up Physiotherapy</i>
Joan Llewellyn Owens	1960	<i>Diana Seton Veterinary Student</i>
Bertha Lonsdale	1954	<i>Molly Hilton Library Assistant</i>
Bertha Lonsdale		<i>Molly Hilton Librarian</i>
Mary Elwyn Patchett	1953	<i>The Lee Twins Beauty Students</i>
Jane Sheridan	1959	<i>Amanda in Floristry</i>

Chatto and Windus

Moie Charles	1957	<i>Eve at the Driving Wheel</i>
Louise Cochrane	1954	<i>Social Work For Jill</i>
Louise Cochrane	1955	<i>Marion Turns Teacher</i>
Louise Cochrane	1957	<i>Sheila Goes Gardening</i>
Louise Cochrane	1960	<i>Anne in Electronics</i>
John Keir Cross	1957	<i>Elizabeth in Broadcasting</i>
Shirley Darbyshire	1954	<i>Young Nurse Carter</i>
Shirley Darbyshire	1955	<i>Nurse Carter Married</i>
Stella Dawson	1955	<i>Joanna in Advertising</i>
Mary Delane	1956	<i>Margaret Lang Fashion Buyer</i>
Robin Deniston	1958	<i>The Young Musicians</i>
Mary Dunn	1955	<i>Cookery Kate</i>
Evelyn Forbes	1954	<i>Brenda Buys a Beauty Salon</i>
Veronica Heath	1956	<i>Susan's Riding School</i>
Joan Llewellyn Owens	1957	<i>A Library Life for Deborah</i>
Beatrice Lloyd	1957	<i>Travels of a Nursery Nurse</i>
Angela Mack	1956	<i>Outline for a Secretary</i>
Angela Mack	1958	<i>Continuity Girl</i>
Laurence Meynell	1957	<i>Sonia Backstage</i>
Laurence Meynell	1958	<i>District Nurse Carter</i>
Laurence Meynell	1959	<i>Monica Anson Travel Agent</i>
Nansi Pugh	1958	<i>Antiques and decorating. The Adventures of Audrey and Anthony</i>
Joan Selby- Lownes	1956	<i>Sally Dances</i>
Joan Selby- Lownes		<i>Linda Flies</i>

WM Collins

Doreen Swinburne	1943 (rep57)	<i>Jean Tours a Hospital</i>
Yvonne Trewin	1947/57	<i>Jean Becomes a Nurse</i>
Doreen Swinburne	1959	<i>Jean at Jo's Hospital</i>
Doreen Swinburne	1964	<i>Jean's New Junior</i>

William Heinemann

Edith C. Walton	1956	<i>Twins and Drawing Boards. A Career Story for Girls</i>
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Lutterworth

Lorna Lewis	1956	<i>The Silver Bandbox</i> (hatmaking)
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Max Parrish

Nancy Allum	1961	<i>Monica Joins the WRAC</i>
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Colin Venton

(These were not strictly career novels but focused on a specific career.)

Edith Arlett	1955	<i>So you want to be a Shorthand Typist</i>
Edith Arlett	1958	<i>So you want to be a Private Secretary</i>
Arthur Bensusan	1958	<i>So you want to be a Photographer</i>
Evelyn Bolton	1957	<i>So you want to be a Hairstylist</i>
Veronica Heath	1957	<i>So you want to be a Show Jumper</i>
Derek Henry	1960	<i>So you want to be an Accountant</i>
Walter Howe	1955	<i>So you want to be a Songwriter</i>
Lynn Lytton	1957	<i>So you want to be a Stewardess</i>
Peter Craig Raymond	1956	<i>So you want to be a Ballerina</i>
Richard Wiggan	1956	<i>So you want to be an Air Hostess</i>
Richard Wiggan	1958	<i>So you want to be a Model</i>

World Books

(These were initially career books which then turned into adventure stories, the popularity of the series indicates the appeal of glamorous jobs and associates them with increasingly exotic destinations, not just for holidays but for work)

Judith Dale	1958	<i>Shirley Flight Air Hostess</i>
	1958	– and the Diamond Smugglers
	1958	– Desert Adventure
	1958	– in Hollywood
	1959	– The Great Bullion Mystery

	1959	– and the Flying Doctor
	1959	– and the Rajah's Daughter
	1959	– Congo Rescue
	1960	– Fjord Adventure
	1960	– Pacific Castaway
	1961	– and the Chinese Puzzle
	1961	– Flying Jet
	1961	– Canadian Capers
	1961	– Storm Warning
Janey Scott	1960	Sara Gay Model Girl
	1960	– in Monte Carlo
	1961	– in New York
Sylvia Edwards	1958	Sally Baxter Girl Reporter and the Mystery Heiress
		– The Runaway Princess
		– In Canada
		– On Location
	1959	– The Holiday Family
		– Underwater Adventure
		– In Australia
		– African Alibi
	1960	– The Greek Goddess
		– The Lost Ballerina
		– Hong Kong Deadline
		– Festival Holiday
		– Golden Yacht
	1961	The Secret Island

6

Girl to Woman

See how the other girls envy your grown up look! You'll be thrilled at how gorgeously 'grown up' you feel [...] when you're wearing a Teenform bra and suspender belt [...] they've been designed specially for you.¹

This advertisement in *Girl* illustrates the way that the formation of a female identity also involved physical appearance. The 'Teenform' bra was clearly a product for a specific adolescent group. Yet this group was also on the brink of adulthood and how they 'look' reflected how they wanted to 'feel'. How they 'felt' affected what they wanted to 'be' and how the representation of themselves as adult women was confirmed by either the entry into the job market or the job of wife and mother. Both these occupations demanded a certain style of dressing and grooming which although reflecting a 'natural femininity' had to be learned and maintained. The business of being a woman acted as the common ground between the paid and unpaid adult female role.

An earlier chapter focused on the way that class interrelated with gender in the educational experience of teenage girls. A consideration of three periodicals aimed at women and young girls explores how these class differences were ameliorated in magazines by the construction of an apparently class-less universal femininity.² The publications presented a seductive cosy world of happy families; physically attractive men, women and children for whom Beveridge had planned the welfare state. The Cold War, single parent families, class divisions and an increasingly multi-cultural society were all absent from their pages. The world they invoked offered a pattern for what might be, rather than what was, yet they purported to be about 'real' women and 'real' lives. Readership for women's magazines peaked between 1956 and

1960, it has been estimated that five out of every six women in Britain read at least one magazine a week in 1958.³ These magazines therefore deserve further investigation in research which explores the possible influences on girls leaving school and planning their careers.

The preoccupation of the magazines with all things female created a sense that 'being a woman' was a full-time career in itself that demanded training and expertise. This notion ran concurrently with sentiments about the 'natural' instincts of female caring. This overarching framework for the adult woman could easily include periods of full-time or part-time employment and contain any possible conflicts within the role which might arise.

The magazines discussed in detail in this chapter are *Girl*, *Housewife* and *Woman* and may be fairly described as the ultimate career guides for 'Woman'.⁴ *Girl*, despite its title was aimed at the twelve to sixteen age-group when career decisions were made, although it also appears to have been read by a younger age group as well. There is, however, no evidence which indicates the class of the readership and it was probably more likely to have been read by middle-class girls who shared the middle-class background of the heroines of the stories. Features assumed that their readers would have access to money for clothes and days out, but equally they did not overtly marginalise or exclude working-class girls. Letters pages and features in *Housewife*, a monthly 'glossy', and *Woman*, a weekly paper, indicate that they were actively read by the same cohort of teenage girls, again with little or no specific appeal to either middle or working-class readers. Mary Grieve, editor of *Woman*, noted how important it was to 'catch' the teenage audience.⁵ All three publications considered women and girls as a specific classless group, with common concerns, and focused on the career of femininity. Division by age was a sub-group, girls were expected and encouraged to join the sisterhood of adult women. Women had a clearly defined, but separate, role to play as citizens of a post-war world. The focus on domesticity as a job for women was underpinned by contemporary child-rearing theory which required mothers to be home-based during the formative years.⁶ Being feminine was a 'business' involving production, consumption and, above all, hard work and girls were educated into this work through the pages of the magazines.

The magazines discussed in this chapter both targeted and created a community of women and girls, a 'readership', who were encouraged to think of themselves as belonging to a specific 'club' or even a 'family'. The community of readers was both the site within which a female identity could be constructed *and* was instrumental in that

same construction. Readers' letters, especially to the problem pages were often couched in terms of writing to a well-established friend.⁷ Women were the central actors although many men wrote for the magazines, for example, David Mace was marriage guidance 'expert' on *Housewife* and also wrote for *Woman*.

Many of the articles along the 'How to' lines appear highly prescriptive to the modern reader. They were, however, prefaced by phrases such as 'we help you, the reader' or 'join us in....' positing the creation of the female identity as a group project. This project was one to which girls were introduced as teenagers as part of their preparation for entering the career of 'being a woman'. Unsurprisingly, features or even advertisements for paid employment were infrequent, yet the underlying assumption was of a period of employment before marriage. The business, or career, of being 'feminine' was, however, paramount and applied to all women, regardless of class. Griffiths cited her own experience of entering into the complicated business of growing up:

When I look back at my teenage self, I notice that I used to tell myself endless stories about my gender. I wanted to be sure I was a woman, that is, a real woman. I also wanted to be myself. In other words I wanted to be sure that that 'self' was a woman.⁸

The model female constructed in the magazines was white, heterosexual and either married, or anticipating marriage and family. At the same time, the magazines assumed that they held a universal appeal, further marginalising those who did not fit their model. Their popularity would suggest that it was a model, at least aspired to, by a huge number of women in the late 1950s.

This chapter explores three aspects of the magazines. First it looks at the way in which periodicals actively encouraged or articulated readership participation and investment in the different publications. It identifies the way that they created a community within which girls could learn to be women. Second, it considers the emphasis laid on the physical appearance of being 'a' woman, as an individual, but also a representative of 'women' the wider group. As Penny Tinkler has observed: 'Clothes were particularly important because they embodied layers of meaning'.⁹ The chapter concludes by considering the way that paid employment was represented and the place of careers advice within the magazines. Specific examples are taken from the three magazines, rather than a quantitative content analysis, in order to illustrate the dominance of the construction of a specifically *female* self as an

influence in the likely career plans of female school leavers in the late 1950s.¹⁰

The ephemeral nature of women's magazines, has tended to undermine their importance as historical source material. Griffiths identified the need to respond to the devaluing of women's voices as one of the commonalities of feminist research.¹¹ Magazines are a rich area for re-discovering some of those voices. Research into women's and teenage magazines has been comparatively recent, and early studies therefore necessarily focused on content analysis in order to explore the overall picture. Now that content analysis by Cynthia White and Marjorie Ferguson has confirmed general trends and themes in the magazines it is possible to use specific examples from the publications in order to consider these themes in more detail.¹²

A problem with using magazines as evidence for women's experience is that they tend to speak for 'women' as a group, which in turn tempts the researcher into making sweeping assertions, without acknowledging difference. Martin Pugh argued that the magazines' popularity and their preoccupation with domesticity illustrate a backlash against the women's movement of the pre-war period.¹³ He suggested that this was by the mid-fifties: 'more a defensive attempt to boost the morale of mothers than a realistic attempt at stemming the drift to work'.¹⁴ Married women's income spent on British-made household goods was important to the economy, but also in tune with the policies of the conservative government and the Beveridge philosophy of the woman at home: 'The ideal propagated in the women's magazines – cosy, individualist, home owning, materialist – was much closer to their brand of politics than to Labour's'.¹⁵ Pugh also identified the apparent classless nature of the magazines, brought about by women's work, typically within the service industries, which: 'brought them more closely into association with middle-class values than did their husbands'.¹⁶

Cynthia White concluded, like Pugh, that the advent of consumerism produced a sea change in the women's press from the mid 1950s.¹⁷ She evaluated modern periodicals with reference to historical background, social, economic and technical change.¹⁸ White also emphasised the way in which consumerism served to obscure class differences amongst women, under the umbrella of middle-class values.¹⁹ Although the earlier chapter illustrated the way that the education system tended to be divisive along class lines, White suggested that the growth of state education: 'helped to create a greater similarity in attitudes, interests and modes of life between the different social strata'.²⁰ Despite this change in outlook, White's analysis indicated

that the focus of the magazines remained unremittingly domestic and: 'used their influence to discourage women from thinking in terms of a wider role'.²¹

The two-way nature of the relationship between women and society was identified by Marjorie Ferguson in her content analysis of *Woman* and editorial interviews in women's magazines during the 1950s. She concluded that: 'These journals are not merely reflecting the female role in society; they are supplying one source of definitions of, and socialisation into, that role'.²² She highlighted the complex way in which women's adult identities were formed, which reflects Griffiths' notion of the construction of the web of identity and the interaction between the individual and the composite 'woman':

These journals help to shape both a woman's view of herself and society's view of her. They are about femininity itself, as a state, a condition, a craft and an art form which comprise a set of practices and beliefs.²³

Ferguson's analysis echoed Griffiths' ideas of overlapping communities and the ambiguous way that female identity is both constrained and created by relationships with others: 'The dominant themes purveyed by the women's media have a close internal consistency, they join up, they overlap, and in so doing they confine as well as define, the female world'.²⁴

Ferguson's work is significant in her identification of the way that women, as individuals, had to be taught the business of being feminine which, in turn, confirmed the position the magazines held in relation to younger women: 'the leading of young initiates into the desirable, but demanding state of womanhood'.²⁵ The magazines were woman centred, in that man was constructed as 'other', they emphasised the powerful organising concept of gender which overrode any other economic personal or social differences.²⁶ She suggested that individual women were encouraged to venerate the 'totem of Woman herself'.²⁷

Ferguson concluded that the magazines placed a: 'heavy emphasis upon the Self and the responsibility ethic laid upon every woman to be the self-starting, self-finishing producer of herself'.²⁸ Her analysis clearly demonstrated the centrality of domesticity to the cult of femininity. Non-domestic occupations were limited to first job features, or glossy accounts of more glamorous careers. Reading of *Housewife* and *Woman* here builds on Ferguson's analysis. Although there were some

features on more mundane careers for girls, Ferguson concluded that the 'business of being a woman' was the prime occupational category.²⁹

Despite the depiction of 1950s Britain as a period of consensus, stability and tradition, any reading of contemporary material suggests quite the opposite. The women's and teenage magazines of the period reflected some concern over changing values and practices within society in their features and letters pages. At the same time they prioritised representations of traditional families in an ordered society. These created tensions and apparent contradictions within the demands for the formation of adult roles by teenage girls. Ferguson also identified how these contradictions were manifested in magazines as: '[T]ension between individual and group norms, between traditional and emergent female roles, between what women's magazines were saying and what women of many different kinds were doing'.³⁰ This is an important caveat to bear in mind. It is easy to be distracted by the sheer quantity of the 'happy young housewife' representations into an assumption that this reflected everyday practice, although of course it is well nigh impossible to know how the readers received and interpreted these images.

Janice Winship noted these tensions when she articulated the ambivalence between the active enjoyment of reading a magazine and an academic critique. Her awareness that magazines can exploit did not stop her enjoying them, and understanding the enjoyment of millions of other women: '[A]bove all, perhaps, becoming a woman is fraught with the pains and pleasures of all manner of conflicting pulls'.³¹ Winship showed how the magazines did address issues such as class, within the concept of women working at the ongoing creation of their adult identity:

In the 1950s when magazines discussed the new consumer work expected of women, women were being educated about a work which reflected not only their femininity, but on their class status and the kind of individuals they were.³²

Winship framed her analysis in similar terms to the notion of the career of 'womanhood' and suggested that the magazines were a guide to the job of being a housewife. The consumer boom and the improvements in technology acted to raise the status of 'occupation Housewife' and the: 'job of women's magazines in the 1950s was therefore to educate and reassure women in this *work*'.³³

Honey, first published in 1959, was the first of what Dawn Currie has termed the 'teenzines'.³⁴ *Honey* was very much a magazine in the format of the adult women's magazines rather than the 'comic' format of *Girl*, but it was excluded from this study as it was not published for most of the period under review and comparisons with *Woman* and *Housewife* would therefore have been compromised.

For most of the 1950s there was no publication in the adult format aimed directly at teenage girls as consumers and as mini-adults. Periodicals such as *Valentine* (first published 19.1.1957) and *Roxy* (first published 15.3.1958) which arguably targeted a more working-class readership than *Girl*, focused on fiction cartoon strips, the cinema and the emergent pop music business, although there were occasional articles offering advice on dressing appropriately. Patti Morgan offered advice in *Valentine* and *Roxy* featured 'Alma Cogan's Glamour School'. Themes in *Valentine's* fiction focused on heterosexual romance and the spending power of the young single wage earner. *Valentine* was not included in the more detailed analysis for this chapter as the content of *Girl*, although to present-day eyes, perhaps unremittingly middle-class, aspired to cover a wider subject area, or at least expectations for girls in addition to the possibilities for love and marriage. The *raison d'être* for *Valentine* was romance and the stories therefore focused on the goal of marriage and heterosexuality. A 'correct' answer in a quiz 'Will You Be An Ideal Wife' to the question 'If your husband wanted you too, would you give up your job?' was, not unsurprisingly, 'yes'.³⁵ In one story a fashion artist, declined the offer of promotion in favour of her boyfriend who, on hearing of his promotion, promptly proposed marriage: 'He'll never know they offered me the job first, men have their pride' observed Pip in the final caption.³⁶ The heroines were usually engaged in stop gap post-school jobs, usually as office clerks or as shop assistants. These locations offered both a space for female gossip and the opportunity to meet the man of their dreams. Dance halls and cinemas, also identified in Clare Langhamer's work, featured strongly as locations for the stories.³⁷ The problem page in *Valentine*, initially run by the motherly figure of Ellis Powell (Mrs Dale of radio diary fame) and then by 'Stevie' a more sisterly image, featured letters asking about relationships and weddings without questioning whether this should be the norm. The expectations presented in *Valentine* and its ilk were consistent with themes in the women's magazines and excluding them from detailed analysis allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the three publications chosen.³⁸

Teenage girls' magazine reading habits were formed either by reading their own publications or their mother's or older sisters' magazines. The readers' letters pages and the problem pages give some idea of the age of the readership and these demonstrate that the fourteen to sixteen age group were regular readers of both *Girl*, and *Woman*. Dawn Currie's research has suggested that teenagers read magazines in a different way to adults. Although her work has focused on current reading habits, her general comments are pertinent for considering the teenage readership of the 1950s.

Currie's critique suggested that the 'map of adolescence' was not as simple as it might appear.³⁹ Using content analysis and interviews it became clear that teenagers negotiated with these texts, and did not unquestioningly absorb the views promoted in the magazines. Currie suggests that modern teenzines provide a 'frame of intelligibility' within which girls could make sense of their world and this could be equally true for the 1950s.⁴⁰ Dawn Currie's own teenage experience was in the 1950s: 'when I negotiated the transition from thinking about myself as simply being a person to thinking about my life as a woman'.⁴¹

Currie questioned how young women: 'come to understand these images in relation to their everyday experiences of being women'.⁴² Like Ferguson, Currie explored the relationship between individual women and the idea of 'woman' and cited Mary Poovey's demand that this relationship be acknowledged:

On the one hand, we need to recognise that 'woman' is currently [...] a position within a dominant binary symbolic order *and* that that position is arbitrarily (and falsely) unified. On the other hand, we need to remember that there *are* concrete historical women whose differences reveal the inadequacy of this unified category in the present and the past. The multiple positions real women occupy – the positions dictated by race, for example, or by class or sexual preference – should alert us to the inadequacy of binary logic and unitary selves without making us forget that this logic *has* dictated (and still does) some aspects of women's treatment.⁴³

Currie's analysis of the teenzine readership is a timely reminder that the magazines of the 1950s, may have been read in very different ways by adults and schoolgirls. The magazines helped to confirm adult readers' domestic choice and helped them in the ongoing construction of that identity against a background of change. Teenagers reading the

magazines demonstrated, through their interaction with the letters and problem pages, that they provided a useful source of information.

Girl has not been the focus of much research apart from Hemming's analysis of the early problem pages.⁴⁴ Angela McRobbie's article on *Jackie* contained some observations which are pertinent to *Girl* a decade earlier. McRobbie identified women's and girls' magazines as a powerful ideological force, she argued that *Jackie* assumed its readership was a monolithic group which obscured class differences: 'It asserts sameness, a kind of false sisterhood which assumes a common definition of girlhood or womanhood [...] there is little or no space allowed for alternatives'.⁴⁵ McRobbie suggested that girls were invited to join a close society for the exchange of information and that they were: 'presented with an ideological bloc of mammoth proportions, one which imprisons them in a claustrophobic world of jealousy and competitiveness'.⁴⁶ This chapter argues that *Girl* while creating a monolithic 'clubbiness', allowed an element of participation and catered for a wide range of interests.

In her comprehensive study of girls' magazines from 1920–1950, Penny Tinkler focused on the tensions inherent between capital and patriarchy. She argued that the magazines sought to frame their readers as independent consumers, at the same time promoting expectations of a heterosexual norm and subordination in eventual marriage.⁴⁷ There were a great many more magazines for the teenage girl in the period up to 1950 than the following decade. Tinkler was able to draw out the way in which different publications catered for girls in different social classes. By the late 1950s the range had narrowed considerably, and although *Girl* catered for the schoolgirl as opposed to the young worker, notions of imminent employment were part of its content. Tinkler identified the way that the transition from school to work and the path to heterosexual relationships, marriage and motherhood were: 'experienced social constructions of female adolescence which varied along the lines of social class'.⁴⁸ By the late 1950s these social constructions were still in evidence and promoted by the magazines, but issues of class were less overt. The assumption that all women would aspire to similar (middle-class) values perhaps says more about the hegemony of the middle-class at this time than any reduction of the stratified nature of society. As the grammar/secondary modern split demonstrated the 'meritocratic society' was still inherently classed. Tinkler argued that the creation of feminine appearance was part of the construction of sexual difference and the 'naturalness of female subordination'.⁴⁹ The papers in

Tinkler's study covered a wide age range; those aimed at younger readers concentrated on female friendships and those on older readers at heterosexual relationships. By the 1950s the problem page in *Girl* covered schoolgirl friendships *and* queries over boyfriends. Tinkler identified different approaches to careers by publications, dependent upon the class of reader. While papers for both middle-class and working-class girls acknowledged that attitudes towards paid work were inevitably linked with expectations of domesticity, working-class publications tended to feature the more glamorous but unrealistic jobs and middle-class papers already expected girls to engage in training and employment in order to fulfil their intellectual potential.⁵⁰ With the reduction in the number of magazines published by the late 1950s *Girl* was publishing its own book of careers and, at the same time, in its fiction portraying girls with glamour and fantasy jobs likely to be far removed from their readers' experience.⁵¹

The web metaphor helps in understanding apparent inconsistencies within the magazines. Dorothy Smith also employed it in her discussion on the creation of femininity:

Rather than an image of a superstructure balanced over the layers of relations of production like the frosting on a cake, the concept of a discourse of femininity [...] envisages a web, or cat's cradle of texts, stringing together and co-ordinating the multiple local and particular sites of the everyday worlds of women and men with the market process of the fashion, cosmetic, garment and publishing industries.⁵²

Smith demanded that women were not treated as passive victims of patriarchal values. They are 'active' and they 'create themselves'. Magazines are sites where: 'Young women learn both the arts and doctrines of femininity [...] providing the standards and practices of a femininity diversified by age, class, races and style of life'.⁵³ While arguing for the importance of dominant constructions of femininity, Smith acknowledged the agency with which women construct their individual selves.

This chapter now turns to a discussion of the way that magazines in the late 1950s were involved in this mutual construction of femininity as a full-time career in itself. The examples used in the following discussion are necessarily selective, but previous content analysis by Ferguson and White has confirmed their general focus. Material used has

come from regular features and editorials and not isolated articles which might have been adrift from general editorial policy. The examples from *Woman* are supplemented by material from the autobiography of the editor throughout this period, Mary Grieve, and offer an insight into editorial policy. The discussion is framed within two issues which have recurred throughout this book; that of community and that of the embodied experience of female-ness. It concludes by considering the way in which these magazines addressed the issue of paid employment for women and girls.

