TRYING WORK

Participant Observation of a Scheme for the Young Unemployed

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Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work.
Dedication

For my Mum:

and for my Dad and all of us
who sorely miss her
Abstract

The thesis is an attempt to understand the lives and culture of working-class teenagers participating in a training workshop, part of the then Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) in a major Scottish city in 1981. The aim was to highlight the lives and culture of these young people, to gauge what the impact of the current high levels of youth unemployment meant to them and to look at how they reacted to and shaped their relations with a YOP workshop. Gender is central to the analysis. I look at the separate and different cultures and experiences of girls and boys. I use participant observation as the methodology best suited to this kind of study.
Preface and Acknowledgements

I want to begin with a word to all the people whose help, time and co-operation made this study possible.

First of all to supervisors and staff in the workshop. The whole argument in this thesis suggests that the root of why teenagers' lives are the way they are lies in changes in the economy and the way in which our society is organised. These would have to change for any very fundamental alterations in teenagers' lives to take place. But, of course, as it stands, this offers little consolation for supervisors and administrators who every day are confronted with managing individual schemes for the young unemployed.

My time in S/F left me with absolutely no doubt that the group of people working there were highly motivated and deeply caring. They undoubtedly had the very best interests of trainees at heart. And if at times this study makes them seem harsh and sometimes portrays them failing, this has little to do with them as individuals and everything to do with the fact that at present they are faced with one of the most difficult jobs in our society. It is the task that is impossible. In a society that can no longer offer jobs to its children, they are on the front line, trying to alleviate the suffering that is caused, trying to make sense of youth unemployment and of the government's half measures to cope with it, trying to make palatable something that is not.

If this study offers anything to the supervisors and staff of S/F, to their understanding of trainees, and if it goes any way towards making the relationships between them better, then I have not failed.

I am deeply indebted to the trainees in S/F for accepting me and finding me the space to try to understand their lives. All the insights and strengths of this thesis come from them. In my study I reveal many private details, the highs and lows of their daily existence, their secrets, fantasies; events which portray them at their most courageous and also at their most vulnerable. I feel grateful that I was able to do it, though ambiguous about it. I have tried to do everything possible to protect their anonymity, for example by changing names and venue. But some violation of privacy remains. If this is justified, it is in the belief that in this time of mass unemployment, where what it means to be working-class and a teenager is being redefined, the implications of these changes should not remain hidden and unacknowledged.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Ian Dey and Adrian Sinfield. Their help and advice throughout the thesis was invaluable.
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I am particularly grateful to my mother and father for their unqualified support (financial and emotional) and encouragement. My regret is that, for my mother, I did not finish quickly enough. I am equally and similarly grateful to Val, Carol, Pauline and Joe, to Cathy, Josie, Mary and Joe and to all my relatives without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface and Acknowledgements</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### INTRODUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Culture</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Unemployment</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Workshop</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Methodological Considerations</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART I  "Boys"  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 1: Girls Among Boys</th>
<th>41</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stages of Acceptance</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 2: The Politics of the Paintshop</th>
<th>61</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Impressions</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tam's Personal Aspirations</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tam's Discipline</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nature of Work</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruption in the Paintshop</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McVee: a case of rejection</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs for the Boys: references, qualifications and apprenticeships</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Conclude</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 3: Joiners</th>
<th>102</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Football Match</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Place for Painters: no place for girls</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Joinery Shop</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nature of Work</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs Out</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs In</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Limited Resistance</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Men/Real Jobs</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Conclude</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| CHAPTER 4: Boys and Sexuality: their daily preoccupations and fantasies | 123 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART II</th>
<th>&quot;Girls&quot;</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5: Knitwear</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process of Acceptance</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls' Supervisors</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Conclude</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6: The Nature of Work and Girls' Disruption</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Atmosphere</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Struggle</td>
<td>157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls and Glamour</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Conclude</td>
<td>178</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 7: Acceptance of S/F: involvement in their own autonomous culture</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearing Glamorous</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Aspects of Home Life</td>
<td>184</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/F : A Job Like any Other</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls' Daily Preoccupation</td>
<td>191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for Romance</td>
<td>191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating the Illusion of Boyfriends: the space to fantasise</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space to Relate to Boys</td>
<td>195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space to Discuss and Find Out About Boys</td>
<td>207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Politics of the Dancefloor</td>
<td>211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Conclude</td>
<td>217</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 8: Conclusion</td>
<td>224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note on the Future of S/F</td>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Forget Gender</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Footnotes  | 241  |
         | Bibliography | 243  |
Introduction