Belonging: the female 'club'

Woman was the market leader magazine in the 1950s, but was constantly challenged by *Woman's Own*. It was, therefore, vital for editors to retain their readership and consequently their advertising revenue. They did this partly by creating their own 'community' which ignored possible class differences, giving readers a sense of belonging:

Since a woman's magazine strives to reflect the life of the reader, it is of first importance that she should see her own life reflected in the pages, not the life of some luckier, richer, cleverer creature. So when we started *Woman* we had to make a deliberate, daily and hourly effort to remember our readers' circumstances.⁵⁴

The generic titles of the magazines supported this universal claim. Wherever she lived and whatever her income, the reader could identify with being a 'woman' a 'housewife' and a 'girl'. Without ever meeting any other readers face to face, she shared a community with mutual problems, interests and preoccupations:

I don't know what time you have elevenses, but for us it's about half past ten [...] And I like to think of all our readers who are having elevenses at the same time. I can see you in shops and offices, and factories and hospitals, or sitting at the kitchen table, and I am sure that some of the good feeling of the coffee or tea break comes from this togetherness.⁵⁵

It was the job of being a woman which united the readers; housewifery was part of the job, with its set routines and timetables and this created a link and continuity with the workplace. Christmas editorials reflected this sentiment; the readers were wished 'Merry Christmas' and 'See you

in the New Year' as if they were part of a workforce which would reconvene after the holidays:

Like millions of women I plan to spend this Christmas in a small, family circle. But also like millions of women I am a member of a much larger, shadowy circle – the great friendly, reader circle of WOMAN.⁵⁶

There were also 'clubs' within the magazines. The 'Stork Wives Club' (featured in *Woman* and *Housewife*) was an advertising campaign which dealt with cookery problems.⁵⁷ Features also followed a 'club' format. *Woman* featured the 'Wooden Spoon Club' for beginner cooks and 'Beauty Box' where readers in London were able to attend in person: 'A real life beauty session where members ask – and answer YOUR questions!'⁵⁸ Teenagers were included as participants, not onlookers, in this togetherness, as Mary Grieve observed on the success of Beauty Box: 'We had regular sessions after office hours which were jam-packed with teenagers turning themselves from shy schoolchildren into confident adults'.⁵⁹

In *Girl*, the 'Girl Club' was of a more adventurous turn which reflected a certain disjunction with other features and advertisements like the Teenform bra. In response to reader demand, a fashion page was introduced in 1959, so clearly not all its readers identified with the tomboy identity.⁶⁰ The club organised Youth Hostelling and ski-ing trips for groups of readers between twelve and sixteen. The 'Girl adventurer of the week' might follow a dangerous hobby or have done a good deed by looking after siblings or the elderly. Members received a birthday present, a pen pal service and were offered organised trips to the pantomime and the cinema, the only proviso was that they placed a regular order for the paper.

Readers were invited to contribute to the magazines, again reflecting the idea of the mutual construction of female identity suggested by Marjorie Ferguson. *Woman* readers gave their 'recipes for a happy marriage' in a double page feature.⁶¹ This was deliberate editorial policy: '*Woman* half turned her back on the policy of being the wonder paper which "lead" the readers in the friendliest possible way, and became a partner in the exchange of ideas and experiences'.⁶² *Girl* readers were involved in sewing and painting competitions, and the winners were featured in later articles. In May 1960, a reader wrote a feature: 'I'm sorry I was born a girl' in which she bemoaned the dependent nature of adult women.⁶³ A later article featured some of the 'hun-

dreds' of responses. These illustrated clearly that girls as young as thirteen were aware of the manufactured nature of gender roles:

Now that I am growing up I have to care more about my appearance. Although I do not want to bother about clothes etc, I must, because after all, I must keep up with the times!⁶⁴

Housewife had a regular experts' panel, available to help women with cookery, flowers, furnishing and legal problems. They also ran 'Housewives Forum', a regular feature for exchanging views. Magazines created a mutual relationship with their readers by presenting themselves as a self-help group: 'Together we explore the possibilities of popular holiday spots at home and abroad, to help you decide where to spend that precious fortnight'.⁶⁵ It was redolent of the wartime spirit of everybody working together and appeared to ignore the possibility that some readers might not be able to afford a holiday. The world of 'woman' that the magazines created may not have reflected accurately all women's lives, but they presented a lifestyle to which all women could aspire.

Women were offered help in their new job as consumers: 'We try to show in *Housewife* each month the best of the new things in the shops [...] choosing them for you with a critical eye on price and reliability'.⁶⁶ *Housewife's* dedication to 'you the reader' remained paramount, and, despite features on film stars and royalty, remained conscious of ordinary 'woman', and like *Woman*, spoke in terms of 'we' in order to be inclusive:

It's the problems and successes of real people that fire our imagination, and we are talking about those very real problems this month. How does an ordinary mother cope with fashion? How do you plan a kitchen that fits your budget and your needs?⁶⁷

Editors were adamant that they were also involved in the business of being women, and needed the same help as the readers, encouraging an image of equality between reader and magazine: 'This week *Woman* is helping everyone to slim sanely. Most of us on *Woman*, I may say are busily taking our own advice'.⁶⁸

Features on readers' houses appeared in *Woman*, ranging from one room living with in-laws to larger houses and gardens. Events amongst the magazines' staff were often used as copy in order to strengthen the bond and mutual interest between the production team and the

readership: 'When they got married Evelyn gave up her job on *Woman*, getting a secretarial post near to her home instead'. The two-page feature illustrated the decoration of two rooms on a budget and advised how to share a kitchen.⁶⁹ Brides' issues appeared regularly and this again provided an opportunity for the magazines to reiterate the universalising aspect of womanhood and present readers as part of a specific community:

Woman invites you to Sylvia's summer wedding. Sylvia, who's been a member of *Woman* staff for more than 5 years was a June bride. Veronica Scott, fashion editor, tells you how we helped plan her wedding and played our part in making it the happiest day of her life.⁷⁰

The letters pages provided an ongoing forum for women and girls to contribute to 'their' magazine. Each of the magazines had a general letters page where readers could comment on funny occasions in their lives, swap recipes and household tips or comment on letters in previous issues. The impression created was of a community of friends, similar to Zweig's factory girls, gossiping on the minutiae of the everyday female world.

The problem pages were a constant feature throughout the period. *Girl's* problem page grew during this five-year span from a small corner in the general page to a full-page feature by 1960.⁷¹ Both *Girl* and *Woman* published letters from young teenagers asking about the appropriate age to start having boyfriends and going to dances. *Girl's* 'What's your worry?' page also concerned itself with problems over peer group friendships, bedtimes and sibling rivalry. Evelyn Home, the agony aunt in *Woman* acted as 'expert' but in some features she derived her authority from her female-ness: 'Evelyn Home writes for you in this series, not as an advisor or a specialist in human problems, but simply as a woman'.⁷² Certain topics appeared regularly: pregnant unmarried girls afraid to tell their parents; the inherent problems of falling in love at fifteen or sixteen; and older readers disillusioned with married life.

Dawn Currie considered how teenagers read current problem pages, where problems are understood as departures from the 'norm'. As a result they pose no threat to the unity of a female community and this is pertinent for an analysis of 1950s problem pages. Angst ridden letters indicated that the trend towards early marriage and motherhood and the Beveridge model of full-time housewife was, in practice, fraught with difficulty. Yet by airing departures from this norm, through

individual letters, the magazines implicitly confirmed prevailing values. Evelyn Home was sympathetic with unmarried pregnant readers, but made it quite clear that they were in the wrong.⁷³ In *Girl* frequent references to boyfriends at thirteen and fourteen confirmed the heterosexual model at an early age, and encouraged girls to form relationships. Not being interested in boyfriends was constructed as a problem to be solved: 'My friend is very keen on boys. I am not in the least bit interested when they are present. Can you suggest how I can overcome this awkwardness I feel?'⁷⁴

The fascination with the Royal Family in all three magazines confirmed both the universal experience of being a woman and the strength of the class system. The Queen was a role model, she represented 'Woman' par excellence. Mary Grieve stated: '[T]he Royal Family was never out of my mind for a week at a time during my editorship of *Woman*'.⁷⁵ The preoccupation with the domestic details of the Queen and her family underlined the community of woman-nés:

She has been a model for every woman in the world, and in a practical way too. Her clothes, for all their glorious materials and meticulous cut are exactly the sort we all love to wear.⁷⁶

Girl contained regular portraits of the Royal family in their pin-up section, yet features on the Royal children also emphasised how 'normal' they were:

Like any other girl of her age Princess Anne enjoys having exquisitely worked party frocks and frilly petticoats (although during the day she mostly wears woollen jerseys and plaid skirts (or even corduroy trousers) – the same clothes worn by children all over Britain).⁷⁷

Both *Housewife* and *Woman* included snippets of Palace gossip as a regular feature. *Woman* readers were told that the Queen advised Princess Margaret about dusting,⁷⁸ and that when it came to interior decorating: 'The Queen has used many an ordinary housewife's choice for the job [...] The hundreds of yards of carpeting [for Buckingham Palace] includes a lot of figured haircord'.⁷⁹ *Housewife* enthusiastically described the Queen's mothering skills:

[A] mother whose hand is always ready to comfort and restrain, whose smile of encouragement and appreciation is ever ready to

break out. Modern child psychology has taught us the value of happiness in early life and no-one looking at these photographs can doubt that the Royal children are indeed happy and carefree.⁸⁰

In addition to her mother and housewife role the Queen was also presented as a working woman: 'We shall think of her and salute her as the best working woman of the lot of us'.⁸¹ The feminine role was, however, paramount, even for the Queen. In the issue celebrating the marriage of Princess Margaret, Evelyn Home took the opportunity to issue a warning to working women everywhere:

No matter how the crowds gape at Princess Margaret, no matter if the Duke of Edinburgh walk at the Queen's shoulder in a ceremonial procession, these are women who in their intimate lives are obviously feminine to their fingertips. They are women who drop the reins of office the minute they are off duty.⁸²

The next section of this chapter discusses the way in which the physical appearance of 'femininity' was constructed by magazines and readers as an integral part of adult female identity, which although 'natural' also needed constant attention and nurturing and was all part of the work of being a woman.

The woman you want to be⁸³

Mary Grieve acknowledged that the magazines could be criticised for their narrow focus on the business of being a woman. She did not deny that there were other factors to women's lives, which were addressed in other publications.⁸⁴ The construction of femininity, however, was a specialist area and *Woman* was the trade journal. Having encouraged women to join a community, they were then educated by the 'experts' into its ways.

Fashion and Beauty were not simply manifestations of an individual woman's vanity; they were promoted as an essential part of her character, her career success and her identity as 'woman'. Advertisements played on the idea that an attractive appearance reflected an efficient individual:

Slimness is more than a reward in itself. To its possessors it pays handsome rewards. Dress is no problem. Confidence comes easily. The world and you like the look of each other.⁸⁵

Advertisements were often disguised as editorial which gave them added authority. An advertisement for No. 7 cosmetics was forthright in its condemnation of any woman who faltered in her construction of femininity. Readers were warned: 'Someone is always looking at you [...] Your beauty can never take time off'.⁸⁶ Women were told that looking their best was the norm, anything less, was unacceptable to the icon of 'woman':

All through the day, all over town people are always talking about what other people look like, about what they wear. They might be talking about you [...] So you can see how important it is to be well dressed, and suitably dressed all the time.⁸⁷

Taking care over appearance was also 'normal', any woman not subscribing to the demands was marginalised from the universal ideal. Significantly, the purpose of the chic appearance was less for the woman herself, but in relation to the men in her life, be they boss, husband or boyfriend:

Every normal woman tries to make herself attractive to men [...] The painstaking efforts that a woman puts into making herself look glamorous go far beyond the mere obligation to be clean and tidy [...] No normal woman can fail to experience a thrill of triumph when the eyes of all the men are fastened intently on her as she enters the room.⁸⁸

Scrupulous care over grooming reflected an equally scrupulous attention to all things woman centred; home, husband and family; and a 'real' family consisted of four children.⁸⁹ The inbuilt contradiction between coping with housework and a large family on a daily basis *and* identifying with the immaculate models on the front cover of the magazines was a Herculean task, a task which was nevertheless part of the duty and job description of being a woman. The magazines were there to aid, but also to reaffirm the construction of the gender role. Scruffiness was only excused in exceptional circumstances. Joan was featured for her selfless devotion to looking after six of her own children plus six of her neighbour's and *Woman* commented that: 'Her hair is pretty but untended'.⁹⁰

Girl's fashion page introduced the readers to the notion of beauty care from the early teenage years and the adult magazines featured articles on dressing for a first job and a later career which offered similar

advice to that given by the mothers in the career novels: 'It's never too soon to be thinking about beauty' cried *Woman*.⁹¹ It was when the magazines discussed fashion and beauty for the housewife that it became apparent that the business of looking good was a lifelong commitment and a career in itself. It was part and parcel of the job of being a wife and a member of Beveridge's 'team':

Now the business of good dressing will be more than personal pride. Because you'll be known as his wife, everywhere you go you'll be dressing to show your happiness and confidence in him.⁹²

Women not only had to dress to please their husbands, their appearance also reflected his status, an idea inherited from nineteenth century notions of leisured middle-class and conspicuous consumption highlighted by Thorsten Veblen. Issues of class were therefore covertly present even in fashion articles. Veblen focused on the popularity of the skirt and the high heel as especially relevant to the ethic of conspicuous consumption and it is significant that during the late 1950s, trousers or slacks were considered totally inappropriate for women and the high stiletto heel was the epitome of elegance.⁹³

The magazines gave women a mandate to indulge in personal shopping as an unselfish exercise: 'Now Arthur has been promoted to managership [...] he wants his wife to share his new social responsibilities – and to dress the part'.⁹⁴ As dressing well was part of the job description, it legitimised the fashion articles which charted changes in fashions and demanded the purchase of new items: 'cosmetics are an important part of our life and a necessary expense'.⁹⁵ At the same time, subtitles such as 'Paris Decrees' demanded that individual women subscribed to a corporate image of 'woman'.⁹⁶

In addition to their duty to dress for the public part of wife, women and girls were warned of dire consequences if they 'let themselves go' once they embarked on the job of marriage and motherhood. Fashion editors 'helped' and advised new housewives on the correct attire for their new career and surroundings:

She's attractive all day long in a permanently pleated washable skirt and well fitting pretty cardigan [...] Slacks, fine for housework, look sloppy on the streets of a spick and span New Town.⁹⁷

The impetus to look feminine reached even into the bedroom as the site of a constructed femininity which again involved the purchase of

cosmetics, furnishings, and, as usual, extra work in an already hectic schedule. An article encouraged women to wear lipstick in bed, and to buy pretty bed linen and night clothes: 'The busiest wife can arrange her beauty care so that she looks as pretty at night as during the day'.⁹⁸

Being busy was no excuse for slackness over appearance, neither was being ill.⁹⁹ Articles warned about wasting time that could have been better spent: 'I am not suggesting that tea, telephoning and chatting aren't very pleasant, but I am suggesting that there are very few of us who can't snatch the odd five minutes for a little self-improvement'.¹⁰⁰ It is significant, that although the ultimate aim for women, and therefore for girls, was to become a wife and mother, the duties which this involved were in no way to compromise the embodied image of femininity. Even when pregnant: 'She must take special pains on her appearance and never let up on her grooming'.¹⁰¹

The beauty pages in the three magazines confirmed the clear progression from girlhood to adult status. This was not attained overnight, but by gradual admission to the rituals of femininity. Letters answered questions about the age to start wearing make-up or nylons and features provided ground rules for sixteen year olds: 'All in one cream and powder compact. No rouge. Pink lipstick. No eye colour as yet, but she can brush her lashes and brows with Vaseline'.¹⁰² The construction of the adult female role was one in which mothers, magazines and girls all played their part. This exchange illustrates the way in which appearance was inextricable linked with career entry:

Q. My daughter leaves school this term to start secretarial training [...] will it be right for her to wear make-up in her new training school as she wants to?

A. Not only right, I'd say, but advisable, since she will be learning a job where appearance counts almost as much as efficiency.¹⁰³

The fashions illustrated in *Girl* were miniature versions of the adult fashions in *Woman* and *Housewife*. Women interviewed for this book also said that they remembered being dressed like their mothers, Patricia recalled having a perm when she was her brother's bridesmaid aged twelve. The 'Harlee' competition in *Girl* in 1959 offered pictures of twelve outfits which the readers had to place in the 'correct order of merit'. The descriptions fit the lifestyle of a trainee 'woman' far more than a boisterous teenager: 'Gina' was the 'essence of charm', 'Christine. An elegant little suit in a smart woollen knobbly tweed mixture', 'Carole, A beautiful classic camel style. So 'right' for any

occasion'.¹⁰⁴ Fashion features were modelled on those in the senior magazines and emphasised the ever present consciousness of dress: 'For lounging around at home after school hours and weekends, Jennifer picked double-jersey slacks [...] For shopping, or visits to the cinema Jennifer found [...] a pleated skirt.'¹⁰⁵

Girl written specifically for the teenage market increasingly highlighted the importance of appearance through the late 1950s. The relationship between the individual and group conformity was complex: 'Be Yourself!' demanded one headline in 1959, followed by a feature explaining just how Virginia Grey ('expert advice') had advised a reader on creating 'her' look.¹⁰⁶ The heroines in the adventure stories displayed femininity in action. Susan of *St Brides* always looked immaculate in her nurse's uniform (she even seemed to wear it on days off revising at home for exams) with its full skirt and fitted bodice. Angela Airhostess was the epitome of well groomed young womanhood in her airline uniform. Both Angela and Susan conformed to the 'heterosexy' model of career girls found in the novels.

Tensions within the established female role were present even in the publications for teenagers. The heroines of the stories, Wendy and Jinx, Angela, Susan and friends all got themselves into adventurous and sometimes dangerous situations and drew on their initiative and their characteristic pluck in order to extricate themselves. The readers' pages featured girls with unusual hobbies and promoted active hobbies. Dawn Watson was 'Star adventurer of the year' in 1955 having dived fully clothed into the sea to help a boy in difficulties.¹⁰⁷ However, the problem pages, the fashion and some of the competitions served as warnings that the non-adventurous world of woman was around the corner and that being truly feminine did not happen by chance: 'Susie as you can see, is a pretty girl, fair and slender with sparkling eyes and a sense of fun [...] But Susie has somehow overlooked the fact that even natural good looks have to be worked at'.¹⁰⁸

Once teenage readers had embarked on the creation of their femininity, the women's magazines were there to help them to create the appropriate image for the world at large. What they chose to 'do' was inextricably involved with who they chose to 'be'. Clothes and make-up reflected identity, *Woman* ran a series 'New ventures in dressing' which featured 'Student on a Budget' and 'Anne's First Job'.¹⁰⁹ The fashion editor of *Woman* was aware of changes in student appearance but commented:

[S]haggy haired, unkempt, impoverished student attitudes are equally unpopular in a fashion conscious world. Like every society,

college life has its rules. It pays a 'fresher' to watch what older students wear and leave trend setting to them.¹¹⁰

The teenage years were constructed as a rite of passage for girls. If the magazines are to be believed, it was a time for training not only for paid employment but also for adult womanhood. Girls were advised to 'study' women they admired.¹¹¹ Women's magazines were a site where the overlapping communities of teenage and adult could meet. Features on teenage brides were not uncommon and not always critical; early domesticity was not wholly condemned.¹¹² The magazines, while constructing 'rules' for being feminine, acknowledged different lifestyles, while assuming that the goal of femininity was universal: 'Three teenage girls, leading very different lives, get advice from Veronica Scott'.¹¹³ Growing up did not just 'happen' in the pages of women's magazines, it was carefully crafted. The following comment reflects the anxieties expressed by the teaching associations and their concern over the difference in appearance between the sixth former and her working sister:

No more school berets, satchels and ankle socks for fifteen-year-old Carole Anne Barker! Like thousands of other pretty teenagers, she left school at the end of last term. And she wants her clothes to show her new status in the grown-up world.¹¹⁴

The magazines appeared to welcome the trend towards working women and career girls, after all they were largely a female staff on the publications. There was an emphasis on the importance of the correct dress and behaviour be it as housewife or paid worker, over any intellectual aptitude:

You're leaving school at the end of term! You're already thrilled at the idea of your first job, for you'll be a responsible adult at last! [...] Smother heroically any impulse to giggle loudly or to run down the office stairs two at a time. It'll ruin the impression of lovely serenity given by your pretty face.¹¹⁵

Of course it is not possible to ascertain how seriously readers took the advice offered. One woman found the image portrayed in *Housewife* unattainable: 'Can any reader give me the secret of the working wife who stays as serene as the immaculate ladies I keep seeing in *Housewife*?'¹¹⁶ According to *Woman*, the job of looking good was as much part of the dual career model as coping with the housekeeping:

'The career girl wife will have to make a pact with her husband so that she can have a free beautifying evening on her own, while he goes out with the boys'.¹¹⁷

Girl, *Woman*, and *Housewife* all assumed that women would spend some time in full-time employment and some time in full-time domesticity. The final part of this chapter considers how the magazines included training and employment as part of their representation of the concept of female 'careers'.

A woman's work

The women's magazines found themselves in an ambivalent position with regard to paid work. The increase in consumerism and new technology encouraged by their advertising required most families to be dual earning. At the same time, the amount of time demanded by the standards of personal grooming, housework and mothercraft, also promoted by the magazines, made this a problematic issue. The most common model working pattern assumed by the magazines reflected Myrdal and Klein's dual role: school, job, job and marriage, child care and full-time domesticity followed perhaps by later return to part-time (and, rarely, full-time) employment. Understood as a career of femininity, paid work seamlessly prepared for, or led into, housework and motherhood, which could then be combined at a later date with a partial return to a previous job. The challenge of combining a return to work with family commitments provided subject matter for advertisements. An advertisement for Horlicks featured a well-dressed middle-aged woman amidst an unhappy husband and two teenage children:

When the children were old enough Eldred went back to the job she had always loved as a fashion buyer. At first the new life was wonderful, but then [...] had she overestimated her abilities? Could she hold both her job and her family?

The picture strip advertisement showed her husband inquiring tenderly, after she had announced there was no food in the house and snapped at the daughter: 'Darling, do you think perhaps you're trying to do too much?' A drink of Horlicks (more consumerism) provided the 'right kind of sleep'.¹¹⁸ There was no suggestion that the family might help with chores, even though Eldred's wages were spent on a family party. Equally, there was no suggestion that she should abandon her

paid job which was, on occasions, advice offered by Evelyn Home. A working wife was told firmly: 'I believe that if you were to give up your work and become the full time homemaker and companion your husband needs [...] your life together would be much richer'.¹¹⁹ The ambivalence around the effects of returning to a 'career' indicate that this was indeed a transitional phase in patterns of female employment, and that women were constantly being asked to revise their original expectations.

The male-centredness of *Woman* and *Housewife* was overwhelming, despite the amount of copy which claimed to focus on the specific and valued nature of the female domestic role. There was little doubt left in the reader's mind that in a heterosexual partnership, the needs of the male breadwinner should be paramount, as suggested in Evelyn Home's advice above. Yet advertising (an industry dominated by men) targeted women as the main purchaser in a manner which confirmed her expertise and superiority in all things domestic. *Girl*, edited by men, first Marcus Morris and then Clifford Makins, offered adventurous fiction and reports of the 'Girl Adventurer of the Week' without losing sight of the ultimate goal of growing up and settling down.

The following discussion considers two ways in which the idea of employment was presented in the magazines. First, as a full-time occupation following school leaving; this took the form of careers advice and recruitment advertisements and second, as a phase in later life where paid employment was combined with domesticity.

The advertisements for the Women's Services change in emphasis during this period, and significantly the emphasis was towards an increasingly domestic focus. At first they were described as a means to adventure and travel, in true *Girl* heroine vein. Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps was also promoted for the accompanying independence and in terms of wider patriotic duty to the Queen.¹²⁰ The Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) emphasised adventure and foreign travel and a way of using existing job skills.¹²¹ The Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) lauded the worthwhile nature of the work and again the adventurous travel involved.¹²² In 1958, *Woman* ran an advertisement for the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) quite specifically in terms of a career:

Here is senior aircraftswoman Barbara at the wheel of the smart standard in which she drives the CO of an RAF Station near Folkestone. She also drives a 33 ton truck and a light ambulance.¹²³

An advertisement for the WRAF in 1959, only a year later, reads more like a promotion for a marriage bureau, than life as a servicewoman. The picture this time was of a young woman dancing with a handsome man in uniform, the text ran:

'I had a wonderful time in the Air Force!' Mrs Pain, the pretty young mother of a nine-year-old son, Philip, lives in a very attractive furnished house in the married quarters at H. Q. Bomber Command in Bucks, where her husband Victor, is a Sergeant. 'I joined up at nineteen' [...] 'I met Victor at a NAAFI dance. We were engaged two months later and married four months after that. You are always free to leave the service to marry even if your term isn't up, you know'.¹²⁴

This advertisement reflects the stop gap concept. The work involved is secondary, Mrs Pain says: 'I *quite* liked the work'. There is no mention of aeroplanes anywhere in the advertisement. This contrasts with the career novel, *Sarah Joins the WRAF*, in which the heroine, fed up with life in a small village joins the WRAF and finds the work interesting, and romance, although present, is conveniently shelved when the boyfriend is posted overseas.¹²⁵

Woman had a regular feature page called 'Women's Mirror' which focused on readers who had unusual or glamorous jobs, but they were constructed in terms of women who departed from the norm.¹²⁶ In the same vein, a series 'Young Success' covered girls whose jobs as reporter, ice skater or ballroom dancer were out of the ordinary. *Housewife*, like *Woman*, ran features on successful women in unusual jobs. In 1956 it featured women TV producers.¹²⁷ Although not specifically careers advice, these articles provided an insight into an alternative way of life from the typical 'housewife'. The women featured in *Housewife* were dual role practitioners, their domesticity was given a high profile. The head of BBC women's programmes said: 'The dress I started three weeks ago is still waiting to have its hem sewn up!'¹²⁸ She reiterated the importance of an accommodating husband in order to maintain a career, as a warning to girls considering combining marriage and paid work.

Housewife, ran a series, 'Careers', which offered advice on training and long-term prospects in a variety of occupations. Unsurprisingly, the careers covered were mostly the traditional ones of nursing and secretarial work but they also featured the newer areas of technology. Even in these fairly straightforward advice pieces, expectations of

gendered roles and femininity occurred, for example the medical auxiliary professions were described in the following terms:

A girl who takes up a medical auxiliary career, any one of which is eminently worthwhile, feels such a sense of vocation, that the monetary rewards will be a secondary consideration.¹²⁹

The assumption was that her financial dependence would eventually rest with her husband, rather than be her own responsibility.

In the column covering beautician and hairdresser the work was promoted as:

suitable for girls who want a career, but at the same time want to get married soon. They won't have to waste time training for something they may never practice again once the children have arrived, because there are plenty of part-time jobs for married beauticians.¹³⁰

In suggesting that jobs were compatible with marriage, or a preparation for it, school leavers were able to construct their future work roles as part of an overall career structure which included marriage. Femininity ruled supreme however:

'Technical qualifications are not incompatible with female charm', said Sir David Eccles. How right he is! Girls in white coats look as attractive and as 'right' in a factory as they do in a hospital.¹³¹

Specific careers advice did not appear in *Girl* itself, but the heroines of the stories increasingly held jobs, albeit in the 'glamorous' occupations of air hostess and nursing. They were portrayed as young women dedicated to their jobs, rather than to the social opportunities involved with them. In one storyline, Susan of St Brides was persuaded to neglect her nursing studies in favour of a more active social life with the non-working girl next door.¹³² The dire consequences of this would have left the reader in no doubt as to the importance of taking a career seriously. *Girl* published a separate book on careers which combined a picture strip with a page of information. Occupations covered ranged from doctor to beautician. The introduction suggested that girls were thinking of their ultimate domestic role as part of their career planning:

The aim of many girls when they leave school, is to take up work which will be 'useful' in one way or another, when they get married.

This is a good thing to do, but sometimes it leads to a great many possible careers being overlooked.¹³³

The problem pages dealt with career choice in both *Girl* and *Woman*. Problems were framed within the model of expected domesticity. A reader bemoaned the loneliness of being away from home and boyfriend during nursing training and was told that it might be better to give up the course, but: 'You can know that every minute spent nursing is going to be of value to you in your future role of wife and mother'.¹³⁴ A young girl writing to *Girl* was given similar advice when she asked whether she should choose nanny training, or get married: 'As a good children's nurse or a mother you would be a very valuable member of society'.¹³⁵ Notions of citizenship or duty to society as a whole were introduced in magazines as supplementary support to discussions on adult roles. Given the amount of discussion over 'citizenship' amongst policy-makers, it is conspicuous by its almost complete absence from the magazines.

The focus of the magazines unremittingly supported the private domestic role. Yet at the same time, features acknowledged that this might no longer provide sufficient 'job satisfaction' for women in late 1950s' society. Girls reading the women's magazines would have been aware of the apparent clash between images of domestic bliss and those of financial independence. A letter from a *Housewife* reader suggested that the balancing act could not be performed:

My experience was, that by the end of a year at work, divided authority began to play havoc with the children's behaviour [...] So I gave up my job. Of course I missed the mental stimulation and the money, but I can get those later when the children are grown up.¹³⁶

This reader was clearly influenced by the contemporary theories of maternal deprivation which underpinned many of the articles on mothercraft in the magazines. A 'well known London psychologist' wrote a regular feature in *Housewife* and discussed the difficulties of the female adult role in the 1950s:

She is still living in a world which is mainly designed for the comfort and convenience of men. Whether a woman chooses the path of domesticity, a career, or a combination of the two, she is likely to find some part of herself sharply frustrated, and resentment follows.¹³⁷

Woman also ran a series from February to March 1956 on 'nervous tension' following research amongst readers into dissatisfaction and feelings of malaise over their lives. Readers of both *Housewife* and *Woman* articulated an unease or dissatisfaction with the domestic role which ran alongside the enthusiasm for domesticity in other features.¹³⁸ Despite the timeless image of adult woman presented in magazines, there was an underlying sense that it was a period of change.

This dilemma was compounded by the way in which the role of housewife and mother was promoted in the magazines as a 'job' and consequently part of a career structure. Unlike a job in the paid workplace, at a time of full employment, it could not easily be swapped for another, if it fell below expectations. Yet the attraction and glamour of the 'career girl' image compromised the status of housekeeping and beckoned married women back to work. The advice and agony letters implied that a woman, by hankering after paid employment, undermined her femininity and her very identity as woman. David Mace wrote:

She wants freedom, independence, money of her own, office friends, prestige [...] When a woman seems to need benefits to the extent of risking failure as a wife and mother to gain them, the question must be asked, has she really in her heart accepted the vocation of marriage and the dedication it implies?¹³⁹

Marriage as a 'vocation' indicated that it was a calling, but one which carried with it some problems for its practitioners. The article acknowledged the advent of the companionate marriage, identifying the trend towards financial partnership as more wives went out to work. David Mace warned that men were slow to accept this new model and women had to be patient. Ambivalence was clear in articles which began with phrases like: 'For better or worse the working wife has become part of the modern scene'.¹⁴⁰ On the one hand, girls were advised at school and in careers advice to think beyond the idea of paid work as a stop gap, on the other hand, women's magazines promoted a model of full-time domesticity and implied that there were problems involved in combining it with paid work.

Morwenna Griffiths voiced a concern that women's voices have been devalued within non feminist epistemologies.¹⁴¹ The magazines *Girl*, *Housewife* and *Woman* provide an insight into the preoccupations of 'ordinary' women in the late 1950s, which is not available elsewhere, through the letter and problem pages. Features focused on specific

readers each week, for example in the 'Woman's Mirror' pages of *Woman* which offered 'true stories of real people'. The features and letters were of course mediated by editors and constrained by editorial policy, but their popularity would suggest that they struck a chord in many women's lives. The beauty and cookery 'clubs' in the magazines claimed to deal with the most frequently asked readers' problems. Even if, as Martin Pugh suggested, they acted as morale boosters in a period of change, their high readership figures reflect the persistence of the model of the full-time housewife.¹⁴²

The women's and girls' magazines considered in this chapter clearly articulate the complexity of career choice for girls in the late 1950s. This was partly a reflection of contemporary debates and partly through the inbuilt tensions highlighted by Penny Tinkler in the production of the magazines themselves.¹⁴³ While setting themselves up as a trade paper for women in their 'job' as housewife and mother, the publications relied on revenue from advertisements for consumer goods and were run and written by women who had eschewed the very role they were promoting. Many of the women interviewed for the following chapter suggested that they initially abandoned full time domesticity and returned to part-time paid work in order to pay for the 'extras', the consumer goods promoted by the magazines.

Much was made of the 'natural' role of women as mothers, yet as Marjorie Ferguson observed, and as the material in this chapter confirms, much of the advice offered was framed in terms of teaching the business of being a woman. Ferguson's analysis of the two way process of the construction of womanhood, whereby women both learnt from the magazines but also contributed to the way in which they presented the 'icon' of woman is apparent; it was 'women' who created 'woman'. Readers' opinions and problems also reflected the uncertainty of adult female identity in the 1950s. A reading of the popular magazines acts as a reminder that the promotion of increasing opportunity by educationists, and in career manuals, did not necessarily reflect universal impressions. The assumption, by Beveridge, that women had a gender specific job of work to do once they married was still highly relevant to society at this time. The magazines possibly provided an anachronistic view of a cosy society immured from the politics of the Cold War and racial tension but the unchanging nature of the job of 'being a woman' presented an enticing picture to those taking their tentative steps towards maturity.

Material from the magazines demonstrates the way in which girls were led into constructing a distinct 'femininity' as one thread of their

web of adult identity. This embodied experience of becoming, or being, female was also part of their overall career structure. The image of a career girl was inextricably tied up with how she looked, whether the uniform was attractive, the environment suitable and the nature of the work compatible with the concept of 'woman'. The editors tried to convey that the community of 'women' transcended class differences and geographical location, yet also interacted with them. As Cynthia White noted this 'umbrella' of classlessness was, in essence, a middle-class one.¹⁴⁴ Girls could be autonomous in their choices of career, but it was an autonomy constructed in relation to (not necessarily constrained by) this community. Although the format and communities of *Girl* and *Woman* were very different, there was an implication that the one was an introduction to the other.

Of course not all teenagers read or liked *Girl*, nor did all women take a regular magazine. Women did however, buy the magazines in their thousands, and they contributed to them by writing letters. This does not mean that they wholeheartedly accepted the views promoted in the magazines, or that the teenage readers continued to value the domestic role as highly as their mothers. School leavers in the 1950s are now in their sixties or early seventies and have reached, or are approaching, retirement. The final chapter of this book considers some reflections on the career choice and development of twenty-three such women in addition to autobiographical material already published and provides another perspective on the complexity of entering the adult world in the mid twentieth century.

7

‘My Own Front Door’ Remembering the 1950s

Childhood is the world we have lost. The children we were are still a part of us, and also quite separate from us. The past is a partial script for the present, but to interpret our adult selves as determined by those children would be a mistake. In recognising the past, the reality lies in the other direction. We are the ones who can reach back and give those children meaning.¹

This final chapter discusses a series of twenty-three interviews with women who left school between 1956 and 1960 in conjunction with already published autobiographical texts. This cohort of women have been the subject of this book, yet in several chapters the voices of the girls themselves have been absent. Discussion has focused on the likely influences available to them on the point of school leaving as they made decisions about their future careers. With the exception of Thelma Veness’s sociological research, source material does not lend itself to a qualitative exploration of girls’ own observations.² In 1962 Veness asked school leavers to describe their lives by imagining themselves at retirement. I could not ask those girls what ‘really’ happened, there are no records of who they were. However, I was in a position to ask women of that age group to talk about their memories of adolescence.

Some women’s recollections of growing up in the 1950s have already been published and many reflect similar sentiments to the women who contributed to this research. Terry Jordan’s collection focuses on the landmark of the 1950s as the emergence of the teenager ‘both as a cult and as a market force’,³ concepts which the previous chapter on magazines also noted. Jordan’s respondents came from a much wider variety

of cultural backgrounds than the South London women I interviewed and yet the collective memory of the 50s was still one of changing lifestyles and parental influence well into the teenage years, despite the representations of rebellious youth which abounded in the media. Like the women in this survey Jordan concluded:

Girls were expected to support themselves between school and marriage, but not encouraged to aspire towards a profession. Careers counselling was as non existent as sex education and this generation of girls was to be kept innocent of both the physical and financial aspects of life.⁴

Liz Heron's research focused on women who were the younger sisters of the group discussed here, but her comment which begins this chapter on the complexity of the dialogue between youth and age is apposite. The women who spoke to me 'reached back' and, with the benefit of hindsight, narrated their stories and the creation of their individual webs of adult identity. Griffiths' notion of gendered autonomy was illustrated by women who found their independence within marriage rather than through wage earning. The comment: 'I wanted my own front door' was made by a woman who remembered marriage, not full-time employment, as the key to escaping the constraints of parental surveillance. Several of the women interviewed shared this sentiment over the problems inherent in leaving the parental home; their social status was dependent on their chosen economic activity and on their marriage prospects and the two combined confirmed their acceptance into the community of adult women. Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet analysed the difficult relationship between the individual self and the social structure and between 'woman' and 'women':

In women's life stories, the social self does not merely occupy a place within the social order; rather its place is overdetermined by the status of woman. This means that women's life stories, unlike men's, deal not only with the relation between the self and the social sphere, but also, and above all, with woman's condition and with the collective representations of women as they have been shaped by the society with which the women being interviewed must deal.⁵

These interviews were not intended to provide confirmation of the documentary analysis. As Chanfrault-Duchet remarks, content analysis

'reduces the collected material to a function of mere illustration of the thesis defended by the historian'.⁶ If that was the only requirement I could have opted for a questionnaire approach. Chanfrault-Duchet argues for a consideration of form as well as content. The metaphor of the web of identity has been an underlying theme of this book and the form of the stories was as significant as the content. Interviews illustrated how women wove their life histories, how they articulated the creation of their adult identity and how they remembered negotiating the tensions and ambivalence present in the late 1950s. Penny Summerfield highlights the implications of the actual process of interviewing in her research on women's wartime lives.⁷ Like Summerfield, I wanted the women to feel comfortable as they composed their stories in order to understand the *way* that they told them.

Neither does this last chapter use individual women's stories to draw together the previous chapters. They offer as much of alternative perspective on leaving school and career decision in the 1950s as each of the earlier topics. Indeed it was noticeable, that although most respondents talked about the implications of the Second World War on their teenage years, notions of citizenship, so prevalent in rhetoric around the welfare state, employment and education policy were not articulated. Although many of them took on the role described by Beveridge, they did not define it in Ruth Lister's terms as 'social citizenship' but simply as what was expected and, in their opinion, necessary.⁸ Placed as the final chapter, the interviews demonstrate the close relationship between the recent past and the present. It is the women themselves who present some analysis of their teenage experience of the world described in previous chapters. Sheila Rowbotham considered this dialogue between past and present in her autobiographical reflection:

The writing of our history is not just an individual venture but a continuing social communication. Our history strengthens us in the present by connecting us to the lives of countless women. Threads and strands of long lost experience weave into the present. In rediscovering the dimensions of female social existence lost in the tangled half memories of myth and dream, we are uncovering and articulating a cultural sense of what it is to be a woman in a world defined by men.⁹

Oral history generates an enormous amount of data. It would be an impossible task to cover all the nuances in the individual stories which represent a very small sample and still resulted in over three hundred

pages of transcript, in one chapter. Although not all the women are quoted in the following pages, they all contributed, to the extent that I have used examples which were representative of more than one interview and the focus is on the similarities between the women's lives. The content of the interviews provided additional perspectives on some of the material already covered, for example, magazines and career novels. Elizabeth as a librarian remembered 'Molly' the librarian in the career novels:

We hooted at it, we thought they were so dreadful, that just shows you what an influence that was! They were so unrealistic! She was always being so nice and sweet, and when you are doing issue at the end of the day...¹⁰

Mary Ingham's reflections on career choice in the early sixties noted that her teachers were 'too intent on pushing us through the examination system as far as we could go to bother about giving us careers guidance, although there were some career novels in the library'. Ingham's memory of the novels was that they ended with the girls being 'sucked into romance' and 'Clare's final triumph in *Clare in Television* is when the producer asks her to marry him'.¹¹

Women were clearly aware of the Bowlby child care theories, which demanded full-time maternal input, even if they did not express it as such. The disjunction between school and home, observed by M. P. Carter and discussed in the education chapter, was reflected in many of the observations.¹² During the interviews, all the women demonstrated the intricate relationship between their domestic role and their employment pattern. The fluency of the narrative stumbled at times when their actions as adolescents did not sit comfortably with their present understanding of who they were.

The following section focuses on a description of the actual process of finding the respondents and conducting the interviews. I then discuss two topics covered in the interviews and, in each, explore the position of the individual in relation to the communities of which she was part. I also consider the way in which she negotiated a path between conflicting expectations of her as an individual and as a female citizen of a post-war Britain. These topics are school and family, and work and domesticity, these uneasy pairs are at times almost discussed as binary oppositions; the awkward relationship between them formed the basis of many of the conversations. These reflections go beyond the actual point of school leaving and

touch on the way that the women's careers, in practice, reflected their initial expectations. In terms of domesticity and mothering responsibilities their comments suggest that the rhetoric explored in the previous chapters was indeed deeply embedded within girls' expectations of their adult role. Women drew on the 1950s discourses of 'mother' and 'housewife' to rationalise their decisions to give up jobs that they enjoyed for full-time domesticity, and I have elsewhere used Penny Summerfield's discursive methodology¹³ to analyse material from the 1950s.¹⁴ Morwenna Griffiths suggests that the metaphor of the web ensures that the experience of the body and its material circumstances are not overlooked within the dominance of language, which is the domain of discourse.¹⁵ In integrating the diverse areas of material considered in this book, the concept of the web embraces the constantly changing nature of identity and also illustrates how apparently competing notions of the feminine self can be synthesised into a coherent whole. Career, including paid employment and domesticity does indeed contribute to an individual's sense of *who* they *are* as well as *what* they *do*.

Chanfrault-Duchet has noted the use of recurring key-phrases as markers which: 'define a type of relation between the self and the social sphere, that is, the community (which contributed to the formation of self), and, more broadly, the society as a whole'.¹⁶ Key phrases used in my own interviews were: 'in those days we...', 'you didn't', 'we didn't', 'that's how it was'. In conclusion, the way in which the women described their entry into adulthood is discussed, as women reflected back both in relation to their individual stories, and to the collective memory of their generation.

The interview process

I am immensely grateful to the women who contributed to this chapter. In addition to those interviewed, I received letters and phone calls from others interested in the project. There was a clear sense that their generation's experience had been overshadowed by the developments of the 1960s. The number of interviews completed for this research is comparatively small but it was enough to allow for the odd malfunctioning tape, and to provide a variety of experiences to investigate in depth without the data becoming completely unwieldy. Autobiographical material already in the public domain reflects similar content, the new interview transcripts offer an opportunity to consider the actual construction of the stories in more detail.

Given the limited number of interviews the geographical limits of South London provided a variety of schools and potential employment opportunities. It was also the area where I grew up, which gave an insider's understanding of the characteristics of different schools and localities. None of the interviewees came from my own school. A large number of free papers are distributed to all households in this area and I wrote to the South London Press, the central agency, asking for volunteers. My request was published in the letters pages, in a number of districts from Lewisham in South East London to Horley, in Surrey. A majority of those who replied had been to grammar school, possibly because the letter was published under the bold title of 'Girls Careers', when I had carefully worded the letter to ask about 'jobs'. The replies were not overwhelming, but I heard from women as far away as Hampshire, Devon and Suffolk who had been sent the cutting by friends. Some respondents were found through word of mouth, and others were friends of those who initially replied to my appeal.

On receiving a reply to the newspaper letter I wrote explaining more about the project and a little about myself, locating myself as a late entry to higher education and a working mother with an eclectic employment portfolio. The purpose of this was to lessen the hierarchy between 'academic' and 'interviewee' and to indicate that there might be some understanding and acceptance of the untidy nature of most women's 'careers'.¹⁷ I also enclosed a short questionnaire asking about type of school the women had attended, their age at school leaving and the occupation they chose. This gave me some idea of the individual's background before we met. We then agreed a date when the respondent would be interviewed in her own home and I enclosed an interview schedule with the confirmation, suggesting different topics that we might cover. This enabled the women, if they wished, to give it some thought in advance, but also allowed them to say if there were areas they did not wish to discuss.¹⁸ Although they all said they were happy to talk about all aspects of their lives, during the course of several of the interviews, women were discomfited by a sudden disruption in their narrative when the self they were describing did not behave in a way which reflected their representation today. Kathryn Anderson writes of how her own interview strategies were:

[B]ound to some extent by the conventions of social discourse. The unwritten rules of conversations about appropriate questions and topics – especially the ones that say 'don't pry' kept me from

encouraging women to make explicit [...] the experiences they related.¹⁹

They were guaranteed anonymity in public material, the names here are therefore pseudonyms. Although several said they were happy to be named, this was not offered.²⁰ The interviews were taped, and transcribed by myself, and took anything from forty minutes to an hour and a half.

The experience of interviewing this cohort of women was very similar to that described by Penny Summerfield.²¹ Interviews usually took the form of a coffee and informal chat, followed by taped interview. Once the tape recorder had been switched off, the conversation continued with the respondents often adding anecdotes or suddenly remembered bits of information. The women were aware, as were Summerfield's respondents, that although the interviewing process was informal, there was a specific reason for the conversation. They knew it was a semi-public performance and that their opinions were sought as part of a piece of academic research. They were happy to collaborate in the telling of their stories and would frequently check that they weren't going off track and that they were providing the 'right' information.

Whereas my intention was the same in all cases, the individual women had different reasons for telling their stories and this may have influenced their 'way of telling'. One was recently widowed and her son had thought it would be 'good for her' to talk about her younger life. Several of the women had children who had, or were in the process of, postgraduate degrees and wanted to 'help'. Some had specific stories to tell, about personal triumph and one woman, who had been through therapy, analysed her story carefully for me as she spoke. A majority, at some point in the interview or during conversation, said that they were pleased to talk about their generation as they felt they had been somewhat overshadowed by the 'swinging sixties'. Their different purposes were reflected by the way they organised seating. Usually interviews took place in a sitting room, but occasionally we sat across a table in a more formal arrangement. One woman had a very specific (success) story that she wanted to narrate. We sat opposite each other, across a large table and she 'told' me her story. There was little 'chit-chat'. She was a 'busy woman'. Significantly she still wanted to find time to be included in the research.

An interview sample of this size cannot be representative in any way of the general population. All the women who replied had married, some had divorced, some remarried, one was widowed, not

all had children. They were all white and had been born in England. We did not talk about social class as a topic, several said that they were from working-class backgrounds, but by inference considered themselves middle-class now. Many of their backgrounds were similar to the fictional family backgrounds of the career novel heroines and the 'average woman' magazine reader. They were all emphatically individuals and did not speak for anyone else, although they frequently used inclusive expressions like: 'That was how it was in those days' when telling their stories. Most of those interviewed went to grammar schools, a reverse of the education statistics. The attitude of those few ex-secondary modern pupils I did manage to talk to, might throw light on this. One, while willing to fill in a brief questionnaire, did not wish to be interviewed. Another was persuaded to talk to me by a mutual friend, yet remained unconvinced that she had anything of interest to say. The interview was short and her body language indicated that she saw little significance in any opinion that she might express. Nobody from an independent school or a direct grant school contacted me, although there were several in the area.

Before embarking on the main series, I carried out a pilot interview with a friend who had left the local grammar school, at seventeen, in 1960. Although we have known each other for about twenty years, we had never spoken much about her life before marriage and children. Following the 'dummy run' we discussed the form of the interview, my approach to it, and her feelings about being asked to look back. She was surprised that I had not included religion as one of my focus points. The local church had been a major factor in her youth, from a spiritual and social perspective. I was unsure how much of a universal experience this would have been, and kept it out of the interview schedule. However, she had alerted me to an aspect I had not considered and it was a topic I followed up if it was introduced. In the event, religion did crop up in a number of interviews and clearly was a contributory factor in many girls' socialising in the late 1950s.

I started every interview with the general question 'Did you like school?' before progressing to questions about feelings and intuition later in the conversation. Shulamit Reinharz discusses the way in which feminist oral history seeks to listen to experience and feelings rather than getting at facts. She emphasises the importance of listening to how the individuals create their meanings.²² I did not take the schedule to the interview, although several women had clearly looked at it in advance and made some notes. Many of the women were first

generation grammar school pupils and the juxtaposition of school and family and the uneasy relationship with employment decision making received much attention. Only one of the respondents had not given up full-time work on the birth of her first child and a majority had returned to work after a period of domesticity. These two topics are discussed in the following sections.

Family and school

Griffiths writes of overlapping communities, but there were cases where, as in M. P. Carter's observations, girls' families clearly felt alienated from the school community, and vice-versa; the girls themselves were the only link.²³ Conflict between school and family represented conflict between two sites of authority and the representatives of the public and private spheres.

Having gone to grammar school and passed her O'levels, Sarah assumed that she would take A'levels and go to university. Her parents, while proud of her achievement assumed that she would leave at sixteen: 'I never, ever to this day know why they wanted me to leave. It wasn't financial'. She wondered why she was made to leave school and voiced the dilemma presented to girls by the schools', the families' and society's conflicting expectations. The general and the particular did not sit easily together: 'And of course in those days an awful lot of people did think that way. Girls didn't have careers and yet they were [long pause] they just got married and had children'.²⁴

Sarah was by no means unique in this experience. The education chapter highlighted the concern by the headmistresses and staff associations that girls were not staying into the sixth form and this was confirmed by several of the interviewees. Most of them had left school after one year in the sixth form.²⁵ Staying on for two years was only considered necessary for those going on to university or training college. As already noted there were long discussions in the teaching associations over the provision of general sixth form courses. My respondents did not see their schools as having provided preparation for citizenship. The one year in the sixth form was used for collecting another O'level or completing a brief secretarial course. Both Brenda and Deborah remembered streaming at their grammar schools which indicated very early who was expected to stay by the teachers, not, significantly, who might have liked to stay. Likely employment destinations were also implicit in these divisions, as these two extracts demonstrate:

Brenda:

We were divided into three forms and if you were in the top of those three forms you were expected, you weren't told that, but looking back I can see what happened. When you came into the school, they started off by dividing you up and you didn't know why you'd been put into each form [...] when we got to the fifth year after GCE, nearly all the other two forms left and just this one form everybody stayed on into the sixth form.²⁶

Deborah:

There were three forms in a year and I suppose, yeah, when you got to the sixth form there were only two, so I suppose a third left. And then there was the commercial stream and the academic stream, depending how bright you were I suppose. And I did the academic year, goodness knows why. [*Did you choose that?*] You know I can't remember ever being given a choice about anything. [laugh]²⁷

The school appeared to have little choice in the final say when the girl left if there was pressure from home. Elizabeth wanted to stay at school, but her parents were concerned about the financial implications. Elizabeth's own thoughts were suppressed; she was caught between the expectations of parents (that she would leave) and school (that she would stay):

I mean that's what was expected I know by the school, because there was quite a big row about it. Father eventually came up because mother said she couldn't cope, the headmistress was fairly strong minded.²⁸

Women were adamant that the 11+ was the first step on the road to adulthood, whatever type of secondary education it resulted in. It was frequently recalled as a turning point. Margaret re-iterated several times, and even as I left her house, that the 11+ and going to the grammar school was the most significant thing that happened in her life. Her mother was completely baffled by the concept of education: 'She did not believe in education at all', yet did not object when her daughter remained at school to eighteen. The gulf between school and home did not seem to bother the matter-of-fact Margaret:

I went for the interview and I was accepted [...] I lived in a block of flats that were for railway people and I was like a sore thumb really.