This is first and foremost a thesis about working class teenagers. It is based upon my experience of taking part in a Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) workshop in a major Scottish city in 1981. Two years into Mrs Thatcher's government, several years into the deepest recession for half a century, a recession that has yet to abate, and which has brought a level of unemployment unprecedented in the post-war period. It is not a thesis about statistics, or about the economics of the labour market, and only indirectly is it a thesis about the state and its response to youth unemployment. My aim, above all, is to document these young people's lives, what unemployment meant to them, boys and girls, and how they both reacted to and shaped their relations with a YOP workshop. The core of this thesis, therefore, is what social scientists call ethnography - detailed, textured description of the day-to-day realities of these young people's lives. My study consisted of five months participant observation of young people taking part in a training workshop, part of the, then, Manpower Services Commission's (MSC) Youth Opportunities Programme.

But first it is necessary to set the research in context. For I would wish to assert (though given the limitations inherent in a study of a given place and a given time I obviously cannot prove) that the events I witnessed were not wholly idiosyncratic and unique. They were part of a process by which what it means to be young and working-class in our society is being redefined. Being redefined not just by the experience of mass youth unemployment, but also by the forms of state action in response to it. To situate my study, then, to help identify themes of importance, I first of all
want to look at what other people have written about young people, their culture, their unemployment, the Manpower Services Commission and the nature of its involvement in their lives.

**Youth Culture**

First of all, what people have written about youth culture. My interest in youth culture originated in the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), Birmingham, particularly Paul Willis' book 'Learning to Labour', subtitled 'How working class kids get working class jobs'. I was interested in how working-class kids come to accept getting no jobs at all. This study, my choice to do participant observation, the assumptions I make about young people, are indebted to this tradition. My work implies also a direct criticism of such literature and I want to elaborate that in this chapter. To understand these studies and how I came to study what I did, I need to understand the tradition in which their work was developed.

Such studies have a direct link to the study of deviance in America. Heidensohn (1985) traces the history of the study of deviance:

'Sociologists of deviance, in this century, have moved increasingly away from viewing deviant behaviour as inherently abnormal and therefore having pathological origins, and towards seeing deviance as a normal and even an admirable activity'.

(Heidensohn, 1985:127)

She claims that the 'end of pathology' can be traced through the Chicago school in the work of E H Sutherland, W F Whyte, Matza and so on (Heidensohn, 1985:127). These studies marked a sharp
break away from mainstream sociology:

'The 1920s saw at the University of Chicago one of the great creative explosions in modern sociology. The teeming city became the laboratory for a host of students who in particular examined the transitional zone and its many and manifest forms of deviance'.
(Heidensohn, 1985:128)

In particular, what characterised the Chicago school was their methodology; detailed ethnography focusing mainly on deviants (Heidensohn, 1985:128).

In such representations of youth, young people were portrayed as classless, forming distinctive and separate groupings and a culture of their own. As Murdoch and McCron (1975) in their article 'Consciousness of Class and Consciousness of Generation' point out, the emphasis was on age divisions:

'... and the corresponding irrelevance of class inequalities, coupled with stress on consumption and leisure as the pivots of youth consciousness ...

(Murdoch and McCron, 1975:197)

has meant that class was downplayed from most analyses of youth until fairly recently.