I trotted off in my uniform first day at grammar school kitted out from head to toe, and I sort of, ummm, I don't know, you know. I looked odd I think because nobody else had gone.²⁹

The previous chapter focused on the importance of appearance and the teaching association discussions also noted how school uniform emphasised the school/home divide. The class divide between secondary modern and grammar school, observed by McCulloch, was implicitly understood by the respondents.³⁰ 'Not fitting' with a school was more to do with class differences than intellectual capacity although interviewing individual women tempers the tendency to generalise. Whereas Margaret, kitted out in the correct uniform did not seem bothered that she did not 'fit' her home surroundings, June felt uncomfortable at school because of her appearance. Not fitting in with the peer community was more uncomfortable than being at odds with her family: 'I started off being terribly proud of the uniform and everything else [...] I was very happy for a while and then suddenly I was a misfit. I think it was things like not having quite the right uniform'. The coat for the school uniform cost as much as June's step-father earned in a month and her parents bought her a similar one from the Co-op. She recalled the humiliation and the divided loyalties when she was suspended for not having the correct coat: 'I felt like a criminal, it wasn't at all my fault'.³¹

The women told very vivid stories of their schooldays and most included anecdotes of teachers or lessons. Hilda remembered the embarrassment of arriving late at her secondary modern school, to have it announced to the entire class by the form teacher: 'Oh you're the girl from the private school' in disdainful tones. The dramatic way in which this was related to me, and the length of time it took, indicates the long lasting memory of what can have been no more than a five-minute episode nearly fifty years ago. Alessandro Portelli discusses the 'velocity' of narration where brief experiences are spoken of at length: 'These oscillations are significant, although we cannot establish a general norm of interpretation'.³² Hilda explained in detail how she had purposely 'failed' her 11+, thinking that she would be allowed to stay at her prep school and not go to the large girls' grammar. She eventually settled in happily to the secondary modern, and yet she still felt that it would be relevant to my understanding of her career pattern, to tell me in detail about her experience aged twelve.

It was striking that women described events in their teenage years as out of their control, yet at the same time they also recalled a strong

sense of self, reflecting Griffiths' point about women creating themselves but not in circumstances of their own choosing. I did not invite the women to compare their experience with that of today's teenagers, yet they frequently did so, illustrating the dialogic nature of past and present. This was often voiced in terms of the difference in attitude to authority. The general feeling was that they: 'did what they were told' without questioning. Elizabeth Roberts concluded that the hegemonic authority of teachers and parents was breaking down in the post-war period, yet this was clearly not the remembered experience of those interviewed here.³³ Avril's comment on school leaving reflects this very clearly. She removed herself from the school leaving decision completely, placing the onus on her father and contemporary society: 'So my father decided that I would work in an office and really when you're fifteen you don't really have much choice, especially in the fifties'.³⁴ This decision was made once she had been thwarted by her parents in what she *did* want to do: 'And when they wouldn't let me leave home and go and join my friend down in Bournemouth [as a stable girl training for British Horse Society certificates] I said then well OK, I'll go with the status quo'.³⁵ Having removed herself from the decision making process, Avril then re-instated herself: 'And I thought, well I'll do what they want for a year, they want me to go into an office and then I'll do what I want to do'.³⁶ In the space of a very few paragraphs it is possible to see the constant negotiation between self and outside communities which was not only apparent at the time, but clearly being thought through as Avril reflected many years later. Elaine in Terry Jordan's collection of memories told a similar story of passive rebellion. Having agreed with her parents to stay at school to take GCE O'levels if they signed her nursing application, her parents pressured her to become a teacher as she was good at English and refused to sign, 'I was heartbroken. I said "'Right, you have broken your half of the bargain so I am not keeping mine"', and I walked out of school six weeks before I should have taken my GCEs'.³⁷

Society's constraints were paramount in the early teenage years of the women interviewed; their destiny after the 11+ was not a matter of choice and it often involved leaving the comparatively closed community of the home district and local junior school. Ivy remembered that the grammar school pupils had a bus journey to school, whereas the secondary modern was within walking distance. Sarah was the only one in her class to go to grammar school and remembered feeling very isolated: 'And I think you led a more sheltered life in those days too. I'd never been very far, didn't know much outside my own little

sphere, you know'. Parents were proud that their daughters had the opportunity to go to grammar school, but were ambivalent about its lasting value and the inevitable cost. As Sarah noted:

There was no question, it was an honour, and actually something of a privilege. It obviously cost them quite a bit of money, uniform, but they were thrilled [...] they had aspirations for me.³⁸

Sarah's experience was confirmed by Deborah: 'There was no choice about it. I passed the exam and that's where you went. You didn't get asked'.³⁹

When the women spoke of their school experience and the integration between school and family they were doing so with the knowledge of hindsight. Their description of their education was necessarily tempered by subsequent events. For those who made it to grammar school, there was a sense of achievement but also a sense of separation from the community which had embraced both home and junior school. Domestic science lessons might have been one site where home and school merged. Memories of cookery and needlework lessons indicated that they were, at best, a light relief from the more academic lessons and, at worst, subjects which had no relevance to school or future domesticity. Mary Evans recalled her flight from domestic science:

As grammar school girls we rejected, if not compulsory heterosexuality, then certainly compulsory femininity. Cooking pineapple upside down cake had no place in our view of our futures and it was with delight that we left behind the curious world of making clothes and strange puddings.⁴⁰

For the women in my survey, it was not the messages of femininity inherent in the domestic science lessons which they rejected, but their complete irrelevance to their experience of domesticity at home or in their future life: 'We made really weird things in cookery we never made anything I wanted to eat. I remember making soup. We never ate soup in our house'.⁴¹ Hannah thought that her grammar school expected the girls to follow professional careers and have help with domestic work. She also used 'weird' to describe the cookery lessons. Kim remembered being caught trying to pour junket down the sink. Needlework consisted of making gym bags or cookery aprons, again with no perceived relevance to the future deployment of skills.

Domestic science was well down the hierarchy of subjects; it was taught to those who were not considered to have the ability to do Latin, German, or in one case, Art. 'Non exam subjects [cookery and needlework] languished in cracks in the timetable like weeds tolerated in crazy paving'.⁴²

The gulf between school and family values was primarily economic. The ease with which school leavers could find and change jobs was probably *the* motivating factor behind early school leaving, and the point of tension between teachers and parents with the girls firmly in the middle. In *Sheila Burton, Dental Assistant*, the heroine opts for a short training course after O'levels in preference to staying at school. One of the reasons she gives is that her parents are already committed to paying for her brother at medical school.⁴³ Similar sentiments were expressed by Brenda who knew that she wanted to use her French and opted to go to secretarial college rather than university:

So I decided to do that. The other reason was because my parents were not at all well off and I had a younger brother and I could see my mother was going to struggle if she had to carry on supporting me for another two or three years at university.⁴⁴

Women were aware that continuing their education would add extra financial burden onto their parents. Even training for something like nursing, which involved living away from home had its problems. Joan left secretarial work and a reasonable income in order to take up nursing and sought to explain why her mother was so aghast. She could only explain her mother's actions in retrospect, not as it appeared to her at the time:

You see you were earning, there was money coming in and looking back on it she lost some of the money coming into her because obviously you paid part of your living and obviously we didn't have much money, I suppose it was money.⁴⁵

Again, memory of wartime and economic depression played a part in parents' desires to see their children earning. Despite expectations that girls would give up work at some point and devote themselves to domesticity, parents clearly wanted to secure their future. Security was seen to be a steady job, rather than a professional career.

Most of the women told me they enjoyed the work they took up after leaving school and reconciled their own desires with those of

family and school. The next stage of their formation of adult identity occurred on marriage and the reconstruction of self in the roles of wife and worker.

Work and marriage

In this book the notion of 'career' has been defined as an overarching description of a woman's paid and unpaid working adult life. At various stages, women reweave their webs of identity to incorporate new factors in their lives. Typically, these stages would be marriage, childbirth and child care and children leaving home. I have argued that these stages were constructed by popular expectation and incorporated within the structure of the welfare state. Myrdal and Klein identified the late 1950s as a time when participation in employment was being taken more seriously, but the assumption that adult women would combine any paid work with domesticity was unchallenged. Mary Ingham explored the memories of a group of women who would have been the younger sisters of the new generation of workers in the 1950s. She noted how influential the recent war had been in framing expectations of domesticity. Women who had combined lone parenthood with work while their husbands were away were relieved and pleased to return to being full time-home makers.⁴⁶ Girls leaving school would, in all likelihood, take these factors into consideration when making their school leaving choices and although attitudes were changing by the late 1950s and the equal pay debates were in full swing, the legacy of the difficulty of the war years remained. The women in Ingham's study remembered their mothers as 'always there', powerful role models for the next generation. At the same time the mothers were keen that their grammar school educated children would have better opportunities than their own limited experiences.

The previous chapters have explored a number of different sources of careers' advice, both formal and informal, available for girls in the 1950s. Yet although the women could remember details about the exams they took, what teachers wore and minor classroom incidents, they remembered very little about actual careers' advice. None of the women remembered the statutory visit by the Youth Employment Officer, except Kim who was upbraided for finding a job on her own. Memories were very hazy and the notion of a careers' mistress very much in its infancy. June recalled: 'If there was [a careers mistress] it was very low key, and no-one was told. Certainly it wasn't publicised'.⁴⁷ Joan's recollection was also

vague, but throws an interesting light on the relationship between employers and formal education:

I think we probably did have one session, you know, when you go in and there's a talk about it. But I don't remember anybody ever giving me any advice about what to do, or how to do it. But the other thing about where we went was that the school had a contract with a company and a lot of, and I mean a lot of us, went into this company.⁴⁸

She recalled how half the girls went into clerical work and half into secretarial jobs, according to their ability: 'There were so many people going, so in the end you just applied and went'.⁴⁹

This rather lackadaisical approach to career expectations reflects Pearl Jephcott's findings in her survey of London adolescents in the late 1940s:

Although her 'job' conditions her life so much more rigidly than her schooling did, girls talk about their work very little....On the whole work appears to call forth no strong emotions, only a feeling of relief at the end of the day, when you are rid of it and free to do what you like.⁵⁰

The women I interviewed had the luxury of reflecting back on completed careers which for many of them had developed far beyond their original expectations. Original occupational choice seems to have been a combination of parental pressure, school expectations and pure serendipity.

Headmistresses, however, left a strong impression and several of the women remembered their final interview with a disappointed and disapproving headmistress. The lack of recall may have had as much to do with the girls' attitudes to work, as with the provision of information. They remembered that it was easy to find jobs, and many found their first employment through the pages of the *London Evening Standard*. It was the place of their first job, rather than the job itself which appealed, as Brenda noted: 'Everybody automatically worked in London. You didn't think. A local job at that time would have been thought so dead end and boring'.⁵¹ The women remembered inappropriate advice they were given and related it to later developments:

They decided for me that it should be nursing, secretarial or physiotherapy [...] I didn't realise at the time how limited that vision was.

I know now what I should have been advised. I should have been advised accountancy, but nobody advised it.⁵²

The lack of advice, not only on the type of careers available but on the possibilities that university or further study might open up were also reiterated in Jordan's study. The ease with which clerical or shop jobs could be found made the uncharted territories of higher or further education still more alien:

Absolutely nobody told me what I could expect at college. Nobody gave me any pointers at all. I didn't want to do anything that I thought a college qualification would prepare me to do. I didn't want to teach. What I didn't know about and what people have career counselling for nowadays was the vast number of things I might have done with a degree, and I often regret not going on to further education.⁵³

Marriage however did seem to have been a major goal, even for the grammar school girls, who were expected by the teaching associations to spend at least some time in a profession. Patricia started working in a bank, which had good career prospects, but she admitted:

My friends and I said if we weren't married by twenty-one, we'd all go to Australia! But I was married at twenty-one so that was out the window! You used to get involved and get married a lot younger then. One of my friends, she was going to university but she was married by nineteen, and that was that!⁵⁴

All the women in my interview sample married. This imbalance will need to be redressed in future work, but for the purposes of this single chapter in a more wide ranging study, the similarity of experience is useful in drawing out common threads. Unsurprisingly, those who were mothers dwelt at length on their children's achievements. Although this was not specifically within the boundaries of my research, comments made while speaking about their children's upbringing and careers shed light on their own experiences. It also highlights the nature of memory itself. Their recollections were made with the knowledge of the eventual outcome of relationships and life changes and they constructed their own lives within the context of their families. Overwhelmingly, they prioritised their role as mother over that of worker. In several cases the very reason they volunteered to take part in my project was precisely because their children had

been to university or would be interested in the research: 'The thing is my daughter is [...] very interested in this. I'm going to show her the questions you've asked, it'll be helpful to her'.⁵⁵

Previous chapters have suggested that women's expected adult role was that of wife and mother. During the interviews, women spoke at length about their jobs as mothers, but tended to marginalise their role as wives. They still held to the 1950s expectations for child care, but their view of marriage bore little resemblance to the articles in *Woman* or *Housewife*. They spoke of their husbands' support or help during re-training, but rarely spoke specifically of 'being a wife'. The locations of their husbands' jobs did dictate where they lived and often postings abroad led to new work experiences for the women themselves. June described how, having given up her job in London in order to live near the south coast as a navy wife, she very soon felt isolated and lost her sense of identity. She located her sense of 'growing-up' and self-assertion with an overseas posting, again as a result of her husband's job. Women spoke of the juggling act involved in fitting work around children's demands, but never around that of being a wife. This is an interesting contrast to the discussion in the magazines chapter on the emphasis laid on 'getting and keeping your man'. Towards the end of her interview Margaret said:

I very much put my children first, and ignored my husband and when they all left home, I turned round and I thought: 'He's still here. He's still here' [...] and I was sort of vaguely surprised that he was still here really, because I ignored him when the children were growing up you know, because I was hell bent on getting these children reared and, you know, getting them through school.⁵⁶

She felt that her marriage had worked well and her husband had played his part in the children's upbringing, but Margaret placed little or no value on domestic skills:

So I was not the least bit into housework when I got married [...] It all nearly ended the first year because I couldn't hack it at all, I hated being married, hated it, loathed it, detested it, and thought this is awful, and somewhere God intervened and got me pregnant and that sort of, well, you know, brought me back to earth really.⁵⁷

Margaret left nursing when she got married and went back to secretarial work. Her work pattern after marriage was not unusual. While the

children were small and her husband worked shifts, she turned her hand to earning 'pin money' (her phrase) and took on:

...odd agency work, I did Tupperware, I did cleaning. I did any sort of odd jobs that did not interfere in any way with, having, you know, three small, then, when my daughter was 5 [...] I went to Queen's for an interview and I started work there very quickly after that. I started working there doing twelve hours a week. According to my husband's shifts.⁵⁸

On the whole, the women followed the concept of the dual role in terms of working full-time, then not while the children were small, then part-time, increasing their hours as the children got older and left home. Their motives were, however, more complex than those predicted by Myrdal and Klein. Although many of the women had undergone some training after school, they did not initially return to the same work when their children were young. Margaret was not the only one who worked at a number of low status jobs before returning to her profession. 'You know I forgot I had a nursing qualification'. Other women, like Ivy returned to a low profile post which then developed over the years.

Deborah went to grammar school, took secretarial training and married at twenty-four. She worked full-time until the arrival of her first child three years later. Couples did not discuss sharing domestic tasks and most assumed the gender specific roles envisaged by Beveridge in his Report. In the following extract Deborah gave very short answers. She made it clear that she thought they were self-evident. She answered the last question more slowly and indicated that the decision to return to work had more to it than the Beveridge pin money model.

And you gave up work when you had the baby to be a full time mother?

Yes, mm.

Before you were married did you discuss what your work pattern was likely to be?

No.

That was the pattern your friends followed?

Yeah, absolutely.

What was it like being at home full-time?

I enjoyed it. Yes I enjoyed it. It was hard work. I did quite enjoy it. I think after a while I missed the money. I missed having any

money. Once both my sons were at school I started doing typing at home so I was still there when they came home. [...] It was pin money and it was money I could spend and it was extra for us and I was at home when the children came home.

That was your priority?

Yes.

What did your husband think of you taking in typing?

It didn't make any difference to him.

You decided?

Yeah [pause] mmm [pause] It gave me an interest to be honest. I suppose I missed. I suppose I missed the company of people at work and that was a way in.⁵⁹

Deborah's marriage broke up when her children were teenagers and she told me that she went back to work full-time in order to be financially independent. When asked if she enjoyed returning to work she cited another reason, which reflected the findings of Pearl Jephcott and Ferdynand Zweig:⁶⁰ 'Yes, I did, yeah. You enjoy the company, you enjoy the people, you enjoy the being with other people'.⁶¹ And in discussing her imminent retirement, the same theme re-occurred in a clear demonstration of the continual weaving and reweaving of identity:

You wouldn't change anything with the advantage of hindsight?

I don't know, I think I might have gone back to work earlier, simply for the social, meeting, being with people, because I think once I retire it's going to be very easy to stay in the house and not go out. I shall need to join things then.⁶²

Once married, women took the responsibility for domestic chores, even if they disliked housework. Sarah's parents shared the housework as they ran a business together. Yet, when she married, Sarah took on the traditional role, illustrating how pervasive this assumption was: 'It didn't occur to me to ask John. I don't know why, somehow I was switching into his family pattern. His mother had a small part time cleaning job but she was, and so I did'.⁶³

Housework was placed low on the list of priorities but all the houses I visited were carefully kept. Brenda was aware of how expectations of housework changed over time. Although she and her husband never planned to have a family she still took on the domestic responsibilities. In her narration of her teenage years, she constructed an identity in which she made all her own decisions. Having won a place at the local

direct grant school, she persuaded her parents to let her go to the county grammar where her friends were going: 'I seemed to make all my own decisions, they never gave me any advice and I never asked for it'.⁶⁴ Once there, she was expected to go to university but opted to leave and take a bilingual secretarial course: 'the headmistress was furious'.⁶⁵ Brenda felt that her story was unusual in that she had been self-motivated and had chosen not to have children. When it came to gender roles within marriage however, she recalled the rigidity of expectations:

I met him at twenty-two, and got married at twenty-five. After about a year struggling with the housework, in those days one was much more conscientious about housework and one had a routine and all that sort of thing. I find this talking to all my friends, looking back you felt you had to do the washing on a certain day [...] So I felt it was difficult to combine a job with looking after a home, so either I had to work locally or I had to work part-time.⁶⁶

Although respondents knew that the focus of my research was their initial school leaving employment choices, the amount of time spent discussing the first job was fairly short. They were keen to tell me how careers had evolved alongside their mothering activities and their later successes and had clearly absorbed the notion of the dual role. Initial job choice was frequently described as 'falling into' a job, answering an advertisement in the paper, or taking a job found for them by their fathers. Often it was having children which had given women the confidence to make their own decisions on employment. The juggling of child care with friends, neighbours, husbands and mothers (never paid help) made paid work a much more positive aspect of the adult women's lives. First jobs were 'drifted' into, work after marriage was organised and focused. This is an interesting contradiction; paid employment before marriage involved a degree of growing up and financial independence, yet employment after marriage and family while presented as 'pin money', or 'helping out', was constructed in a much more purposeful way.

Constructing the self – looking back

In this final section I focus on the way that women constructed their stories and how their experiences of life and paid work both contributed to the formation of their adult identity. Without being

prompted, they compared their teenage selves with the women they had become. There was a constant dialogue between the past and present self and between past and present constructions of 'woman'. At times, when confident with their narrative, they spoke fluently and then faltered when, as they spoke, they became aware of inconsistencies. Sometimes these contradictions led to the inability to finish a sentence or to a more disjointed way of speaking, which was different from the simple narrative employed when asked to describe the process of finding a job and going for an interview. They often apologised when this happened. June was happily describing her final year at school and her entry into journalism:

He [stepfather] said: 'I want you to apply for it', and I didn't really want to leave school and the headmistress didn't [pause] If I had to leave school, *if* I had to leave school and if I had to do anything, I was not going to be a secretary and that was quite unlike me to have the courage to say so. I was not going to be a secretary. I'm sorry I'm getting a bit disjointed.⁶⁷

June found it difficult to find the words to explain the tension between doing what she wanted, what the school wanted and what her stepfather wanted her to do.

Having set the framework for the interview, I tried to keep my questions short, and my observations to a minimum. As I read the transcripts through, it became apparent that the women invited me to be part of the story they told on that specific day, and they told their present stories of the past, with me as a third party. Avril tried to explain why she had been in such a hurry to get married:

We were all terrified of being left on the shelf [...] I think it was after the war [...] so there was this tremendous shortage of men, so as you grew up, all you overheard was conversations about men who didn't come back and men who weren't there and how difficult it was for a woman to be on her own. And of course women weren't used to supporting themselves, in those days everything was geared to marrying and your husband's support. I mean, I don't know how old you are, but it's difficult to get this concept across to people who were not there then. You know I talk to my daughter about things. She just cannot grasp the idea of what it was like for us then, that without a man you were nothing [...] Because I'm ten years older than you, but in that ten years, Stephanie, just so much changed,

even in five years, let alone ten years, you know, the Pill, things like that, we just didn't have [pause] that [pause] you know [tails off]⁶⁸

Avril knew that her opinions and view on life had changed substantially since she left school. She found it difficult to express exactly how or why this had happened and used her interactive conversation with me to try and clarify changes in attitudes over the last fifty years.

A large majority of those interviewed had lived in their homes for a number of years and their families, although not present, were evident in photographs. The women presented themselves in a visual context, the 'comfort of their own home' was more than a physical comfort, and it acted as a context within which to tell their stories. The interviews were littered with personal anecdotes, but these were often placed as examples of a more general attitude or trend and carefully contextualised. The stories were presented against a specific background and the women offered their own analysis in relation to gender or class expectations. Elizabeth was careful to explain at the beginning of our conversation that it was necessary to know about wartime disruption and her evacuation to Wales in order to understand her decisions. She also talked about her parents' work and educational background: 'There's a lot of family history which actually shows you why these things developed but that's going to be outside your brief, but just background a bit'.⁶⁹ At the end of the interview she concluded by saying:

I think, well people of my age will come up about the war. This is the trouble. I've cut out all the reminiscence sort of bits, except for saying I think I was advanced and they didn't like us [in Wales] which was war and social.⁷⁰

Although the interview schedule did not specifically suggest a chronological narrative, most women chose that approach. Jean offered a story of young love, devotion, support, children and a strong relationship. In the closing part of the interview she disclosed that her marriage ended in divorce when she had 'finally had enough'. It is significant that she had not wanted to disrupt the narrative by 'giving away' the last scene. The following extract from Avril's interview comes from the very beginning of our conversation. It is interesting in that it sets out the parameters for the ensuing discussion. It also illustrates the way conversations veered from past to present and back again. She presented the web as it stands now before proceeding to

unpick the individual strands. Avril felt very strongly that she was written off after failing her 11+ and that at the secondary modern 'you were just brought up to be wives and mothers':

You really felt that? ['that we were written off at 11']

We did absolutely, absolutely and anyone who went, like my sister who was seven years older than me to grammar school [...] having this career and going to university. But we were not at all. It just didn't enter anybody's mind that perhaps we were late developers or we would like an opportunity to go to college or whatever, and the funny thing is at the end of the day although I feel it's been much harder for me than it has, say, for my sister because she had the opportunities that I didn't, at the end of the day there's been no difference, that is the funny thing about it. I would say I am probably earning as much, if not more, than she is, ummm, just purely through hard work, but it was a shame you were made to feel like that then.⁷¹

Previous chapters have discussed the relationship between what was expected of women as a group and the increased number of opportunities available to individual girls. The tension in this came through very strongly in conversation. Women were quite clear about what was expected of them and the constraints laid down by those in authority. It was often couched in gendered terms and first mentioned in the context of education. Jenny talked about the choices of subject available in her co-educational school, which she categorised as a central school. Jenny was diffident about being interviewed and gave very short answers, waiting for me to ask questions.⁷² She distanced her adult self from the self she constructed at the time:

No – you weren't allowed to do that [chemistry and physics], it's like, you know, you weren't allowed to do woodwork, you had to do cooking [laughs] but er, you know it's only when you start looking back really, I suppose you didn't really question it at the time. Boys done that and girls done what they were told [smile].⁷³

Friends played a significant part in women's lives; they were not the constraining authority of parents or society but, equally, peer norms were important in the construction of self. I interviewed two of Brenda's friends who both told me how clever Brenda had been at school, always winning the prizes. Brenda herself was quite ambivalent

about this, and considered how being successful had not always been plain sailing:

Looking back I really am an odd person. I never wanted to do well. I didn't at school. I didn't want to be on top. I wanted to be like everybody else. And at [my job] I just enjoyed being one of the secretaries, it was great fun, you know I didn't want to be the top secretary in an office of her own that everybody looked up to and had to knock on the door all this sort of thing. I hated it, and I actually said I didn't want the job and they just said: 'You're mad!'⁷⁴

At the end of her interview, I asked Brenda if there was anything further she wanted to say. Her comments are illuminating, in that she obviously felt that there were rigid prescriptive frameworks, but the final clause offers a telling comment on autonomy within an acknowledgement of this framework:

Obviously in the fifties you were influenced by what was expected of you. Everybody was. People were less independent than they are now, especially women. You just saw what you were expected to do, although even then I didn't do what I was expected to.⁷⁵

She was adamant that she only broke informal rules: 'you're not actually breaking the law by making your own decisions', but her choice of phrasing indicates how rigid those informal rules appeared to be.