For example, Frederick Thrasher (1927) argues:

'Faced with the breakdown of family life, inefficient and alienating schooling, and a lack of leisure facilities, he argued, adolescent boys respond by creating a world distinctly their own - far removed from the humdrum existence of the average citizen - the world of the street gang'.
(Thrasher, 1927, quoted in Murdoch and McCron, 1976)

Murdoch and McCron also quote Mark Abrams (1959) in 'The Teenage Consumer' that adolescent spending on leisure and entertainment represented:
'distinctive teenage spending for distinctive teenage ends in a distinctive teenage world'.
(quoted in Murdoch and McCron, 1976:16)

Interactionist approaches to the sociology of deviance dominated the 1960s and 1970s with Becker's 'Outsiders' the key text (Heidensohn, 1985:137). In Britain, the authors of 'Resistance Through Rituals' (1975) claim that for them Becker's work 'best signalled the "break" in mainstream sociology and the subsequent adoption ... of what came to be known as an interactionist, and later a "transactional" or "labelling" perspective'.

Hall and Jefferson (eds) 1975:5).

Becker's work, they say, was greeted 'with both exhilaration and unease', 'a feeling particularly that deviant behaviour had other origins besides public labelling' (Hall and Jefferson, 1975:5).

British studies have gone on to build on, criticise, and extend this tradition and have been concerned mainly with attempting to situate delinquent gangs within the wider class structure (Murdoch and McCron, 1976:18).

Influential in this respect was Albert Cohen's book Delinquent Boys' (1955) (see Murdoch and McCron for description). Cohen demonstrated 'the centrality of class inequalities in structuring both the social situation of youth and their responses to it ...'

(Murdoch and McCron, 1976:19). Murdoch and McCron do though point out two problems with Cohen's (1955) work. One was that by...

'...presenting the delinquent culture as a rejection and inversion of the dominant culture it ignored the continuities between them. By continuing to characterise the culture of the gang as largely self contained, it seriously underestimated the extent of its connections with the wider working class culture'.

(Murdoch and McCron, 1976:19)
Another major study in the mid-1960s which 'offered a convincing demonstration of the centrality of class' was David Downes' work on the 'corner boy culture of Stepney and Poplar' (Murdoch and McCron, 1976:21). Mostly, though, class as a consideration in the study of youth culture was still downplayed. However, Murdoch and McCron argue that as the economic situation in Britain worsened in the 1970s, 'the contours of the class system once again became starkly visible'. Authors increasingly 'recognised the need to restore class to the centre of the sociology of youth' (Murdoch and McCron, 1976:24). They have been increasingly concerned to understand the behaviour of young people both in relation to the 'parent' working-class culture out of which it emerged and also in relation to wider institutional arrangements which impinge on working-class young people and to which their sub-cultures are a response. These studies too are about deviant youth, but now there is an attempt to understand young people's behaviour, the sub-cultures they create as growing out of the social position they occupy as young working-class people and as a response to wider societal arrangements.

Phil Cohen's work (1972) on the culture of working-class boys in the East End of London was particularly important. Cohen attempts to place

'... the parent culture in a historical perspective, mapping out the relations between sub-cultures and exploring the intra-class dynamic between youth and parents'.
(Clarke et al., 1975:30)

Much subsequent work on youth culture has been an attempt to build on and extend Cohen's (1972) work on the emergence of the Teds.
For example, much of the earlier work at CCCS did this. In 'Resistance Through Ritual' (1975), the authors were interested in trying 'to gauge how the impact of certain forces on a parent culture is filtered through and differentially experienced by its youth; and then how and why this experience is crystallised into a distinct youth culture' (Clarke et al., 1975:33). They are also interested in the social-structural exploration of the appearance of distinctive youth cultures (i.e. Skins, Mods and so on); in why they expressed themselves in the way they did and why one youth culture differed from another. This, though, they say, 'must in no way be confused with an attempt to delineate the social and historical position of working-class youth as a whole' (Clarke et al., 1975:16).

'Generally we deal in this volume only with subcultures ... which have reasonably tight boundaries, distinctive shapes, which have cohered around particular activities, focal concerns and territorial spaces. When these tightly defined groups are also distinguished by age and generation, we call them youth subcultures'.

(Clarke et al., 1975:16)

So, in 'Cultural Responses of the Teds', for example, Tony Jefferson (1975) looked at the Teds. In his own summary he analysed the way in which the 'sense of group' Teds had, their 'near lumpen' status, made them sensitive to insults and at the way this oversensitivity became attached primarily to the distinctive dress and appearance of the group. He looked at what Teds borrowed from the dominant culture and reworked into a distinctive style of their own (Jefferson, 1975:81).

John Clarke's analysis of the 'Skins' (Clarke, 1975:99) looked
at the way 'skinhead culture selectively reaffirms certain core values of traditional working class culture and this affirmation is expressed both in dress, style and appearance and in activities' (Clarke, 1975:99). (3)

Class is now firmly in the centre of analyses of youth. And these and more recent studies (4) are interested in the extent to which institutions in society attempt to create the social relations necessary to reproduce young people in such a way as to ensure the smooth running of society. They are interested in understanding the extent to which young people accept or reject these institutional arrangements and official definitions of their lives, and in what young working-class people create in response. They attempt to understand the conditions under which young people reject such institutions and arrangements and reject them and be rebellious. Indeed, these themes of rebelliousness and resistance to authority inform my study and are central to it. But they are not the only considerations. And recently some criticisms of this literature have been meted out.

For example, Mungham (1976) mentions that the now numerous attempts to understand 'the nature of British youth' have

'... typically concentrated on unconventional fractions of youth - especially working class youth. The fascination for the bizarre, the esoteric, the pathological, the marginal elements of youth behaviour and ideology ...'

Murdoch and McCron (1975:26) suggest that

'Subcultural theories start by taking groups who are already card-carrying members of a particular subculture such as skinheads, bike boys or hippies and working backwards to uncover their class location'. (Murdoch and McCron, 1976:25)
The implication of this, they say, is to exclude young people of the same class location but who are not members of the sub-culture. It underestimates 'the range of cultural responses' (Murdoch and McCron, 1976:25).

'The problem is not only to explain why styles such as mods or the skinheads developed within particular class strata at the times and in the forms that they did, but also to explain why adolescents in essentially the same basic class location adopted other modes of negotiation and resolution'. (Murdoch and McCron, 1976:25)

'Contemporary subcultural analysis has its roots in delinquency research and still reflects the preoccupation of that area. Hence, recent research continues to follow earlier work in focusing on the deviant rather than the conventional, on working class adolescents rather than those from the intermediate and middle classes and most crucial of all, on boys rather than girls'. (Murdoch and McCron, 1975:20)

They argue for a move towards more 'symmetrical analyses':

'A comprehensive analysis of youth, however, must necessarily be capable of accommodating and explaining not only deviancy and refusal but also convention and compliance'. (Murdoch and McCron, 1975:206)

Simon Frith (1981) makes a similar point more strongly:

'...Most accounts of youth cultures derive from academic cultural theories which divide the working class into the "rough" and "respectable": the rough are seen as having the most class consciousness. Thus youth's street deviants, from Teds to Skins, are taken to express working class values (even in the act of racial assault) while the majority of ordinary teenagers are considered to have no positive political interest at all. This argument has dubious consequences, particularly for any politics. (Girls, for example, as non-members of male mobs, are defined out of working class altogether.)' (Frith, 1981:30)
He comments on aspects of skins' activities of 'defending territory, dressing in uniform, hitting strangers and women' and suggests that 'What is surprising is that socialists should ever have romanticised such activities'. He points out that what has been neglected has been 'the politics of the ordinary unemployed school leaver, the vast majority of youth on training schemes and work experience programmes whose boredom and anger is expressed, not on the street but privately at home among friends' (Frith, 1981).