As the interviews progressed, I noticed how each woman inferred that she was not typical of her generation. At the same time they would emphasise how clear the rules were in the late 1950s. June said: 'We just accepted and I know I can speak for the rest of my friends that in the late fifties and early sixties you just accepted what came'.⁷⁶ Later she added:

This is what I meant when I said at the beginning it may not be very typical because a lot of the things that happened to me in my life came from my way of being brought up [...] I felt it was not that relevant to you.⁷⁷

As the circumstances she referred to were an unsettled childhood, living with different relations during the war, and a stepfather whose working life was disrupted and resulted in lower earnings through wartime military service, she was hardly untypical.

The women were all asked how they felt being asked to look back, a question which seemed to surprise a number of them. I originally included it to indicate that the interview was coming to a close and to encourage them to mention anything they felt had been left out. Reading the transcripts, it was noticeable that so many of them at this point showed a high degree of self-deprecation. This was surprising given that they were self-selected volunteers and had offered very positive stories. This self-deprecation may throw light on issues of epistemology. It was clearly not that they thought their stories were insignificant, but they were not convinced that our conversation on a pleasant summer afternoon or evening had enough gravitas to be included in an academic analysis. Ivy merely reflected that the process had been 'interesting'. Jean said: 'It doesn't worry me at all', indicating that perhaps it might have worried some people and then: 'I expect it's all mumbo jumbo'. As she was the only one who had asked me how I was going to analyse the transcripts, I doubt very much if that was what she really thought, so why say it? Patricia concluded: 'I don't suppose it's been any help whatsoever'. Sarah took a long time to answer this question, whereas in the rest of the interview she had been quite quick to respond:

I feel quite flattered really [smile] The first time anyone's ever really wanted to do it. Obviously we've sort of talked about the past. But nobody from an outside source [pause] quite independently. As you say, I don't think it's been researched enough and I don't think anyone's taken our generation seriously. And I think we were a strange generation, because there we were, the baby boom of you know, well, during the war. But it wasn't until the sixties that we seemed to sort of wake up to the raw deal that women were having. It was so kind of you!⁷⁸

Some expressed sadness, but there was in many, a feeling that they were in the process of re-weaving their webs as they spoke: 'I'm not at the end, I can see plenty ahead. I can see gaps where I might have done something else'.⁷⁹ As most of the women I interviewed were reaching retirement they were able to tell their stories of employment with a clear narrative of beginning, middle and end. Other collections have also sited the production of memory at a distinct time in their respondents' lives, for example Mary Ingham's *Now We are Thirty* where the women's working patterns were still not clear but they had reached what seemed a significant milestone and point of reflection.

In a book which seeks to bring together many disparate sources in order to explore possible influences on young women in the 1950s, the final chapter has examined the reflections of those who were themselves school leavers of the time. In locating it at the end, the material could have been used to provide an overview, or a verdict on the analysis of the documentary research. The interviews provided enough descriptive material to have written a vivid narrative of the expectations and mores of society in the middle decade of the twentieth century. But the material provides an opportunity to do more than present a verbal collage of individual lives. Each woman described the formation of her own web of identity, the result of interactions between sometimes competing institutions of state, family, school and work environment. Each web was unique yet they were not isolated from others. Like Penny Summerfield's respondents the women in this research drew on established discourses, in their case the 1950s full-time mother, in order to rationalise their actions.⁸⁰ For the women who knew each other, or who attended the same school, their lives and attitudes touched in more than one place, yet the way in which memories were constructed resulted in a similar event being described in varying ways. Brenda's friends remembered her success with a degree of pride, as an example of what a clever girl could achieve. All Brenda wanted, she said, was to be like the others, not a torchbearer. As the women reflected on their teenage years, some for the first time, they inevitably brought the benefit of hindsight to their descriptions of remembered attitudes. Women who had not done particularly well at school but had successful careers, dismissed the negativity of school experience in a way they might not have done if their subsequent lives had been more affected by it.

The interviews show the myriad influences which affected their career choices and in turn the negotiation of apparent contradictions. As Kristina Minster and Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet have suggested this has been made apparent by the form, the way of speaking as much as by the content.⁸¹ Many of those interviewed were the first in a family to go to grammar school, but were still expected to follow expectations of minimum age school leaving and entry into work. Conflict and tension between expectations of different communities had to be reconciled within a self that remained true to itself in the retelling of the story. Women drew on the 1950s discourse of good motherhood in order to rationalise their choice to give up enjoyable work to be home with their children. At the same time they were aware that changes in the last fifty years had altered the relationship between

home and work for their children and indeed their own recent work patterns.

My own attitude towards work and family and my own disjointed career portfolio inevitably informed, or could have clouded, the direction of the interviews. This rendered my relationship to those I interviewed less clearly defined than a traditional hierarchy of researcher/researched. A heightened awareness that this was a possible problem kept me alert during the course of the interview, and on reading the transcripts, as far as I can see, does not appear to have impinged on the process of interviewing. The women were keen to 'help' me with my research and wished me good luck with the writing. They clearly felt that they shared an investment in the project and this resulted in a highly reflexive style of narrative, in which they not only told me of events, but also attributed meaning to them as they progressed. In addition, it was clear that they were aware that the legacy of the 'swinging sixties' had somewhat obscured the events of the previous decade.

This chapter concludes with an extract from Kim's interview. Kim's description of her life as a young married woman could have been written in the pages of *Housewife* or *Woman*. She followed the lifestyle that William Beveridge had assumed that all women would embrace in the years following the war. As she constructed her story, reflecting back Kim could see that this was not an inevitable pattern and contrasted it with that of her daughter and son-in-law. Kim's description veered from 'I' to 'We' in a few lines, illustrating how the powerful construction of 'woman' had influenced her life as an individual:

When I had my first child, I thought I would never ever work again except for odd jobs that I might get. I thought I might be a school dinner lady or work in a shop or something, just for a little bit of pocket money. [...] We always had their dinner on their plate on the table when they walked in, you know. I'd start the day in old clothes, and then, it sounds ever so old fashioned, at half past four I'd go and change into something respectable and put some make-up on because he was coming home and then the minute he walked in the door, the dinner would be in front of him. I mean now, I think my son-in-law comes home and she says: 'Oh I've had a terrible day'. And she's looking a mess [...] and then they'll eat about ten o'clock at night. Something he's cooked half the time! Things have changed drastically.⁸²

Conclusion

It is tempting to dismiss the 1950s as a rather dull decade in women's history in which English women dutifully returned to rebuilding homes and families after the disruptions of the Second World War. The relief with which the population returned to the traditional model of family life with a stay at home (where financially possible) wife and mother and breadwinning father must have been enormous. For many families of course, this ideal model was out of reach after the casualties of war. Despite increased employment opportunities for women during the 1940s it should not be forgotten that advances in labour saving domestic appliances were in their infancy and that looking after a house and family still required a great deal of time and energy. The safety net of the new welfare state in terms of pensions, allowances, unemployment pay and the National Health Service provided a secure future for those returning from active service. Free secondary education following the 1944 Education Act offered the teenagers of the 1950s longer time in school and better future employment prospects, although university education was still the prerogative of a very few school leavers.

The decade spans a short space of time when job opportunities were expanding but a majority of school leavers still made their employment choices in the three years between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. This book has focused on understanding the gendered nature of career choice and the significance of gender as a framework for understanding patterns of employment. Chapters which have explored employment opportunities and education policy suggest that the 1950s offered a variety of jobs to boys and girls. Popular literature and oral history life stories suggest that the 'choice' was very much gendered and more constraining for girls. The powerful

representations of the ideal 'Woman' of the 1950s, the perfect housewife with loving family do not sit easily with ideas of women's agency in constructing their unique adult identity. These individual negotiations with, and contributions to, the overarching model have provided the theoretical framework for the book. How might it be possible to talk of careers for women when the notion of a full-time forty year employment pattern was not only unlikely but plainly undesirable to a majority of teenage girls? Looking at the popular literature in more detail I have suggested that being a housewife was in many cases also constructed as a job, albeit unpaid, and the 'business' of being a woman offered a full time career in itself. Within that career might be incorporated time in paid employment and time caring for children, but it all contributed to the Beveridge vision and a gendered definition of citizenship.

Joan Scott famously posited the meaning of 'gender' in analytical frameworks as both relational and a signifier of power.¹ In this book I have focused on the female experience but the gendered, i.e. the relational aspect of career decisions is fundamental to understanding the process of employment choice for girls *and* boys in the 1950s. If girls had to incorporate periods of dependency into their career structure so boys in turn had to plan breadwinner careers without any breaks up to retirement. Boys also had to cope with the difficulty of planning careers when the prospect of two years National Service following school leaving loomed. What teenagers decided to do in terms of their career plans inevitably affected their understanding of the kind of person they wanted to 'be'. The 1950s provides a useful snapshot to interrogate some of those issues but the wider implications of the link between formal and informal education, employment and our sense of self is much more far reaching. Employment choice is not therefore just of interest to economic policy makers or historians, it is integral to our understanding of who we are and what influence our gender, the social construction of our role, both by ourselves and by society at large has on that identity. As Morwenna Griffiths reflects:

Identity does not refer to my potential for choice alone, but to the actuality of my choices, namely how I as a finite, embodied individual, shape and fashion the circumstances of my birth and family, linguistic, cultural and gender identity into a coherent narrative those episodes of choice and limitation, agency and suffering, initiative and dependence.²

Girls faced some difficult decisions as they left school and entered employment in the 1950s. This book has explored just some of the issues involved in that process. I have argued that the exploration of a variety of sources can improve an understanding of the complex nature of the gendered construction of the adult female role in this period. Consequently, 'career' has been understood throughout as a woman's passage through adult life which could incorporate periods of full-time domesticity and periods of employment. In the process it has sought to contribute to the current wider historical debate which questions the long held notion of consensus in 1950s Britain.³ The introduction of a gendered dimension further undermines this now discredited, somewhat simplistic, analysis. Situated theoretically within women's history, the discussion has suggested that we move forward from analytical considerations of women as *either* a homogenous group or as individuals towards finding a way to encompass both.

In this conclusion I first summarise the main issues which have arisen in the course of the research and offer an overview of the previous chapters which leads into a discussion of the theoretical and methodological implications. I discuss how satisfactory the web metaphor has been for explaining the constantly changing and dialogic nature of the relationship between past and present. I am not suggesting that the 'web of identity', initially developed by Griffiths in order to further understanding of widely differing autobiographies, can simply be transposed wholesale into an analytical tool for women's historians but it provides an entry point for understanding career as more than a linear progression from school-leaving to retirement. The chapters may be thought of as 'strands' of the web which may be read in a non-linear progression. Within these strands of such broad topics as employment, or education, different themes emerge which re-occur throughout the book. These analytical 'threads' are notions of gendered autonomy, overlapping communities, citizenship and social class. The reader will undoubtedly have identified other threads which might have been included. In addition, my understanding of how the web of identity may have been fashioned for girls in the late 1950s will not be the same as that of the reader; within feminist analysis the author chooses to openly acknowledge her place in the research and her choice of material. The selection of material here has not, and could not, have been exhaustive, but a rationale has been offered for the difficult decisions reached in their selection. Each area of interest is itself composed of different sections which have highlighted the continuities and discontinuities even within that strand. The nature of the relation-

ship between the historian and the archive means that I can only offer an overview of some of the sources available, not an insight into the minds of the 1950s schoolgirl. Even the interviews and autobiographical material only offer us a retrospective view and one interpreted with the benefit of hindsight.

It is difficult not to fall into somewhat nostalgic rhetoric in writing about the 1950s. Much of the documentary material can be read as a purposeful myth-making exercise in re-building national identity. The following passage by Arthur Bryant at the beginning of the study *Some Young People* is a case in point. On the one hand it summarises the importance of addressing the experience of the 'teenager', at the same time the voice of Pathé News is never far away:

It [the Report] concerns what we all were once – girls and boys on the threshold of life faced with life's problems and the necessity of conforming to a society and a world already made. We are all in this together, for on what our 'young people' can be made and make themselves depends the future of England.⁴

Adolescents or teenagers were attributed a specific identity; legally they were not adults until the age of twenty-one, yet after the age of minimum school leaving at fifteen they were no longer children. J. B. Thomas has suggested that the various Education Acts from 1870 onwards have contributed to the creation of adolescents as a group worthy of academic attention and that specifically the 1944 Act generated a number of investigations into the link between school and industry and the development of vocational guidance.⁵ Teenagers had money to spend, and, as Mark Abrams noted, they were acknowledged as a significant consumer group.⁶ This in itself made them an important part of the growing economy in this decade. A clear demarcation of gender identities emerged as boys entered National Service and girls embarked upon paid employment, often in the specifically 'female' clerical, nursing or primary teaching occupations. The conflict of interests between industry and entrenched social expectations offered girls different and difficult options when they considered their future pathway. There was a universal expectation that at some point young women would leave the work place in order to spend some time in full-time domesticity. Yet Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein observed changing attitudes to employment as girls took advantage of training opportunities and entered professions to which they could return at a later date.⁷ Domesticity signalled a break in, rather than an end to, paid

work. The book considered some of the ways that the adult female role was presented to adolescent girls. Each chapter considered a different area of primary material in order to explore the tensions and ambivalence which underlay the residual image of the 1950s middle-class, full-time, wife and mother, so beloved of later politicians.

The historiography of theoretical development within women's history demonstrates a tension between those who wanted to use women's history for political ends, and those who wanted it established as an academic discipline.⁸ This has resulted in the oversight of the relationship of individual women to the monolithic model of 'woman' presented by the media and within policy making. The web metaphor mitigates this difficulty and allows for two-way interaction between outside forces and individual agency. It also explains how women could link together conflicting expectations into a coherent whole. The main facets of Griffiths' philosophical approach which I used throughout my analysis were the notion that women formed their lives within overlapping communities; that independence and autonomy were gendered constructions and, finally that the web metaphor was a dynamic metaphor which could include change through time.

The methodological approach which developed out of the theoretical framework resulted in research into a variety of areas from formal policy documents, to magazines and novels and finally to interviews with some women who left school during this period. The feminist methodology informed the selection of sources, the process of the interviews and my foregrounding of gender as the main category of analysis.

The chapter on the planning of the welfare state explored the tensions which were incorporated within the final structure. It considered how constructions of gender roles, which were essentially middle-class, became written in to the social security system. As a result William Beveridge's assumptions of the unchanging nature of gender roles, formed before the Second World War, became the prescription for post-war society. Evidence from the Beveridge committee in the Public Record Office illustrated that Beveridge's ideas were not uncontested. An examination of alternative recommendations suggested that, while Beveridge's notion of women's domestic priorities may not have been questioned, his construction of female dependence was not universally accepted. Evidence from the Mass Observation Archive tempers the notion that the construction of gender roles was a major priority at the time in general attitudes to reconstruction. The chapter focused on the way that

women's role as citizens was presented differently from male notions of citizenship. This in turn affected notions of autonomy and women's agency within the constraints of kinship structures.

In focusing on the provision of formal education the following chapter explored analyses of school leaving decisions in sociological surveys, material from the archives of the female teaching associations and the debates around the Crowther Report. The teaching associations were faced with the difficult task of reconciling an awareness of girls' ultimate domesticity while providing a curriculum which prepared girls for paid employment. Notions of social class and gender again intersected within much of the written evidence. Employment opportunities depended heavily (not entirely) on the type of school attended. Sociological and educational surveys suggested that grammar and secondary modern pupils tended to divide along class lines. When data on girls' experiences did not 'fit' a hypothesis girls as a group tended to be omitted, as marginal to theories of vocational choice. At the same time considerations of all girls as future wives and mothers affected the design of curriculum content and post-school expectations.

Questions of autonomy were considered in the chapters which focused on careers' advice in the form of manuals, novels and *Women's Employment*. The dual role model that presumed a return to employment after a period of domesticity allowed girls to consider training for entry into professions. This undermined the established concept of employment as a stop gap between school and marriage. The primary sources used in this chapter illustrated clearly the transition which was taking place in attitudes towards female employment. Conflict between expectations of domesticity and expectations of a serious professional investment required considerable negotiation. The material studied overtly grouped all girls together, yet the complex issue of gendered definitions of class was implicit in much of the literature discussed.

Girl, *Housewife* and *Woman* provided a representation of women as a universal group with common interests and expectations. 'Being a woman' was constructed as a career in itself, which at different points might include paid employment. The relative importance of paid work or domesticity changed constantly between the ages of fifteen and sixty. The magazines validated the business of being a housewife as work and, as such, created a coherent model of adult female identity to those just entering adulthood. The chapter highlighted how individual women contributed to the 'icon' of woman presented by the

magazines rather than assuming that they were passive receptors of a prescriptive code. I argued that the careful construction of a 'feminine' appearance under the magazines' tutelage implicitly undermined notions of women's 'natural' aptitude for their prescribed role.

Interviews with women who made their career choices in the late 1950s were the subject of the concluding chapter. These interviews were included in order to consider how women told their stories and the way in which they managed to incorporate apparent inconsistencies within their narratives. They illustrated the complex and sometimes constraining nature of the relationship between themselves as individuals and themselves as 'women'. This understanding had developed over time, and the position of the interview chapter as the final one emphasised the significant, but awkward nature of the evidence discussed. Without being asked they offered a historical analysis of the period under discussion from the point of view of 'being there' and also demonstrated an awareness that their current view could only be an interpretation that might still change as their circumstances altered.

The inspiration for the book was a growing awareness on my part of the many different factors involved in the apparently simple process of choosing employment during the last year of school. Research for other projects has confirmed my impression that teenage decisions revolved around more than academic ability or job availability. They were (and I would suggest still are) highly gendered and bound up with parental and peer opinions, representations in the media and inextricably involved with the process of becoming an adult member of post-war society. Previous research suggested that this was especially problematic in the late 1950s, when women's established adult roles as wives and mothers appeared to be inscribed in stone.⁹ As the memory and instability of the war receded and the euphoria of the return to 'normal' subsided, the next generation of girls became aware of alternatives to the apparently unchallenged goal of full-time domesticity. Paid work was no longer only undertaken by married women who were unable to afford the luxury of staying at home, dependent on their husbands. It could be constructed as part of the duty of citizenship and also as having an intrinsic worth of its own as part of the individual's sense of self, alongside the rewards of motherhood and domesticity.

Using the philosophical approach proposed by Morwenna Griffiths in *Feminisms and the Self* offered a way to analyse and bring together a wide range of material, which still only scratches the surface of all that is available. It presented the means to examine the way that the rela-

tionship between employment and domesticity was represented differently according to the source material consulted. At the same time it allowed for flexibility in an analysis of a time of change and transition. The view offered in this book is not a frozen snapshot of the 1950s, but a way into understanding the constantly fluctuating nature of adult female gender roles through time. Gender was, of course, the prime category of analysis as the book has focused on the specific experience of women and girls in relation to the established 'norm' of the male career.

The problematic issue of social class however, inevitably interconnected with that of gender and, as has been observed, was a major factor in the career decision. Magazines, novels, career guides and welfare policy assumed a class-less model of 'woman' that was unremittingly middle-class in its aspirations if not in practice. The chapter on education, however, illustrated the centrality of social class in defining many women's lives. The division at age eleven, ostensibly on academic grounds, usually followed a class divide which affected the aspirations and expectations of school leavers. During the course of interviews women often referred back to their class background, not as it is now, but that of their parents in the way that it affected their expectations for their adult lives. Their awareness or definition of class was centred on their experience of secondary education. The amount of family income and their father's occupation were relevant to this understanding but it was at school that the social class hierarchy became most apparent. Sometimes this was recounted in the form of an apparently trivial anecdote, for example cooking strange dishes that never appeared on the home dinner table. The way that these memories were recounted so vividly would suggest that they were significant to the individual's understanding of her construction of identity. Class was also defined by where they lived, what age they were expected to leave school and the type of job that was considered 'suitable'.

Griffiths stresses that autonomy and independence are not gender neutral terms. She argues that women define their autonomy, not as isolated individuals in the public arena, but within the communities of which they are a part; their children and husbands, friends and colleagues. This has been a useful reminder that notions of independence or autonomy, as defined in financial terms, might lead to an ahistorical understanding of independence for women in late 1950s. Material in the magazines, and indeed from the teaching associations, attributed full adult status to girls once they were married and mothers, and therefore, by default, had moved from a financially independent life to

one whose independence came as a result of *dependence*. This, in turn, had ramifications for the gendered understanding of citizenship.

The notion of 'citizenship' has occurred regularly throughout this book; it remains an elusive but clearly gendered term at this time as it was used to validate women's public role as mothers. Beveridge defined women's citizenship by their 'duty' as wives and mothers of the Empire. Teachers in girls' schools utilised citizenship education as a way of giving status to their pupils' future role outside paid employment, whether in voluntary work or in their domestic duties. Women's 'duty' as citizens appeared to fluctuate between domesticity and paid employment depending on the age of their children. Significantly, the women interviewed did not speak in terms of citizenship, nor was there mention of it in the magazines. Martin Pugh suggested that the magazines were bolstering full-time domesticity as a time when it was losing popularity; possibly the editorial policy encouraged readers to look inwards towards their private role, rather than outwards into a more public role. During their interviews women gave the impression that they had not been concerned with their wider responsibility to society; they did not need the notion of citizenship to justify their actions, either in their caring role, or in their return to work.

Above all the book has pleaded for the consideration of both women as individuals *and* women as a group and, most importantly for an interrogation of the relationship between the two. The notion of unique webs with similar shapes allows for exploring individual autonomy at a time when overarching prescriptions appear to have been dominant. The ultimate agency within the web model rests with the individual. No matter what outside forces do to the existing web, it is the individual who has the responsibility and the capacity to re-weave and re-create. The framework allows for individuals and general circumstances to change and the configurations to change in strength and significance. This model allows for continuous unpicking and re-weaving and gradual change through time, in addition to class, it also enables an acknowledgement of difference according to location and age.

The book has considered careers advice to be found in formal and informal educational source material and as such benefits from the move to interdisciplinarity which is apparent within History of Education.¹⁰ This is one of the strengths of a subject which although marginalised within its original home of initial teacher training can now be found in a wide variety of university departments.¹¹ A broader historical picture can be formed by drawing on material more usually

found in other disciplines. Sociological surveys and analyses added to the understanding of contemporary attitudes in both the education and employment chapters. Analysis of the magazines and career novels drew on theoretical perspectives presented in women's studies and literary analysis.

The methodological approach taken here also has implications for future possible theoretical developments within women's history. It has illustrated that a wide variety of sources can be used in order to combine a consideration of women as individuals, without losing sight of the strong prescriptions, especially in the 1950s, for women as an apparently homogenous group. The approach does not suggest that these two be taken in isolation but that the interaction between them is significant. It has illustrated how individual women both contribute to and draw on the existing universal model. This in turn explains how this model is constantly changing and evolving.

A methodology which draws apparently at random from various sources might be accused of cherry picking. Griffiths suggests that this is a possible flaw in her own work and admits that she could be accused of 'cultural tourism'.¹² It is not, however, uncharted territory. Judy Giles, Dawn Currie, Elizabeth Edwards and Clare Langhamer have also negotiated the difficult path of combining documentary sources with their own interviews with women who were the subjects of their research.¹³ Their work has demonstrated that this methodology can successfully enhance a wider analysis.

The concept of the web of identity does not of course provide a universal panacea for unpicking the formation of adult female identity in the late 1950s. It has been successfully used as a theoretical approach by Jane Martin to consider Mary Bridges Adams' activities in the London School Board in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; so I am not the first to utilise a theory designed for analysing autobiography for historical inquiry. Martin suggested that it highlighted: 'the passive/active tension in any attempt to consider subjects as both constituted and constitutive'.¹⁴ The way that the theoretical framework of the web can incorporate this duality is one of its most significant features. In many ways, however, its advantages are also its defects. The web is a very simple metaphor, it provides a visual 'clue' to the way that analysis might proceed, but this simplicity can be abused. Unless a researcher is careful, the web metaphor provides an excuse for an ill thought out eclectic ragbag of source material to be brought together into a 'coherent' whole. For every strand that is included, there are several which are abandoned and, even within each strand,

the material might appear to have been chosen in a somewhat arbitrary fashion. I arrived at my decisions for this book in a number of ways, including serendipity. Each chapter was carefully considered and material within it chosen to provide a range of opinions. Serendipity appeared in the form of the career novels, the Chatto and Windus archive and Evelyn Forbes' granddaughter. The novels provided a balance with *Women's Employment* and career manuals, enabling a consideration of the formal with the less formal ways in which careers advice reached teenage girls. It was originally intended to consider official employment policy in juxtaposition to *Women's Employment* but, on reflection, this might have been too similar to some of the material used in the welfare state chapter. Originally I had intended to include a discussion of the parliamentary debates on the population and the passage of the social insurance legislation with the consideration of the Beveridge report. Although these provided a useful overview of the diversity of opinion, they did not add substantially to the arguments presented.

Using a wide selection of material from different disciplines presents problems for analysis. This was especially significant in the choice of contextualising background literature which included historical analyses of the late 1950s and sociological surveys from the period. Use of novels involved a brief foray into literary theory and embarking on a series of interviews involved understanding the pitfalls of both the theory and practice of oral history. Incorporating this within the framework of the web of identity, itself not an established historical mode of analysis, could have resulted in something which looked more like an academic sampler than the presentation of a coherent argument. The strange positioning of women's history as not quite history, not quite women's studies and not quite sociology, makes it a demanding discipline to work within especially when combined with history of education that is not quite history and not quite education. Each of these 'disciplines', for want of a better name, has at its centre the question of power, and the locus of power has been central to this discussion.

I have tried to limit the notion of oppression within an analysis which sought to explain women's agency at a time when functionalist theory marginalised the individual from an analysis of the workings of western society. Griffiths problematises the notion of oppression, suggesting that it is rare for any individual to be wholly the oppressor or the oppressed. In the fragmented nature of the self which the web model supports the term oppression serves to emphasise the fluidity of identity.¹⁵

The relationship between the notion of universal oppression and individual women has been problematised by Mary Poovey, who also suggests that an acknowledgement of women as well as 'woman' are two projects which have to be undertaken simultaneously:

Real historical women have been (and still are) oppressed, and the ways and means of that oppression need to be analysed and fought. But at the same time, we need to be ready to abandon the binary thinking that has stabilised women as a group that *could* be collectively (although not uniformly) oppressed.¹⁶

Although this theoretical framework allows for an alternative perspective of the period, it is limited in its explanation of how the different views arose or how they were legitimated. A discursive approach, as used by Penny Summerfield in *Women's Wartime Lives*, illustrates how different representations of the female role compete in a society. While Griffiths' model allows for a fluid understanding of the way that women might move between different discourses it cannot look beneath the surface in order to explain how one community (in Griffiths' parlance) became more dominant than another. In the web metaphor some of the strands appear to be free floating, they just appear. It is my choice alone, which has decided which strands to include although I have endeavoured to justify the reasons for their inclusion.

In considering the Beveridge proposals for the welfare state, the framework of the web does not explain why Beveridge's model was passed into law almost without revision, despite the protestations and evidence from women's organisations. Their alternative suggestions do not seem to have received more attention than mere lip service from civil servants. In this instance, women's voices do not appear to have had as much clout as those with political backing. Evidence to the Crowther committee nearly two decades later did not suffer the same fate, but again the web, while foregrounding the variety of different perspectives, does not explain why some carried more weight than others. As a way of analysing the complex construction of identity presented in the interviews, the web provides a satisfactory way of illustrating the nuances, and interactions between apparently disjointed and conflicting influences.

Neither the framework nor the women themselves can adequately explain why the opinions of peers, parents or teachers were so influential. Certainly while economic interests might have been the

motivating factor behind gender roles presented by employers and in the magazine pages, they played a more ambivalent role in girls' decisions to marry and take up full-time domesticity. They could only articulate these decisions in a way which indicated that there was a factor, possibly 'society', whose dictates were beyond their control, simply 'that's how it was'. In presenting a case for understanding the 'I' as fragmented and not a transparent unitary self, Griffiths' model arguably minimises the part played by essentialism in the formation of a gendered identity.¹⁷ The gendered agency asserted by the individual in Griffiths' model is not an agency based on a claim to the innate experience of being female. Yet Mary Poovey has argued that denying any form of essentialism:

[R]enders the experience women have of themselves and the meaning of their social relations problematic, to say the least. [...] The challenge for those of us who are convinced that real historical women do exist and share certain experiences *and* that deconstruction's demystification of presence makes theoretical sense is to work out some way to think both women and 'woman'. It isn't an easy task.¹⁸

Poovey's analysis reflects the inherent difficulty of understanding the construction of gender roles and career decisions in the 1950s which in many cases, as has been illustrated, was based on a presumption of women's 'natural' role. Although I have argued that the idea of an innate natural role was so tenuous that this role had to be learnt from a variety of sources, it would be unwise not to retain at least an element of it within the analysis. The innate nature of the female role might be the continuous thread which is maintained in webs rewoven within a changing historical context.¹⁹

I hope that some of the ideas in this book will encourage the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of women's and education history. Having brought a number of disparate sources together, the next step is to take them apart again and consider each one in more depth. This can now be done with an acknowledgement that each area exists, not in isolation, but in a close and complex relationship to other factors. Although feminist historical analysis has become more sophisticated and moved away from making sweeping generalisations about women as a group, an awareness that these still exist and need to be taken into consideration should remain. It is apparent that the terms 'women' and 'woman' are frequently interchanged

and are slippery concepts, which defy attempts to pin them down. This should signal an immediate need to interrogate their specific use in any research.

The last word belongs not to me but to one of the women who agreed to be interviewed for this book. As she spoke she reflected on the implications of her career pattern in terms of understanding how the place of paid employment reflects women's multifaceted lives.

I think at 17 I was very disgruntled and in the end it worked out...So really all my careers I went into for the wrong reasons – have you realised that? I went into the BBC because I was being made to leave school [grrr] and in that case I'll work in London and do something odd. I started librarianship because I thought I loved books and really librarians are to do with organising and, ok I can do that. I started teaching to fit in with the children [laugh] and as far as guidance at school was concerned it was virtually nil except when I was leaving the Head said 'You should teach' and by then I had enough gall to say 'Over my dead body'. She said 'It's a shame because I think you would enjoy it' which was why I was even more cynical when I started doing it and I came to love it afterwards... I feel sad in a way [looking back] because I'm aware that there are parts of me I haven't used as well as I might I feel, yes, I'm not at the end I've got plenty ahead. I can see gaps where I might have done something else.

Statistical Appendix

This book is mainly concerned with the qualitative analysis of the relation between gender, education and paid employment. Some statistical background may be found useful to the reader.

1 Education

1.1 Number of pupils in secondary schools in England and Wales 1958

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of pupils 11–14	Number of pupils 15–18
All-age	2,297	120,189*	723
Secondary modern and other secondary **	3,890	1,499,183	49,800
Grammar including direct grant	1,414	452,652	229,324
Secondary technical	279	67,681	27,513
Comprehensive***	86	63,666	11,384
Bilateral and multilateral	54	29,614	3,133
	8,020	2,232,985	321,877
Total pupils 2,554,862			

*Independent schools omitted because of lack of data

** includes a number of secondary selective schools known as 'central' schools. In 1958 there were under 200 such schools accounting for 25% of total pupils 15 or over in secondary modern schools

*** Figures are misleading for England as arithmetically more proportionate in Wales, where there are 25 schools and 13,000 pupils.

Source: Ministry of Education, 15–18 (*Crowther Report*) 1959, vol. 1, table 5, p. 17

1.2 Proportion of total age groups in different kinds of education, 1957–58 England and Wales (%) 1957–58

Education	15 boys	15 girls	16 boys	16 girls	17 boys	17 girls	18 boys	18 girls
Full-time school or further education	39.8	39.7	22.1	22	13	10.8	7.8	5.4
Part-time day	16.2	5.2	24.5	7.1	24.6	6.0	18.1	2.2

1.2 Proportion of total age groups in different kinds of education, 1957–58 England and Wales (%) 1957–58 – *continued*

Education	15 boys	15 girls	16 boys	16 girls	17 boys	17 girls	18 boys	18 girls
Full-time and part-time	56	44.9	46.6	29.1	37.6	16.8	25.9	7.6
Evening	24.5	23.1	25.3	23.7	23.8	20.3	17.8	14.9
None	19.5	32	28.1	47.2	38.6	62.9	56.3	77.5
Total (thousands)	309	295	272	263	277	269	289	283

Source: Ministry of Education, 15–18 (*Crowther Report*) 1959, vol. 1, table 1, p. 6

2 Employment

2.1 Number of young persons entering employment by age (Great Britain) thousands

Year	Boys 15	Girls 15	Boys 16	Girls 16	Boys 17	Girls 17	Boys total	Girls total
1950	225.2	214.2	37.0	35.8	11.0	13.5	273.2	263.5
1955	214.1	202.6	36.4	33.4	9.1	12.1	259.6	248.1
1960	219.8	204.1	51.4	42.6	15.0	14.8	286.3	261.5

Source: British Labour Statistics Historical Abstracts 1886–1968 (HMSO: London, 1971) Table 158.

2.2 Class of employment entered by young people (Great Britain) thousands

Year	Apprenticeship to skilled occupation		Employment leading to recognised professional occupations		Clerical		Other		Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys (Girls)
1950	92.3	21.2	4.6	3.5	26.8	78.9	149.4	159.8	273.2 (263.5)
1955	96.7	15.6	3.2	2.7	21.7	83.4	138.0	146.5	259.6 (248.1)
1960	103.0	20.0	4.3	3.1	30.4	99.8	148.6	138.7	286.3 (261.5)

Source: British Labour Statistics Historical Abstracts 1886–1968 (HMSO: London, 1971) Table 158

2.3 Female employees in civil employment as percentage of all females by quinquennial age groups, 1951 & 1959 thousands

Age group	Total 1951	Employed	Employed %	Total 1959	Employed	Employed %
15-19	1558	1209	77.6	1644	1211	73.7
20-4	1692	1137	67.2	1609	1045	64.9
25-9	1848	778	42.1	1601	657	41.0
30-4	1744	632	36.2	1691	624	36.9
35-9	1882	673	35.8	1941	787	40.5
40-4	1897	729	38.4	1602	713	44.5
45-9	1797	679	37.8	1848	817	44.2
50-4	1674	554	33.1	1806	754	41.7
55-9	1479	411	27.8	1667	581	34.9
60-4	1331	182	13.7	1463	281	19.2
65-9	1158	70	6	1250	121	9.7
15-69	18058	7054	39.1	18122	7591	41.9

Source: Routh, *Occupation and Pay in Britain 1906-60* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) table 22, p. 47

2.4 Distribution of economically active population by occupational category. Great Britain (males and females)

Standard census occupational category	1951 males	1951 females	1961 males	1961 females
Self employed & higher grade salaried professional	2.8	1	4.5	1.1
Employers and proprietors	5.7	3.2	4.8	3.0
Administrators & managers	6.8	2.7	7.5	2.6
Lower grade salaried professionals and technicians	3.0	7.9	4.0	9.2
Inspectors, supervisors and foreman	3.3	1.1	3.8	0.9
Clerical workers	6.0	20.3	6.5	25.5
Sales personnel and shop assistants	4.0	9.6	3.9	10.0
Skilled manual workers including self employed artisans	30.3	12.7	32.3	10.8

2.4 Distribution of economically active population by occupational category. Great Britain (males and females) – *continued*

Standard census occupational category	1951 males	1951 females	1961 males	1961 females
Semi-skilled manual workers	24.3	33.6	22.8	30.9
Unskilled manual workers	13.8	7.9	9.9	6.0
Total active population in thousands	15584	6930	15992	7649

Source: J. Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), table 2.3, p. 62.

2.5 Analyses of the occupied population 1921–1951, 1951 figures thousands (aged 15 or over)

	Men	Women
Public administration	214	21
Armed Forces	560	18
Professional and technical	788	588
Professional entertainers and sportsmen	90	23
Personal service	512	1,610
Commercial finance and insurance (excluding clerical)	1,357	856
Clerks, typists etc	932	1,409
Transport and communication	1,569	149
Agriculture, horticulture and floristry	1,105	114
Fishing	26	–
Mining and quarrying	675	2
Metal manufacturing engineering and allied trades	2,517	208
Building and contracting incl painting and decorating	1,268	14
Wood cane and cork, incl furniture	492	15
Treatment of non metalliferous mining products other than coal	86	48
Coal, gas and coke, chemicals and allied trades	102	14
Leather, leather goods incl boots and shoes and fur	125	67
Paper, books and printing	178	93
Textiles	220	413

2.5 Analyses of the occupied population 1921–1951, 1951 figures thousands (aged 15 or over) – *continued*

	Men	Women
Textile goods and clothing other than shoes	135	474
Food drink and tobacco	175	97
Administrators or managers in extractive or manufacturing industries	347	30
Warehousemen, packers, storekeepers, bottlers etc	379	199
All others occupied	1,794	497
Total occupied	15,649	6,961
Total unoccupied	2,213	13,084

Source: British Labour Statistics Historical Abstracts 1886–1968 (HMSO: London, 1971) Table 158; Source cited Abstract of British Historical Statistics B. R. Mitchell with collaboration of Phyllis Dean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962)

Notes

Chapter 1 Introduction: The Forgotten Generation

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- 3 J. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (London: Allen Lane, 1974); R. Coward, *Our Treacherous Hearts; Why Women Let Men Get Their Own Way* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).
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- 6 C. M. Stewart, 'Future Trends in the Employment of Married Women', *British Journal of Sociology* (1961) 12 (1) 1–11.
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- 8 R. K. Kelsall, A. Poole and A. Kuhn, *Graduates: The Sociology of an Elite* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 118.
- 9 H. Land, B. Martin and S. Spencer, *ENEF's Forty-Five Years of Plugging the Gaps in Women's Education: From Daughters to Mothers* (Bristol: School for Policy Studies, 2000), pp. 17–19.
- 10 Birmingham Feminist History Group, 'Feminism as Femininity in the 1950s', *Feminist Review* (1979) 3, 48–65, p. 63.
- 11 S. De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Picador, f.p. 1949, 1988); B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Pan, 1983, f.p. 1963); H. Gavron, *The Captive Wife: Conflicts of Housebound Mothers* (London: Penguin, 1966).
- 12 Gavron (1966), p. 145.
- 13 M. Griffiths, *Feminisms and the Self: The Web of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1995).
- 14 The modern 'state' is recognised as comprising legislature, executive, central and local administration and police and armed forces. This multi faceted nature compromises its apparently homogenous nature. N. Abercrombie, S. Hill, B. Turner, *Dictionary of Sociology* (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 241.
- 15 O. Campbell, *The Feminine Point of View: Report of a Conference* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1952), p. 25.
- 16 See M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972); L. Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Arnold, 2000); J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (London: Longman, 2000).
- 17 J. Scott, Women's History in P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives in Historical Writing* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State Press, 1991).

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- 19 Ibid., p. 4; J. Wellens 'The Bulge Progress Report Number 1', *Technical Education* (November–December, 1959), 8–9, p. 8.
- 20 These essays have disappeared, despite inquiries to Birkbeck.
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- 22 Ibid., p. 33.
- 23 J. Lewis, *Women in England 1870–1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1984); *Women in Britain Since 1945: Women, Family, Work and the State in the Post-War Years* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); E. Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State* (London: Tavistock, 1977); *Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Post-War Britain 1945–1968* (London: Tavistock, 1980).
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- 25 P. Tinkler, P. 'Girlhood in Transition? Preparing English Girls for Adulthood in a Reconstructed Britain', in C. Duchon and I. Bandhauer-Schoffmann (eds) *When The War Was Over: Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1940–1956* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2000b), 59–70; P. Tinkler, 'Youth's Opportunity? The Education Act of 1944 and Proposals for Part-Time Continuing Education', *History of Education*, vol. 30 (2001) (1) 77–94; Sarah Aiston's PhD thesis explores the experience of Liverpool University women students in the 1950s; Elizabeth Kirk's MPhil focuses on Royal Holloway.
- 26 Birmingham Feminist History Group (1979), p. 63.
- 27 Lewis (1992), p. 40. Entrenched ideas on women's roles took a long time to change. Sue Sharpe observed highly gendered attitudes by girls to career choice in 1976. S. Sharpe, *'Just Like a Girl'. How Girls Learn to be Women* (London: Penguin, 1976).
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- 29 Ministry of Education, *Education in 1959. Report of the Ministry of Education and Statistics for England and Wales* (London: HMSO, 1960), Cmnd 1088, table 5, p. 142.
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- 32 E. Coxhead, *Women in the Professions* (British Council Pamphlet, 1961), p. 29.
- 33 Ibid., p. 30.
- 34 For example twilight shifts were introduced in order to allow women to work once their husbands were home.
- 35 Heron (1985), p. 5.

- 36 The Birmingham Feminist History Group (1979), p. 63.
- 37 P. Abbot and R. Sapsford, *Women and Social Class* (London: Tavistock, 1987); N. Britten and A. Heath, 'Women, Men and Social Class', in E. Garmarnikov, D. Morgan, J. Purvis, D. Taylorson (eds) *Gender Class and Work* (London: Heinemann, 1983) 46–60. The problematic relationship between women and social class occurs throughout this book.
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- 46 R. Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997) pp. 169–71.
- 47 Ministry of Education, *Citizens Growing Up: At Home, in School and After* (London: HMSO, 1949), p. 31.
- 48 J. Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).
- 49 The term 'Butskellism' was coined by *The Economist* 13.2.1954 to reflect contemporary politics. See B. Harrison, 'The Rise and Fall of Political Consensus in Britain since 1940', *History* (1999) 84, 301–324.
- 50 H. Jones and M. Kandiah (eds) *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945–1964* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).
- 51 B. Conekin, F. Mort and C. Waters (eds) *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945–1964* (London: Rivers Oram, 1999), p. 4. The introduction provides an excellent critique of the historiography of the 1950s.
- 52 P. Johnson (ed.) *20th Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, London: Longman, 1994), p. 1.
- 53 This fascination with the royal family is discussed in chapter six.
- 54 See C. Waters, 'Disorders of the Mind, Disorders of the Body Social: Peter Wildeblood and the Making of the Modern Homosexual', in Conekin et al. (London: Rivers Oram, 1999), 134–151; J. Weeks (1981) *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981), 232–248.
- 55 J. Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860–1960* (Goldenbridge Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), p. 3.
- 56 C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920–60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
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- 61 Springhall (1986), p. 190.
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- 63 P. Tinkler, 'Sexuality and Citizenship: The State and Girls' Leisure Provision in England, 1939–45', *Women's History Review* 4, 2 (1995a) 193–217, p. 196.
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- 71 T. Keil, 'Social Structure and Status in Career Development', in A. Watts, D. Super and J. Kidd, *Career Development in Britain: Some Contributions to Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: CRAC, 1981), p. 181.
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- 73 R. V. Clements, *The Choice of Careers by Schoolchildren* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), p. 25.
- 74 Sharpe (1976).
- 75 Ibid., p. 62.
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- 86 Tinkler (1995b).
- 87 S. Weiner, *Enfants Terribles, Youth and Femininity in the Mass Media in France, 1945–1968* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001). Weiner's extensive bibliography provides further reading for the construction of adolescence in other parts of Europe.
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- 89 K. Abbot and E. Bompas, *The Woman Citizen and Social Security: A Criticism of the Proposals of the Beveridge Report as they Affect Women* (London: Women's Freedom League pamphlet, 1943).
- 90 These are also located at University of Warwick Modern Records Centre.
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- 93 J. Bennett, 'Feminism and History', *Gender and History*, 1 (3) (1989), 251–272, p. 253.

Chapter 2 Women and the Welfare State

- 1 M. P. Mr Griffiths. House of Commons Debates 1943, vol. 391, col. 568.
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- 3 See J. Giles for a more detailed discussion of the gendering of modernity, *The Parlour and the Suburb* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).
- 4 H. M. Government, *Social Insurance and the Allied Services* (The Beveridge Report), Cmd. 6404 (London: HMSO, 1942).
- 5 Contributing women's organisations included: Married Women's Association, Edinburgh National Women Citizens' Association, Family Endowment Society, National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, National Council of Women of Great Britain, National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Great Britain and Ireland, National Federation of Women's Institutes, National Union of Women Teachers, Queen's Institute of District Nursing, Scottish Midwives Association, Six Point Group, United Women's Insurance Society, Women's Co-operative Guild, Women's Freedom League, Women's Pension League (Scotland).
- 6 K. Abbot and E. Bompas, *The Woman Citizen and Social Security: A Criticism of the Proposals of the Beveridge Report as they Affect Women*, Women's Freedom League pamphlet, 1943.
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- 9 S. Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* (London: Pluto Press, 1973a); R. Bridenthall, C. Koonz and S. Stuard (eds) *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).
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- 13 Terry Jordan also questions this commonly held assumption of the 50s as 'a bland transition while the world caught its breath between the excitements of World War II and the Singing Sixties', *Growing Up in the Fifties* (London: Optima, 1990).
- 14 M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914–1959* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 285.
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- 16 Marwick (1990); D. Marquand and A. Seldon (eds) *Ideas That Shaped Post-War Britain* (London: Fontana, 1996).
- 17 Lewis (1984; 1992); Wilson (1977; 1980).
- 18 Lewis (1992).

- 19 Ibid., p. 21.
- 20 Ibid., p. 92.
- 21 Wilson (1977) p. 39.
- 22 Ibid., p. 35.
- 23 From the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, following the increased availability of domestic training colleges, middle-class girls had followed this idea of creating a 'career' out of being mother and wife, see S. Spencer, 'Advice and Ambition in a Girls' Public Day School: The Case of Sutton High School, 1884–1924', *Women's History Review* (2000a), 9 (1), 75–94.
- 24 Wilson (1977), p. 9.
- 25 Ibid., p. 7.
- 26 House of Commons Debates 1944–5, vol. 408, col. 2259.
- 27 Wilson (1980), p. 3.
- 28 S. Blackburn, 'How Useful are Feminist Theories of the Welfare State?', *Women's History Review* (1995) (4) 3, 369–394. Blackburn cites Pat Thane (1993) 'Women in the British Labour Party and the Construction of State Welfare, 1906–39', in S. Koven and S. Michel (eds) *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of the Welfare States* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 342–377. For an overview of feminist theories of the welfare state see: J. Kenway, 'Feminist Theories of the State: To Be or Not To Be?', in M. Blair, J. Holland and S. Sheldon (eds) *Identity and Diversity: Gender and the Experience of Education* (Clevedon: Open University Press, 1995).
- 29 Tosh (2000), p. 118. Tosh contrasts 'present-mindedness' with those historians like Elton who seek to understand 'the past in its own terms' and highlights the weaknesses in both arguments.
- 30 J. Dale and P. Foster, *Feminists and State Welfare* (London: Routledge, 1986). Chapter 6 illustrates the high status also awarded to the job of housekeeping by women's magazines even in relation to women in the professions.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Blackburn (1995), p. 376. See also Clarke et al. (1987), p. 101. They argue that the newer women's organisations like the Married Women's Association and the Council of Married Women supported Beveridge's view of reconstruction that women's primary duty was 'hearth and home' and that women's response must be viewed in the light of this.
- 33 J. Harris, *William Beveridge, a Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977); J. Beveridge, *Beveridge and his Plan* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954).
- 34 R. Titmuss, *Essays on the Welfare State* (London: Allen and Unwin, f.p. 1958, 1976).
- 35 Ibid. 'Social Administration in a Changing Society', p. 98. The idea of the companionate marriage was directly linked to changing economic relationships within marriage. Dr David Mace writing in *Housewife*, February 1956, p. 38: 'The economic emancipation of women has made marriage an equal financial partnership'. Significantly this was written as part of a marriage guidance feature in which economic equality was seen as a potential problem within marriage.

- 36 J. Finch and P. Summerfield, 'Social Reconstruction and the Emergence of Companionate Marriage, 1945–59', in D. Clarke (ed.) *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change. Writings for Jacqueline Burgoyne (1922–88)* (Routledge: London, 1988), p. 31.
- 37 Myrdal and Klein (1956).
- 38 T. Gourvish and A. O'Day, *Britain Since 1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 193–4. Gourvish and O'Day drew these figures from a combination of the census returns, employment statistics and House of Lords Reports. They highlighted how difficult it is to trace women's economic activity as many did not pay insurance or worked as 'outworkers'. It is the rise in participation rather than specific numbers which is significant.
- 39 S. Pedersen, 'The Failure of Feminism in the Making of the British Welfare State', *Radical History Review* (1989), 43, 86–110, p. 103.
- 40 Pedersen (1989), p. 106.
- 41 Social Insurance and Allied Services [SIAS], London: HMSO, Cmd. 6404, p. 6.
- 42 Ibid., p. 50.
- 43 Giles (2004).
- 44 The target for the ideal family was four children, D. Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London: Virago, 1983), p. 151, a figure confirmed by articles in *Housewife*, January, 1956, p. 123; July 1956, pp. 102–3.
- 45 G. D. H. Cole, *Beveridge Explained* (New Statesman Pamphlet: London, 1942), p. 41.
- 46 Marwick (1990) notes that the Report was attacked by many conservatives and Churchill was reluctant to commit himself to support, p. 46.
- 47 Inside front cover SIAS.
- 48 Marwick (1990) describes Beveridge as a: 'vain and difficult man', very much a product of the upper-class and 'fustian' in his approach. p. 46.
- 49 SIAS, p. 9. [my italics]
- 50 Lewis (1992), p. 92.
- 51 Debate on the Population Trends, 16.7.1943, House of Commons Debates, vol. 391, col. 601.
- 52 SIAS, p. 9.
- 53 Ibid., p. 64.
- 54 W. Beveridge, *Full Employment in a Free Society* (London: Allen and Unwin, f.p. 1944, 1967), p. 15.
- 55 Titmuss (1958), p. 92.
- 56 Blackburn (1995); H. Land, 'Women: Supporters or Supported?', in D. L. Barker and S. Allen (eds) *Sexual Divisions and Society: Process and Change* (London: Tavistock, 1976) pp. 108–132.
- 57 SIAS, p. 53.
- 58 Gourvish and O'Day (1992), p. 192.
- 59 Lady Apsley, House of Commons debate on Women in National Service, 3rd August 1943, Hansard, vol. 391, col. 2126. Lady Apsley demanded training for girls then in the forces: 'Woman's fundamental knowledge is instinctively based in the home'. Yet she also demanded that courses should be run on home-making which included: 'home nursing, mending, dietetics and child and social welfare'.