The book *Working Class Youth Culture* (REP, 1976) went some way towards meeting some of these criticisms. While retaining the centrality of class they also recognise the 'need to look at conforming youth as a counterbalance to that work which has taken up the more conspicuous and "pathological" aspects of youth behaviour' (Mungham, 1976:83).

In his study of dance halls, Geoff Mungham (1976) has 'tried to illustrate the sheer ordinariness of this corner of "youth culture"' (Mungham, 1976:101).

'These were not the marginal men or the wild ones whose exploits fill the pages of so many studies of youth cultures'.
(Mungham, 1976:102)

'They revealed themselves to me as conservative and quiescent; a group who, measured in terms of their work, leisure and minimal aspirations, demonstrated at every turn a continuity with the world of their parents' generation'.
(Mungham, 1976:102)

The need to restore class to the centre of analyses, the need to move to study ordinary and conforming youth as well as the more visible aspects of youth culture are points which I echo and a lot of recent work has gone some way towards fulfilling this.
But what has been sadly lacking in all of these studies mentioned and it still constitutes a large gap in the study of youth is any understanding or analysis of the lives of young working-class girls. As Heidensohn points out regarding women 'in almost fifty years of theoretical and ethnographic work on deviant cultures from Whyte to Willis, nothing had changed' (Heidensohn, 1985:140).

Frances Heidensohn in her book 'Women and Crime' (1985) discusses a number of such studies illustrating and explaining why women have come to be ignored in the literature. She claims that classic techniques of participant observation, of getting close to gangs and to gang members, treating gangs as normal, admiring the group members, has produced rich ethnography. One major limitation though was that they could not and did not study women (Heidensohn, 1985:129).

She claims the history of these studies, rooted in close observation and ethnography of close association and empathy with subjects by male sociologists, led to exclusion of women. About the methodology, Roberts (1975:246) characterised 'the classic participant observer':

'... the participant observer is the man (and the image is characteristically male) who has looked "real life" in the eye, the "guy who's done the leg-work", the person who's seen it all. Perhaps the fact that so much participant observation has been done in Chicago has contributed to this "private eye" image'.

Traditionally, then, the participant observer is male, studying men and studying the seemier side of life. Heidensohn also points out these features in relation to W F Whyte's Street Corner Society (1955). She says Whyte's book is exemplary of its kind; his account
is sympathetic and sociologically analytical (Heidensohn, 1985:131). She notes his clear admiration for Doc and the gang (Heidensohn, 1985:131). Girls do appear occasionally, but

\[\text{'when girls do figure they are only observed through the eyes of the Nortons (the gang) and are not independent subjects'.} \]

(Heidensohn, 1985:131)

Her criticism of Whyte is that as a man he focussed only on what interested him and not on what would give him the broadest sociological perspective.

But these are classic studies and Heidensohn (1985:132) found it understandable that in this context 'respectable middle-class college boys' came to admire their subjects:

\[\text{'As gifted and sympathetic social observers they could identify much to admire in the energetic, lively delinquents with their group and communal loyalties'.} \]

(Heidensohn, 1985:132)

But the problem of excluding girls did not stop there and little has changed. Indeed, for her, Whyte marked the 'start of the long romantic attachment of sociologists of deviance to delinquents as heroes' (Heidensohn, 1985:132). And now she asks, where are the books Promiscuous Girls, Lower Class Culture and Teenage Prostitution (Heidensohn, 1985:136). Writers now, it seems, are still predominantly male and limited by interest and experience from observing female behaviour (Heidensohn, 1985:139). In more recent books too

\[\text{'girls do flit through the pages of these books and articles, but as in Street Corner Society, they are perceived and portrayed through the eyes of the lads'.} \]

(Heidensohn, 1985:139)
She suggests that studies of youth are still a celebration, not an analysis, that college boys are still fascinated by 'corner boys'; and in all of them girls are invisible.