- 60 House of Commons Debates on Conscription of Women. 3.8.1943.
- 61 Giles (2004).
- 62 SIAS, p. 135.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 J. Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health: A Report Prepared on Behalf of the World Health Organisation* (Geneva: World Health Organisation, 1952); D. Winnicott, *The Child and the Family* (London: Tavistock, 1957).
- 65 L. Davidoff, M. Doolittle, J. Fink and K. Holden, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830–1960* (London: Longman, 1999), p. 197.
- 66 SIAS, p. 14. My italics.
- 67 Beveridge (1967) p. 20.
- 68 This conflict between the need to encourage young people to make a choice about their future and an assumption that all young women would take up full-time domesticity was also prevalent in some of the careers literature.
- 69 As women also earned less than their male peers, a proposal for equal insurance payments would also have been problematic. See later discussion recorded by Mass Observation.
- 70 PRO/CAB/87/77 Interdepartmental Committee on Social Insurance and the Allied Services. Meetings 1–15, vol. 1. Meeting 11.3.1942. Minutes, p. 29.
- 71 PRO PIN 8/48.
- 72 J. Beveridge (1954), p. 106.
- 73 Ibid., p. 154.
- 74 Ibid., p. 184.
- 75 Lewis (1992).
- 76 SIAS, p. 50.
- 77 Lister (1997), p. 72.
- 78 Ibid., p. 77.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Abbot and Bompas (1943) p. 4.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Deputation to discuss the position of married women under the Beveridge proposals. PRO PIN 8/48.
- 83 Abbot and Bompas (1943), p. 3.
- 84 Beveridge suggested a retirement age of 65 for men and 60 for women, based on an assumption that women tended to marry men 5 years older than themselves. However, he originally wanted this to be a minimum, not a statutory retirement age; interesting in the light of current debates over retirement ages.
- 85 Abbot and Bompas (1943) p. 19.
- 86 PRO PIN 8/48.
- 87 PRO PIN 8/48 Deputation to discuss the position of married women under the Beveridge proposals. Letter 23.2.1944.
- 88 PRO PIN 8/48.
- 89 This organisation gave itself the subtitle 'The Housewives' Trade Union'. Originally a sub-committee of the Six Point Group, it was a nationwide organisation and campaigned unsuccessfully to be given official union status by the TUC. Warwick Modern Records MSS 292/91/169.

- 90 PRO PIN 8/66.
- 91 PRO PIN 8/65.
- 92 Abbot and Bompas (1943), p. 20.
- 93 Lewis (1992), p. 21.
- 94 J. Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War: Continuities of Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 95 J. Beveridge (1954), p. 124.
- 96 Mass Observation Archive File 1538 (report) 24.12.1942. Janet Beveridge (1954) referred to the volume of press cuttings which amassed on the Report: 'Every daily paper in Britain seems to have printed an account of the Plan, sometimes in great detail and with copious and nearly always highly commendatory criticism', p. 117, although of course her reading might have been somewhat biased!
- 97 20/12/42 Female, 45 (no class). The women MPs in the House of Commons, although representing the three political parties and an Independent appear to have accepted the proposals as they regarded women. The only dissent was in the original plan to pay family allowances to the father. See K. Parker, 'Women MPs, Feminism and Domestic Policy in the Second World War', unpublished Oxford University DPhil thesis, 1994.
- 98 M. Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy and Social Policy in Britain, c. 1870–1959* (Oxford Historical Monographs, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1998).
- 99 File E, Box 1, Beveridge Indirects, Female, 32, temporary civil servant.
- 100 Ibid., Female, 38, civil servant.
- 101 Ibid., Female, 35, newsagent.
- 102 Ibid., Female, 25, barmaid, Westminster.
- 103 Ibid., Female, 60, social class D.
- 104 Women's unseen role in the welfare state as unpaid carers has been one feature of the feminist critique of the welfare state. D. Gladstone, *The Twentieth Century Welfare State* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 136.
- 105 Myrdal and Klein (1956); Association of Headmistresses' Archive; Association of Assistant Mistresses' Journal, University of Warwick Modern Records Centre.
- 106 Female, 45, social class C. File E, Box 1, Beveridge indirects.
- 107 Ibid., 19/12/42, Letter; also Calder and Sheridan (1984) pp. 181–2.
- 108 W. Crofts, 'The Attlee Government's Pursuit of Women', *History Today*, vol. 36, August (1986) 29–35.
- 109 Box 1, File C, Miscellaneous reactions to the Beveridge Report 1942/3.
- 110 Davidoff et al. (1999), pp. 221–338 discusses the anomalous position of the spinster's place in society.
- 111 Female, 55, social class B.
- 112 See Davidoff et al. (1999), pp. 221/2.
- 113 This is explored further in the chapters on women's magazines and the interviews.
- 114 File 1673, 5.5.1943, Social Security and Parliament. 'Diary of a Middle Aged Woman'.
- 115 Wilson (1977); Lewis (1992).
- 116 Pedersen (1989) p. 103.
- 117 See tables 1.1 and 1.2 in the appendix.

Chapter 3 Formal Education and Career Choice

- 1 M. Woollett, 'The Technical High School for Girls', *Technical Education*, October, 1959, 4–6, p. 4.
- 2 Changes in mental health legislation and provision marginalised sections of the community from comprehensive state support. Women's role was implicated on both sides of this debate. The rise of 'problem families' emphasised growing concern at the significance of the mother and her intellectual ability. In addition the growth of the National Health service provided increased job opportunities, often in the emergent profession of social work which built on a history of middle class women's philanthropic involvement. See M. Thomson (1998).
- 3 Association of Headmistresses' Papers, MSS. 188/4/1/17, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick. (WMR) Headmistresses' Association (HMA) Education Committee Minutes, 7.3.1958, p. 291.
- 4 K. Roberts, *From School to Work: A Study of the Youth Employment Service* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971), p. 145. Roberts referred to 'opportunity' rather than 'choice', claiming that the education system had already substantially reduced the 'choice' available to an individual by the time job decisions were made.
- 5 K. Jones, *Education in Britain 1944 to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 60.
- 6 Griffiths (1995), p. 86.
- 7 I. Grosvenor, *Assimilating Identities: racism and educational policy in post-1945 Britain* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997).
- 8 McCulloch (1998), pp. 77–78; Jackson and Marsden (1962), focused on the previous generation. They found that working-class children who attended grammar school were more likely to leave early than their middle-class counterparts.
- 9 Jones (2003), p. 46.
- 10 In 1959, 192,221 fourteen year old girls attended secondary modern schools or modern streams in bi/multi lateral schools; 8,918 attended technical schools and 59,744 attended grammar schools or streams. Ministry of Education (1959), table 4, p. 137.
- 11 W. Liversidge, 'Life Chances', *Sociological Review*, 1962, vol. 10, 17–34. The social class of the pupils was determined by the occupation of the father: 'following other investigators, occupation was taken as the best single criterion of social class'. The occupations were graded according to the Registrar General's Index, p. 18; 'economic class for women is always in relation to men – fathers and husbands', Claricoates, in R. Deem (ed.) *Women's Work and Schooling* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 40.
- 12 C. Dyhouse (1978).
- 13 P. W. Musgrave (ed.) *Sociology, History and Education* (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 3.
- 14 Jones (2003), p. 40. Ministry of Education, *Britain's Future and Technical Education*, 1958.
- 15 The clash between parents and daughters over school leaving is discussed again in the interview chapter. The correlation between the leaving age of fathers and sons is quantified in the second volume of Ministry of Education (1959) 15–18, pp. 15–17.

- 16 J. Purvis, 'The Double Burden of Class and Gender in the Schooling of Working-Class Girls in 19th Century England 1800–1870', in L. Barton and S. Walker (eds), *Schools, Teachers and Teaching* (Brighton: Falmer, 1981), pp. 97–116; S. Delamont and L. Duffin (eds), *The Victorian Woman, Her Cultural and Physical World* (London: Croom Helm, 1978).
- 17 M. Arnot, M. David and G. Weiner, *Closing the Gender Gap: Post-war Education and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p. 68.
- 18 T. Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory* (New York and London: Free Press (Macmillan), 1954).
- 19 Birmingham Feminist History Group (1979), p. 3.
- 20 E. Byrne, *Women and Education* (London: Tavistock, 1978).
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 151.
- 23 R. Deem (1980), p. 1.
- 24 M. Arnot, 'Culture and Political Economy: Dual Perspectives in the Sociology of Women's Education', *Educational Analysis*, 1980, vol. 3 (1) 97–168.
- 25 G. McCulloch and L. Sobell, 'Towards a Social History of the Secondary Modern Schools', *History of Education*, 1994, vol. 23 (3) 275–286; McCulloch (1998).
- 26 McCulloch (1998), p. 46.
- 27 B. Simon, *Education and the Social Order 1940–90* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1991).
- 28 T. R. Fyvel (1963); Ministry of Education (1959) 15–18, pp. 38–44.
- 29 McCulloch (1998), p. 121.
- 30 Jones (2003), 67.
- 31 Board of Education, *Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools* (Norwood Report) (London: HMSO, 1943); Ministry of Education (1959); Ministry of Education (1963) *Half Our Future* (Newsom Report) (London: HMSO, 1963).
- 32 A. M. Wolpe, 'Official Ideology for Girls', in M. Flude and J. Ahier (eds) *Educability, Schools and Ideology* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), pp. 138–159.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- 34 P. Tinkler (2001).
- 35 M. P. Carter (1962), p. 52.
- 36 Miriam David has identified the way in which the family and the education system work together to: 'sustain and reproduce the social and economic status quo' and maintain the sexual and social division of labour. M. David, *The State the Family and Education* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1980).
- 37 C. Avent, *Careering Along: Careers Guidance* (Reading: Educational Explorers, 1975), p. 28.
- 38 Jones (2003), p. 40.
- 39 Carter (1962), p. 44.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 91. With the prospect of National Service before them, and posting to trouble spots like Suez and Cyprus, boys may have felt uncertain rather than apathetic about planning their long term future.
- 41 Carter (1962), p. 115.

- 42 Ibid., p. 310.
- 43 H. C. Dent, *Secondary Modern School: An Interim Report* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1958); W. Taylor, *The Secondary Modern School* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963).
- 44 Dent (1958) p. 42; W. P. Hadrill also commented on the improved nature of boys' attitude when vocational subjects were introduced, 'Vocational and Near-Vocational Interests in the Curriculum of the Secondary Modern School', *The Vocational Aspect*, Spring, 1955, 45–58.
- 45 Dent (1958), p. 44.
- 46 Ibid., p. 76.
- 47 Ibid., p. 169.
- 48 Ibid., p. 171; Ministry of Education, *School and Life. A First Enquiry into the Transition from School to Independent Life* (London: HMSO, 1947) also emphasised the need to find a balance between the needs of a child as a growing individual and as a citizen.
- 49 Dent (1958), p. 116. This was similar to Victorian elementary school practice.
- 50 Ibid., p. 129.
- 51 Taylor (1963), p. 14.
- 52 Ibid., p. 19.
- 53 Ibid., p. 69.
- 54 Ibid., p. 77.
- 55 J. E. Floud, A. H. Halsey and F. M. Martin, *Social Class and Educational Opportunity* (London: William Heinemann, 1956).
- 56 J. Floud, 'Social Class and the 11+', *Journal of Education*, October, 1956, 427–430, p. 428.
- 57 O. Banks, 'Some Reflections on Gender, Sociology and Women's History', *Women's History Review*, 1999, 8 (3), 401–410.
- 58 S. Acker, 'No-Woman's land: British Sociology of Education, 1960–1979', *Sociological Review*, 1981, 29 (1), 77–104.
- 59 Ibid., p. 79.
- 60 O. Banks, *Parity and Prestige in English Secondary Education: A Study in Educational Sociology* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 202.
- 61 D. Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Pandora, 1990) analyses the silencing effect of using he/man: 'Man (and he) is in constant use as a term which supposedly includes females, and one of the outcomes of this practice has been to plant *man* uppermost in our minds', p. 151.
- 62 Super (1957), p. 3.
- 63 Ibid., p. 6.
- 64 Ibid., p. 76.
- 65 Veness (1962), p. xvii.
- 66 E. Sykes, *Sociological Review*, vol. 1 (1953) 29–47, p. 29.
- 67 Ibid., p. 45.
- 68 M. Wilson, 'The Vocational Preferences of Secondary Modern School Children', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 23, June 1953, 97–113.
- 69 This attitude to nursing may have been partly due to its rather romantic and glamorous image, as illustrated by the instant success of the 'Nurse Carter' series of novels published by Chatto and Windus.

- 70 Ibid., pp. 112/3.
- 71 Ibid., p. 170. This is similar to Ferdinand Zweig's conclusions in F. Zweig, *Women's Life and Labour* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1952).
- 72 M. Wilson, 'The Vocational Preferences of Secondary Modern School Children', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 23, November 1953, 163–179, p. 175.
- 73 Liversidge (1962).
- 74 This sentiment was also expressed in 1956: 'In an industrialised economy, the educational system becomes the prime agency of occupational selection and mobility', R. Hall and J. A. Lauwerys (eds) *The Yearbook of Education, Education and Economics* (London: Evans Bros, 1956) p. 523.
- 75 McCulloch (1998).
- 76 Liversidge (1962), p. 33.
- 77 Ibid., p. 22.
- 78 Arnot (1980).
- 79 WMR MSS 59/4/3/25, Spring, 1958, Journal AAM. Report of Annual Conference. E. G. Barber from Vickers Armstrong. My italics.
- 80 H. Land, 'Who still cares for the family? Recent developments in income maintenance taxation and family law', in J. Lewis (ed.), *Women's Welfare, Women's Rights* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).
- 81 WMR MSS 188/4/1/16, HMA Reports 1955–57. Speech to Annual Conference 1956, 'Diversity and Unity', p. 3.
- 82 WMR MSS 188/4/1/16, Annual Report 1954/5. 'The Grammar School, Today and Tomorrow', paper read by Miss M. B. Ambrose, headmistress of Dudley High School for Girls, p. 19.
- 83 WMR MSS 59/4/3/22, Journal of AAM Conference proceedings, 1957, p. 7.
- 84 WMR MSS 188/4/1/16, Proceedings of the conference and 83rd meeting 1957, p. 91.
- 85 WMR MSS 188/4/1/16, HMA Annual Report 1954/5, 'The Grammar School, Today and Tomorrow', p. 20.
- 86 WMR MSS 188/4/1/16, HMA Annual Report 1954/5, Miss A. M. Bozman, 'The Final Years: The Sixth Form', p. 25.
- 87 WMR MSS 188/4/1/16, HMA Annual Reports. Meeting of the Careers Committee, November, 1954, p. 2.
- 88 WMR MSS 188/4/1/17, HMA Comments on Report of Central Advisory Committee on Education, 15–18, May 1960, pp. 8,9. My italics.
- 89 Birmingham Feminist History Group (1979).
- 90 WMR MSS 59/4/3/27, Autumn, 1958, p. 161.
- 91 Gendered issues were raised in this committee especially the position of married female teachers in recruitment planning. WMR MSS 188/4/1/17, Report for 1958 Joint Four Executive of the Four Secondary Associations, p. 8.
- 92 WMR MSS 59/4/4/22, Spring, 1957. AAM Presidential Address 73rd AGM and conference, p. 5.
- 93 WMR 59/4/3/25, AAM Journal, Spring, 1958, p. 47.
- 94 Jones (2003), p. 44.
- 95 WMR MSS 59/4/3/26 AAM Journal, Summer, 1958, p. 75.

- 96 WMR MSS 59/4/4/22, Annual Conference AAM. Spring, 1957, Professor John Coulson, 'Opportunities for and Training of Girls in Technology', p. 19.
- 97 Ibid., p. 137.
- 98 See C. Dyhouse (forthcoming) *Gendering Higher Education*.
- 99 O. Banks, *Sociology of Education* (London: Batsford, 1968), table 1 p. 27.
- 100 S. J. Aiston, 'The Life Experiences of University-Educated Women: Graduates of the University of Liverpool', 1947–1979 (PhD, University of Liverpool, 2000); E. Kirk, *Femininity and female culture at Royal Holloway and Bedford Colleges 1945–1965* (MPhil Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, 2002); P. Thane, 'Girton Graduates Earning and Learning, 1920s–1930s', *Women's History Review*, 13, 3 (2004).
- 101 J. Hubback, *Wives Who Went to College* (London: Heinemann, 1957).
- 102 WMR MSS 59/4/3/25, Spring, 1958, p. 61.
- 103 Arnot (1980).
- 104 PRO ED146/31 File 2. Oral and written evidence to the Crowther Report.
- 105 Tinkler (2001). In this case 'adolescence' was restricted to the ages of school-leaving – that is 15–18. However, it must be borne in mind that young people did not achieve full legal adult status until the age of 21, thus even those between the age of 18–21 were still somewhat marginal to the adult world.
- 106 Ministry of Education (1959) vol. 1, xxvii.
- 107 The other two surveys derived their sample population from technical schools and National Service recruits.
- 108 PRO ED146/31 File 2. National Association of Schoolmasters, National Institute of Adult Education, National Association of Youth Employment Officers.
- 109 PRO ED146/31 File 2. London County Council (1957) 'Special Studies in Secondary Schools': 'Care must be taken to avoid giving employers, parents and pupils wrong ideas that 'a trade' is being taught, or exaggerated ideas about the specific occupational qualification the secondary education can give', p. 27.
- 110 PRO ED146/31 File 2. The Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions, p. 15.
- 111 PRO ED146/31 File 2. Association of Heads of Secondary Technical Schools.
- 112 PRO ED146/31 File 2. London County Council (1957) 'Special Studies in Secondary Schools', p. 25.
- 113 Ibid., p. 8.
- 114 PRO ED146/31 File 2. National Union of Women Teachers.
- 115 PRO ED146/31 File 2 London County Council (1957) 'Special Studies in Secondary Schools', p. 30.
- 116 PRO ED146/31 File 2. AAM.
- 117 Ibid., p. 2.
- 118 Tinkler (2001).
- 119 PRO ED146/31 File 2. Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education.
- 120 Simon (1991).
- 121 PRO ED146/31 File 2. Summary of evidence from the Association of Education Officers.

- 122 McCulloch (1998). The Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions declared that: 'at present there is too much concentration on the elite [...] need to develop the full potential of all children'.
- 123 PRO ED146/31 File 2. AAM, p. 4.
- 124 Ministry of Education (1959), vol. 2, p. 17.
- 125 Ibid., p. 34, para 51.
- 126 Wolpe (1974).
- 127 Dyhouse (1978).
- 128 Ministry of Education (1959), vol. 1, p. 32.
- 129 Ibid., p. 110.
- 130 Griffiths (1995), p. 79.
- 131 WMR MSS TBN 50. Executive committee meeting, February 1957. Miss Hilton from the Women's Employment Federation addressed the careers committee of the HMA and emphasised the changing pattern of female employment.
- 132 Byrne (1978).
- 133 Ministry of Education (1959), p. 34.

Chapter 4 Advice Manuals and *Women's Employment*

- 1 Myrdal and Klein (1956), p. 156.
- 2 C. Briar, *Working for Women? Gendered Work and Welfare Policies in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: UCL, 1997), p. 108.
- 3 Lewis (1992).
- 4 L. Tilly and J. Scott, *Women Work and Family* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 3.
- 5 This was, of course, not unchallenged, especially by the 'Angry Young Man' literary genre.
- 6 Abbot and Sapsford (1987), p. 1.
- 7 P. Summerfield, 'The 'Levelling of Class'', in H. Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 179–207.
- 8 The Women's Employment Publishing Company was established in 1899.
- 9 *Women's Employment*, inside every front cover.
- 10 Zweig (1952), p. 58.
- 11 Engineering was rarely mentioned, despite the activities of the Women's Engineering Society. 'There are well over 3,000 occupations, each separately recognisable', H. Heginbotham, *The Youth Employment Service* (London: Methuen, 1951), p. 193.
- 12 Titmuss (1958); Tilly and Scott (1987), p. 215.
- 13 M. Young and P. Wilmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London: Pelican, 1962), p. 54; P. Jephcott, N. Seear and H. Smith, *Married Women Working* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962).
- 14 Myrdal and Klein (1956), p. 149.
- 15 There was also concern over the link between the rise in juvenile delinquency and lack of parental control. See Fyvel (1963).
- 16 Secondary education reflected the class divide. A majority of working-class children attended secondary modern schools and middle-class children attended grammar schools. McCulloch (1998).

- 17 The Crowther Report, 15–19 (1959) highlighted the differences in provision for post-school training. See also P. Tinkler (2001).
- 18 Myrdal and Klein (1956); J. Hubback, *Wives Who Went to College* (London: Heinemann, 1957); Campbell (1952), p. 29.
- 19 Zweig (1952), p. 7.
- 20 Ibid., p. 8.
- 21 Ibid., p. 9.
- 22 Friedan (1983, f.p. 1963).
- 23 Hubback (1957), p. 11.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 88–109; Myrdal and Klein (1956), pp. 111–113; J. B. Marcham, 'Part-Time Employment', *Women's Employment*, 4.1.1957, p. 387; Campbell (1952).
- 25 J. Lewis, 'Myrdal and Klein, Women's Two Roles and Post-war Feminism, 1945–1960', in H. Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990).
- 26 V. Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 29.
- 27 J. Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900–50* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 19.
- 28 Zweig (1952), p. 59
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Thanks to Peter Spencer for his observations on this point.
- 32 Heginbotham (1951), p. 4.
- 33 Ibid., p. 23.
- 34 Ibid., p. 132.
- 35 Kim, transcript in author's possession, p. 3.
- 36 Heginbotham (1951) p. 195. Heginbotham suggested that in its infancy the Youth Employment Office would focus on secondary modern schools in the manner described above. Only later, when employment officers themselves would have higher qualifications did he anticipate regular attendance at grammar schools.
- 37 Penny Tinkler discusses the provisions made for the 15–18 group as a specific pre-adult stage in P. Tinkler, 'Girlhood in Transition? Preparing English Girls for Adulthood in a Reconstructed Britain', in C. Duchén and I. Bandhauer-Schoffmann (eds), *When The War Was Over: Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1940–1956* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2000).
- 38 *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, 1960, p. 9
- 39 J. Shelley, *Careers for Mothers: a complete guide to part-time work for women* (Parents Magazine, 1957).
- 40 Ibid, p. 17.
- 41 Heginbotham (1951) mentioned Ministry of Labour Industrial Information leaflets, local pamphlets in Merseyside, Tyneside and Greater London, p. 163.
- 42 J. Heal, *Jeanne Heal's Book of Careers for Girls* (London: Bodley Head, 1955); E. Brockett, *Choosing a Career* (London: Staples Press, 1959).
- 43 Actress, advertising, air stewardess, almoner, architecture, artist, artist in industry, ballet, banking, beautician, dancing, dentist, dress designer, farming, fashion, hairdresser, horticulture, hotel and catering, kennels,

laundry management, law, librarian, medicine, model girl, musician, nursing, photography, policewoman, politics, secretary, social work, teaching, travel agent, work in a store (Selfridges).

44 Heal (1955), p. 9.

45 Ibid.

46 Catherine Avent referred to fellow members of the Newsom committee as 'misogynists' who saw women as: 'either caterers or secretaries – the idea of girls being an engineer was anathema'. McCulloch (1998), p. 121.

47 Heal (1955), p. 10.

48 Ibid., p. 11. However, Zweig (1952) and Young and Wilmott (1962) concluded that women were content with unskilled or semi-skilled employment.

49 Heal (1955), p. 30.

50 Ibid., p. 14.

51 Ibid., p. 95.

52 Brockett (1959).

53 Ibid., p. 143.

54 Ibid., p. 145.

55 Ibid., p. 146.

56 Brockett (1959), p. 147.

57 Hubback (1957), Chapter 11, 'Wife Mother and Self', pp. 144–159.

58 Ibid., p. 144.

59 Advertising for the Women's Services focused on the social opportunities. See magazines chapter.

60 *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, 1960, p. 356.

61 The Countess of Roseberry, *The Ambitious Girl* (London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1943), p. 14.

62 Ibid., p. 23.

63 Ibid., p. 29.

64 E. Craig, *Housekeeping: A Book for the Single-handed Housewife* (London: Collins, 1950), p. 128.

65 Brockett (1959), p. 162.

66 AIM25 Reference code(s): GB 0106 10/41 records held at the Women's Library.

67 Letters were frequently written by mothers on behalf of daughters. *Women's Employment*, 5.10.1956.

68 *Women's Employment*, 20.1.1956. The letters page reflected the wide readership, it included an inquiry from a widow wanting to return to work in an Old Peoples Home and a 16 year old who had just left school asking about dispensing.

69 *Women's Employment*, 4.5.1956, pp. 131–2.

70 Griffiths (1995), pp. 145–150.

71 *Women's Employment*, 4.3.1960, 'Citizen Education for Girls', p. 69.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ministry of Education, *Citizens Growing Up: At Home, in School and After*, pamphlet number 16 (London: HMSO, 1949).

75 *Women's Employment*, 16.11.1956, p. 341.

76 Ibid.

77 SIAS, p. 53.

- 78 D. Neville-Rolfe, *Nothing Venture: The Story of the House of Citizenship* (privately printed, 1961), p. 36.
- 79 Ibid., p. 124.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ibid., p. 127.
- 82 *Women's Employment*, 16.3.1956.
- 83 *Women's Employment*, 1.1.1960, p. 4.
- 84 J. B. Marcham, 'Part-Time Employment', *Women's Employment*, 4.1.1957, p. 387.
- 85 Hubback (1957), pp. 88–109.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 *Women's Employment*, 5.2.1960, p. 37.
- 88 *Women's Employment*, 5.8.1960, p. 228.
- 89 Hinton (2002).
- 90 *Women's Employment*, 20.7.1956, p. 215.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 *Women's Employment*, 15.11.1957, p. 725.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, 1960, p. 356.
- 95 V. Klein, *The Feminine Character: The History of an Ideology* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co, 1946), p. 170.
- 96 *Women's Employment*, 7.12.1956, p. 356.
- 97 The current increase in single parent households indicates a further period of re-alignment.

Chapter 5 The Career Novels

- 1 See J. Meyerowitz (ed.), *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Post-War America, 1945–1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
- 2 G. Craig, *Kerry Middleton, Career Girl* (London: Wright and Brown, 1960).
- 3 Richard Hough at Bodley Head wrote to Chatto and Windus: 'There is considerable demand for children's books in this category', 9.4.1953. Michelle Duke of Random House kindly allowed access to the Chatto and Bodley Head Archive at Reading University [CWA].
- 4 Between 1953–1962 Bodley Head published 30 titles and Chatto and Windus 25.
- 5 *Journal of Education*, 'Jobs for the Girls', December 1956, p. 544.
- 6 Responses came from a wide area from Scotland to Devon. 11.2.1953; Mary Dunn to publisher Harold Raymond: '5000 is a good sale for a book today'. 16.3.1953. CWA.
- 7 Nora Smallwood to Andrew Shirley, 31.5.1954.
- 8 1.7.1954 letter from Manchester Public Library to Andrew Shirley. CWA.
- 9 Mary Dunn to Nora Smallwood, 29.3.1957. CWA.
- 10 Wright and Brown used the vehicle of the workplace in several of their Romance novels; further reading suggested at the end of *Kerry Middleton* includes *Thanks to Doctor Colin* and *The Foolish Heart*, whose heroine 'although efficient at her job, is afraid of emotion'.
- 11 Mary Dunn broadcast on the novels for Australia in May 1956. CWA.

- 12 Thanks to Kay Morris Matthews in New Zealand for this information.
- 13 Nora Smallwood to Phoebe Snow, agent. 3.11.1954. CWA.
- 14 The exception is the library novels: E. Kerslake and J. Liladhar, "'Jolly Good Reading For Girls" Discourses of Library Work and Femininity in Career Novels', *Women's History Review*, 1999, 8 (3), 489–504 and J. Liladhar and E. Kerslake, 'No More Library Classes for Catherine: Marital Status, Career Progression and Library Employment in 1950s England', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1999, 22, 215–224. See also S. Spencer, 'School Girl to Career Girl: the City as Educative Space', *Paedagogica Historica*, 34 (1 and 2) February, 2003 and 'Women's Dilemmas in Post War Britain: Career Novels for Adolescent Girls in the 1950s', *History of Education*, 29, 4 (2000b).
- 15 M. Cadogan and P. Craig, *You're a Brick, Angela! A New Look at Girls' Fiction from 1839–1975* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1976), p. 304.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Lesley Scott Moncrieff 'Careers for Girls', *The Tablet*, 14 January, 1957.
- 18 *Journal of Education*, August 1956, pp. 366–368, reviewed eight of the novels. In December of the same year, under the title 'Jobs for the Girls' it reviewed a further six titles, pp. 545–546.
- 19 *Journal of Education*, August 1956, p. 366.
- 20 Ibid., p. 367.
- 21 Letter Hilda McGee to Andrew Shirley, CWA, 1.7.1954.
- 22 S. G. Watts to Mary Dunn: 'I find career novels much in demand in the school library', CWA, 18.7.1954.
- 23 *Journal of Education*, August 1956, p. 368.
- 24 D. Swinburne, *Jean Tours a Hospital* (London: Collins, 1962), pp. 7–11.
- 25 H. Carpenter and M. Pritchard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 96.
- 26 M. Crouch, *The Nesbitt Tradition. The Children's Novel in England, 1945–1970* (London: Ernest Benn, 1972), p. 186.
- 27 W. Whitehead, *Journal of Education*, December, 1956, p. 546.
- 28 Ibid., p. 544.
- 29 L. Meynell, *Monica Anson Travel Agent* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 9.
- 30 Meynell (1959), p. 143.
- 31 A. Barret, *Sheila Burton Dental Assistant* (London: Bodley Head, 1956), p. 11.
- 32 Ibid., p. 11.
- 33 Ibid., p. 13.
- 34 It is also interesting that the heroines were all white, the books clearly did not reflect changes in the workplace in the 1950s, especially in the New National Health Service, which followed the increase in immigration from the Caribbean, see H. Hopkins, *The New Look, A Social History of the Forties and Fifties in Britain* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1964), pp. 464–468.
- 35 The importance of the change in appearance was the focus of many magazine features. See following chapter.
- 36 A. Mack, *Outline for a Secretary* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), p. 120.
- 37 The two types were identified, and the phrase 'heterosexy' was coined by Liladhar and Kerslake (1999).
- 38 Craig (1960), p. 174.
- 39 L. Cochrane, *Anne in Electronics* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960), p. 49.

- 40 Ibid., p. 137. This was a pattern described by several of the women interviewed, two of whom had eventually divorced.
- 41 Cochrane (1960), p. 49 my italics.
- 42 Mary Dunn to Nora Smallwood, 19.5.1954. CWA.
- 43 M. Dunn, *Cookery Kate* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955), p. 24.
- 44 Mary Dunn to Nora Smallwood, 23.10.1954. CWA.
- 45 Nora Smallwood to Mary Dunn, 29.1.1957. CWA.
- 46 L. Cochrane, *Social Work for Jill* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), p. 7.
- 47 J. Dale, *Shirley Flight Air Hostess* (Manchester: World Distributors, 1958), p. 17.
- 48 A. Barrett, *Sheila Burton Dental Assistant* (London: Bodley Head, 1956), p. 22.
- 49 This is covered in more depth in the next chapter on magazines.
- 50 Marwick (1990), p. 123.
- 51 S. Rowbotham, *Threads Through Time. Writings on History and Autobiography* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 39.
- 52 Author's conversation with Sarah Bauhan, 25.1.05.
- 53 See the discussion of the recruitment campaigns for the Services in the following chapter.
- 54 L. Lewis, *Valerie, Fashion Model* (London: Bodley Head, 1955), p. 9.
- 55 Ibid., p. 11.
- 56 J. Scott, *Sara Gay Model Girl in Monte Carlo* (Manchester: World Books, 1960), p. 70.
- 57 Ibid., pp. 134–5.
- 58 M. Delane, *Margaret Lang, Fashion Buyer* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), p. 3.
- 59 Countess of Roseberry, *The Ambitious Girl* (London: Nelson and Sons, 1943), p. 23.
- 60 L. Cochrane, *Social Work for Jill* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954).
- 61 L. Meynell, *District Nurse Carter* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958), p. 27.
- 62 S. Darbyshire, *Young Nurse Carter* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954) was immediately successful, followed by *Nurse Carter Married* (1955). The author died during discussion over the third in the series which was eventually written by her widower.
- 63 L. Lewis, *Judy Bowman, Therapist* (London: Bodley Head, 1956), p. 22.
- 64 Lewis (1956).
- 65 Meynell (1958); Cochrane (1960); L. Cochrane, *Marion Turns Teacher* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955); Delane (1956); Barrett (1956); D. Swinburne, *Jean, SRN* (London: Collins, 1960).
- 66 Cochrane (1955) p. 135.
- 67 Delane (1956), Aunt Mary, a buyer, flew all over the world and wore beautiful clothes; Cochrane (1955), Aunt Sophie, an HMI advised on training colleges.
- 68 Cochrane (1955), p. 7
- 69 Ibid., p. 29.
- 70 Ibid., p. 131.
- 71 Ibid., p. 132.
- 72 *The Keene Sentinel*, New Hampshire Obituary, p. 2. 13.12.1989.
- 73 E. Forbes 'Reminiscences' unpublished. No date.
- 74 Ibid., p. 12.

- 75 Ibid., p. 21.
- 76 Ibid., p. 25.
- 77 Ibid., p. 29.
- 78 Ibid., p. 94.
- 79 Ibid., p. 33.
- 80 Ibid., p. 96.

Chapter 6 *Girl to Woman*

- 1 *Girl*, 26.3.1960, p. 13.
- 2 I am excluding from this generalisation magazines such as *Vogue* and *Queen* which clearly maintained an elitist appeal.
- 3 M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914–1959* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 292.
- 4 Mary Grieve, editor, proclaimed *Woman*: 'The trade press of all women'. M. Grieve, *Millions Made My Story* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1964), p. 53.
- 5 Ibid., p. 135.
- 6 Bowlby (1952).
- 7 Even *Girl* had an agony aunt. James Hemming analysed the letters written to *Girl* between April 1st 1953 and March 31st 1955. J. Hemming, *Problems of Adolescent Girls* (London: Heinemann, 1960).
- 8 Griffiths (1995), p. 21.
- 9 P. Tinkler, 'A Material Girl?', in M. Andrews and M. Talbot, *All the World and Her Husband: Women in Twentieth Century Consumer Culture* (London: Cassell, 2000a), 97–112, p. 104.
- 10 P. Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood: Popular Magazines for Girls Growing Up in England* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995b) discusses the limitations of content analysis which can: 'obscure [...] the tensions and negotiations which are articulated within representations of girlhood and femininity', p. 9, note 27.
- 11 Griffiths (1995), pp. 59–61.
- 12 C. White, *Women's Magazines 1693–1968* (London: Michael Joseph, 1970); M. Ferguson, *Forever Feminine: Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity* (London: Heinemann, 1983).
- 13 Pugh (1992).
- 14 Ibid., p. 284.
- 15 Ibid., p. 292.
- 16 Ibid., p. 293.
- 17 Ibid., p. 145.
- 18 White (1970).
- 19 Ibid., p. 156.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid., p. 51.
- 22 Ferguson (1983), p. 184.
- 23 Ibid., p. 1.
- 24 Ibid., p. 71.
- 25 Ibid., p. 8.
- 26 Ibid., p. 1.
- 27 Ibid., p. 11.

- 28 Ibid., p. 44.
- 29 Ibid., p. 52.
- 30 Ibid., p. 77.
- 31 J. Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (London: Pandora, 1987), p. 5.
- 32 Ibid., p. 60.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 5, 43. My italics.
- 34 D. H. Currie, *Girl Talk, Adolescent Magazines and their Readers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
- 35 *Valentine*, 26.1.1957, p. 8.
- 36 *Valentine*, 31.1.1959, 'Fibbin', pp. 20–22.
- 37 C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
- 38 I am grateful to Penny Tinkler for her comments and suggestions for this chapter based on her unpublished research.
- 39 Currie (1999), p. 170.
- 40 Ibid., p. 9.
- 41 Ibid., p. 95.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 M. Poovey, 'Feminism and Deconstruction', *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1) 1988, 51–65, p. 62, quoted in Currie (1999), pp. 116/7.
- 44 Hemming (1960).
- 45 A. McRobbie, 'Jackie an Ideology of Adolescent Femininity', Stencilled occasional paper, women's series SP No. 53, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1978 in B. Waites, T. Bennet and G. Martin (eds), *Popular Culture Past and Present* (Buckingham: Open University, 1982), pp. 263–283, p. 265.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Tinkler (1995b), p. 5.
- 48 Ibid., p. 3.
- 49 Ibid., p. 178.
- 50 Ibid., pp. 92–94.
- 51 For example one of the picture strip stories in 1956 featured 'Vicki and the Vengeance of the Incas' whose heroine travelled as an explorer with her father 'looking for David Hume who went in search of Inca gold'.
- 52 D. E. Smith, 'Femininity as Discourse' in R. C. Smith with E. Ellsworth (eds), *Becoming Feminine: The Politics of Popular Culture* (Sussex: Falmer, 1988), p. 53.
- 53 Ibid., p. 46.
- 54 Grieve (1964), p. 90.
- 55 Editorial, *Woman*, 28.5.1960, p. 3.
- 56 Editorial, *Woman*, 26.12.1959, p. 3.
- 57 'We get 250 letters a week' claimed the Stork Wives Club, *Woman*, 4.5.1957, p. 50.
- 58 *Woman*, 13.6.1959, p. 37.
- 59 Grieve (1964), p. 201.
- 60 *Girl*, 9.5.1959, p. 12. A year later the fashion and beauty expert was introduced: 'She has been in touch with many readers, to learn their views', *Girl*, 2.4.1960.
- 61 *Woman*, 9.7.1960, p. 16.

- 62 Grieve (1964) p. 198.
- 63 *Girl*, 28.5.60, p. 15.
- 64 *Girl*, 20.8.1960, p. 12. The author was 13.
- 65 *Woman*, 10.1.1959, p. 53.
- 66 *Housewife*, April 1956, p. 47; *Woman's* cookery editor shopped with a newly wed colleague to: 'help her choose wisely from the bewildering array of foods on the shelves of her nearest self-service store'. 23.5.1959, p. 18.
- 67 *Housewife*, October 1957, p. 39.
- 68 *Woman*, 4.5.1957, p. 3.
- 69 *Woman*, 19.5.1956, p. 35.
- 70 *Woman*, 14.6.1958, p. 36.
- 71 These included; 'That Fickle Boy', 30.5.1959, p. 14; 'Infatuation or Love?', 7.11.1959, p. 14; 'Irritable at Home?', 12.9.1959, p. 14; and 'Should I Let Him Kiss Me?', 23.4.1960, p. 14. An invitation to write in resulted in a flood of letters resulting in a special department. Hemming (1960) p. 16.
- 72 *Woman*, 14.1.1956, p. 65.
- 73 Mary Grieve confirmed that the letters were genuine. Grieve (1964), pp. 98/9. Hemmings (1960), also discussed the problem of authenticity and concluded that most were genuine, p. 17.
- 74 *Girl*, 18.1.1956, p. 13.
- 75 Grieve (1964) p. 59.
- 76 *Woman*, 27.7.1957, p. 3.
- 77 *Girl*, 'Palace Playmates', 31.12.1960; *Housewife*, July, 1956, 'Colour pictures of the Royal children'.
- 78 *Woman*, 18.5.1957, p. 5.
- 79 *Woman*, 11.1.1958, p. 5.
- 80 *Housewife*, July, 1956, p. 54.
- 81 *Woman*, 19.4.1958, p. 3.
- 82 *Woman*, 7.10.1960, p. 17.
- 83 Advertisement for Kayser stockings. *Woman*, 17.8.1957, p. 41.
- 84 Grieve (1964) p. 177.
- 85 *Housewife*, January, 1956, p. 102.
- 86 *Woman*, 26.5.1956, p. 58.
- 87 *Woman*, 8.2.1958, p. 10.
- 88 *Housewife*, August, 1958, p. 18.
- 89 *Housewife*, November, 1956, Anne Cuthbert on mothercraft; 'Planning a family is like planning a career', pp. 102/3; *Housewife*, July, 1957, p. 70; *Housewife*, February, 1959, p. 74.
- 90 *Woman*, 2.5.1959, p. 67.
- 91 *Woman*, 10.8.1957.
- 92 *Woman*, 28.3.1959, p. 36.
- 93 T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: Penguin, 1994, f.p. 1899), p. 170ff.
- 94 *Woman*, 7.2.1959, p. 13.
- 95 *Woman*, 25.2.1956, p. 30.
- 96 *Housewife*, April, 1956. Paris decreed: 'hair longer, make-up accents eyes [...] Skirts narrow and fourteen inches from the ground. Shoes with pointed toes and high heels', p. 49.

- 97 *Woman*, 24.1.1959, p. 13; 11.5.1957: 'Breakfast never finds her in curlers and a grubby wrap', p. 14.
- 98 *Housewife*, October, 1960, p. 49.; see also 11.2.1956: 'Beauty at Breakfast', p. 13.
- 99 *Woman*, February, 1957. 'Beauty after Flu'.
- 100 *Housewife*, March, 1956, p. 58.
- 101 *Woman*, 2.5.1959, p. 31.
- 102 *Housewife*, May, 1956, p. 119.
- 103 *Housewife*, July, 1956, p. 106.
- 104 *Girl*, 29.2.1956, p. 15.
- 105 *Girl*, 24.9.1960, p. 10.
- 106 *Girl*, 23.5.1959, p. 14.
- 107 *Girl*, 4.1.1956, p. 11.
- 108 *Girl*, 27.2.1960, p. 14.
- 109 *Woman*, 14.2.1959, p. 21; *Woman*, 1.1.1959, p. 31.
- 110 *Woman*, 14.2.1959, p. 21.
- 111 *Woman*, 7.1.1956, p. 17.
- 112 *Woman*, 1.11.1958, p. 19; 31.10.1959, p. 29; Evelyn Home wrote in a more cautious vein, e.g. *Woman* 17.8.1957, p. 53; *Housewife*, December 1959, 'Why Teenagers Want to Marry', pp. 110, 192.
- 113 *Woman*, 26.7.1958, pp. 14/15.
- 114 *Ibid.*
- 115 *Woman*, 9.6.1956, '16 and Lovely', p. 25.
- 116 *Housewife*, February, 1959, p. 121.
- 117 *Woman*, 11.5.1957, p. 43.
- 118 *Woman*, 4.7.1959, p. 38.
- 119 *Woman*, 19.5.1956, p. 67.
- 120 *Woman*, 25.2.1956, p. 64.
- 121 *Woman*, 6.6.1956, p. 11.
- 122 *Woman*, 20.7.1957, p. 44.
- 123 *Woman*, 11.1.1958, p. 28.
- 124 *Woman*, 14.2.1959, p. 34.
- 125 S. Darbyshire, *Sarah Joins the WRAF* (London: Bodley Head, 1956).
- 126 For example: *Woman*, 14.1.1956, 'The Only Woman Mountain Guide in the Country', p. 62; *Woman*, 2.5.1959, 'The Typist is a Bullfighter', p. 67.
- 127 *Housewife*, January, 1956, pp. 30/31.
- 128 *Ibid.*
- 129 *Housewife*, October, 1956, p. 157.
- 130 *Housewife*, April, 1957, p. 112.
- 131 *Housewife*, October, 1957, p. 148.
- 132 *Girl*, October, 1960.
- 133 *I Want to Be. A Girl Book of Careers* (1957) London: Hulton, p. 8.
- 134 *Woman*, 18.5.1957, p. 67.
- 135 *Girl*, 3.1.1959, p. 14.
- 136 *Housewife*, December, 1957, p. 155.
- 137 *Housewife*, May, 1956, p. 95.
- 138 *Housewife*, August, 1956, p. 89.
- 139 D. Mace, 'Her Career or her Marriage?', *Housewife*, October, 1958, p. 97.
- 140 *Housewife*, August 1956, 'Living on Two Salaries', p. 37.
- 141 Griffiths (1995), p. 60.

- 142 Pugh (1992).
- 143 Tinkler (1995b).
- 144 White (1970).

Chapter 7 'My Own Front Door' Remembering the 1950s

- 1 Heron (1985), p. 9.
- 2 Veness (1962).
- 3 T. Jordan, *Growing Up in the 50s* (London: Optima, 1990).
- 4 Jordan (1990), p. vi
- 5 M. F. Chanfrault-Duchet, 'Narrative Structures, Social Models and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story' in S. Gluck and D. Patai (eds) *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 78.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 P. Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 16–23.
- 8 Lister (1997). Lister uses the term 'social citizenship' as a way of highlighting the gendered nature of women's role as both citizen-as-carer and citizen-as-wage-earner, p. 168.
- 9 Rowbotham (1999), pp. 37–38.
- 10 Elizabeth, p. 15. The page numbers refer to transcripts in author's possession. Pseudonyms are used throughout.
- 11 M. Ingham, *Now We are Thirty: Women of the Breakthrough Generation* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981), p. 79.
- 12 Carter (1962).
- 13 Summerfield (1998).
- 14 Spencer (2000b).
- 15 Griffiths (1995), p. 83.
- 16 Chanfrault-Duchet (1991), p. 79.
- 17 A. Oakley, 'Interviewing Women, a Contradiction in Terms', in H. Roberts (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).
- 18 See Penny Summerfield's discussion of 'composure' (1998), pp. 16–23.
- 19 K. Andersen, 'Learning to Listen. Interview Techniques and Analyses', in Perks, R. & A. Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998). Perks and Thomson (1998), p. 159.
- 20 This a constant area of friction in oral history, which seems insoluble. There was a lively debate at the Women's History Network Conference, Stoke-on-Trent, 1999, following a plenary lecture by Penny Summerfield.
- 21 Summerfield (1998), pp. 22–23.
- 22 S. Rheinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 141.
- 23 Carter (1962).
- 24 Sarah, p. 3.
- 25 See education tables in appendix for age of entry to work.
- 26 Brenda, p. 2.
- 27 Deborah, p. 2.
- 28 Elizabeth, p. 3.

- 29 Margaret, p. 1.
- 30 McCulloch (1998).
- 31 June, p. 1.
- 32 A. Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in Perks and Thompson (1998), p. 66.
- 33 E. Roberts, 'Continuity and Change: Oral History and the Recent Past', 1998 Phillimore Lecture, published as a supplement to *The Local Historian*, vol. 28 (4) x.
- 34 Avril, p. 2.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Elaine in Jordan (1990), p. 83.
- 38 Sarah, p. 1.
- 39 Deborah, p. 1.
- 40 M. Evans, *A Good School: Life at a Girls' Grammar School in the 1950s* (London: Women's Press, 1991), p. 12.
- 41 Patricia, p. 2.
- 42 Ingham (1981), p. 53.
- 43 Barrett (1956), p. 13.
- 44 Brenda, p. 2.
- 45 Joan, p. 3.
- 46 Ingham (1981).
- 47 June, p. 11.
- 48 Joan, p. 3.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 P. Jephcott, *Rising Twenty. Notes on Some Ordinary Girls* (London: Faber, 1948), p. 118.
- 51 Brenda, p. 3.
- 52 Ivy, p. 3.
- 53 Hazel in Jordan (1990), p. 9.
- 54 Patricia, p. 4.
- 55 Ivy, p. 18.
- 56 Margaret, p. 11.
- 57 Margaret, p. 7.
- 58 Margaret, p. 5.
- 59 Deborah, p. 7.
- 60 Jephcott, Seear and Smith (1962); Zweig (1952). A friendly working environment was a top priority for girls in these studies.
- 61 Deborah, p. 8.
- 62 Deborah, p. 11.
- 63 Sarah, p. 5.
- 64 Brenda, p. 5.
- 65 Brenda, p. 6.
- 66 Brenda, p. 8.
- 67 June, p. 4.
- 68 Avril, p. 4.
- 69 Elizabeth, p. 2.
- 70 Elizabeth, p. 16.
- 71 Avril, p. 1.

- 72 Kristina Minster offers alternative strategies to the question and answer approach, for example a directive statement and expectant pause. However although Jenny's answers were short, she frequently engaged in the combined self-reflexivity observed by Kristina Minster, 'A Feminist Frame for Interviews', in Gluck and Patai (1991), p. 38.
- 73 Jenny, p. 1.
- 74 Brenda, p. 7.
- 75 Brenda, p. 19.
- 76 June, p. 12.
- 77 June, p. 12.
- 78 Sarah, p. 10.
- 79 Elizabeth, p. 13.
- 80 Summerfield (1998).
- 81 Minster (1991); Chanfrault-Duchet (1992).
- 82 Kim, p. 11.

Conclusion

- 1 J. Scott, Gender a Useful Category of Historical Analysis, in *Feminism and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 2 Griffiths (1995), p. 83.
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