Rather than discuss each and every author from this point of view, I want now to focus on one study in particular, Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour*. This was of course a book of enormous significance, and formed the framework for my own work prior to this thesis (Stafford, 1981). If my research has taught me to be critical of Willis, it is the criticism of someone who has learned a lot from him.

The connections to my concerns here are clear. Willis' central focus is class analyses. Yet Willis' goes further and, rightly, sees culture and gender as crucial to how class is in practice reproduced. His basic question is why the 'lads' in his study are content to voluntarily take upon themselves the definition and consequent material outcomes of being manual labourers (Willis, 1977).

Through a complex (and not predictable) process, the 'lads' reject more traditionally rewarding mental labour and come to accept themselves as manual labourers. And in coming to this acceptance (argues Willis) the 'lads' glean radical insights. The important thing about this for Willis is not so much the radical insights themselves, but the fact that these insights are not ultimately transformed into political action. And his explanation for this is that 'external' and 'internal' forces are a powerfully distorting and limiting factor.

'Cultural penetrations are repressed, disorganised and prevented from reaching their full potential or a political articulation by deep, basic and disorienting divisions'.
(Willis, 1977:145)
Gender is one of the most basic of these 'disorienting divisions'. For him, gender is central to his understanding of class. Gender and class working together bring some sections of working class youth to a complicated acceptance of themselves as manual labourers. By introducing gender into his analysis, Willis adds a whole new layer of understanding to traditional class ways of looking at the reproduction of labour power.

But I cannot agree with the substance of Willis' analysis. Of course, the epoch in which he did his fieldwork is, though less than a decade before, in chronological time, separated by a chasm from that which I studied. His 'lads' were confident they could find manual jobs - his question was why they embraced them. For their younger brothers, even these 'dead end jobs' have moved almost out of practicable reach. Yet I do not think my difference with Willis is simply this.

Willis chose to focus on boys only. That, I would argue, was the practical and theoretical flaw in his analysis. Yet again, he cannot be blamed for it personally; it is difficult to imagine how a male researcher could achieve the familiarity with girls' worlds that he achieved with boys'. (It is an odd consequence of male domination that female researchers - being inconsequential - may find it easier to study males ethnographically than vice versa.) But men and masculinity are not set, constant. They are formed and reformed all the time, in relation to women and feminity. One is the flip side of the other; you cannot, I would argue, understand one except in relation to the other. (5)

This, I suppose, is a feminist criticism of Willis. But my point is not the normal feminist one that Willis underestimates the
effect of gender. Paradoxically, he overestimates it.

Specifically, he mistakes for gender, for masculinity, what are in fact phenomena of class. Let me explain: Willis' understanding of boys was as an insider. His ideas about girls were formed wholly on the basis of how girls seemed superficially in relation to boys.

Willis saw what boys saw.

'The resolution among working class girls of the contradiction between being sexually desirable but not sexually experienced leads to behaviour which ... takes the form of romanticism readily fed by teenage magazines.

... the dominant social form of their relationship with boys is to be sexy, but in a latter day courtly love mould which falls short of actual sexual proposition!.

(Willis, 1977:45)

'What "the lads" see of the romantic behaviour they have partly conditioned in the girls, however, is a simple sheepishness, weakness and a silly indirectness in social relationships'.

(Willis, 1977:45)

And it is true. In relation to boys, girls are like this. But it is only part of the story. Willis did not and could not see the rest. The public face of girls as they relate to boys is only the tip of a very hidden iceberg and it is important that analyses of girls are not left at this level. Descriptions like these must be set against more total accounts of their lives. 'Confused' and 'passive' accounts of girls must be set against the background of what happens in their autonomous culture, where they can be witty, confident, assured and engaged in a vigorous class culture of opposition to the exploitative structures of their situation. And, as we shall see (and take up) in a way which is not too different from the 'lads' in Paul Willis' study. Indeed, there does now exist
some literature on girls' involvement in (male) sub-cultures which is beginning to challenge taken-for-granted notions about their total exclusion. (6) (See Campbell, 1981; McRobbie and Garber, 1975; Heidensohn, 1984).

Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (1975), however, state the main point at issue clearly in 'Girls and Subcultures: an exploration'.

'The important question, then, may not be the absence or presence of girls in the male subcultures, but the complementary ways in which girls interact among themselves and with each other to form a distinctive culture of their own'.

They claim girls occupy and negotiate a different space, with different ways of resisting, which are as worthy of study as male sub-cultures. Indeed, it is precisely these hidden spaces that my research attempts to uncover.

It is themes like these then that are central to my attempt to understand the ordinary lives of the working-class girls and boys who participated in a local training workshop, part of the then Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) in the early 1980s.

I tried to unravel a complicated story and to understand the complex process through which YOP ideology was imposed, accepted and rejected. I used participant observation to gauge the everyday way in which the life and culture of young people is being affected and changed and how the experience and culture young people bring to the scheme modifies it in practice. I tried to bear in mind that this experience would be different for boys and girls.

Before I begin, however, it is necessary to discuss the programme I studied (YOP); the build up to its introduction in 1977, the reasons for it and what it was about.
Youth Unemployment

From indirect to direct involvement in manpower planning

Until recently the state's direct involvement in manpower planning was minimal. Before 1974,

'... direct state intervention in the operation of the labour market had been restricted to a peripheral involvement in skills training for industry, in counter-cyclical attempts to accommodate the perennial complaints of skills shortages from capital and in the low level of provision of direct "sheltered" employment for groups such as the physically handicapped'.

(Finn, 1982(a):2) (7)

By the early 1979 unemployment as a whole was growing and 'the complacent assumptions of full employment in a mixed economy began to be threatened by the growing social and political visibility of the unemployed' (Finn, 1982(a):1). Within the general problems of unemployment, youth became a particular area of concern. It rose dramatically from 1974. In July of that year there were 80,000 under 20s unemployed in Britain. By July 1976 there were 390,000 (Loney, 1983:27). In the five years since 1972, the number of unemployed 16 and 17 year olds had risen by 120% (Firth, 1980:25). Girls were particularly disadvantaged. Between 1966 and 1976 youth unemployment as a percentage of all unemployment had increased from 19% to 30% for boys and for girls from 40% to 60% (Finn, 1982(a):5). (8)

Causes of youth unemployment

The causes of youth unemployment have been discussed by a number of authors. This is not the place to discuss the debate fully. I merely wish to highlight some of the more widely held explanations.

The explanation that is perhaps most widely held is that young
people themselves are somehow individually responsible for their own unemployment, that they lack the energy, skills, motivation or whatever to find jobs. While this is an easy position for social scientists to discredit, and even government spokespeople have had to retreat after having asserted it, it is nevertheless deeply ingrained in 'commonsense' ways of thinking. As I have argued elsewhere (Stafford, 1981:55-78), and will show below, it is an assumption that young unemployed people themselves can very easily come to share.

But it is for good reason not a respectable position within the social sciences. With the present level of youth unemployment it would indeed be hard to argue that the cause is individual inadequacy. And indeed few authors would. But there is less consensus as to the precise causes of the phenomenon. For convenience, debate can be classed into the two positions of 'structural' and 'cyclical'.

For those who take the 'structural' point of view, (9) youth unemployment does indeed arise from a lack of 'fit' between the characteristics of the unemployed and those for which employers are looking, but it is not a lack of 'fit' for which individuals can be blamed. Typically, indeed, structural unemployment arises when social, economic, geographic or technological change causes skills, for example, that once were essential to be no longer appropriate. David Raffe quotes Lipsey's (1979) explanation of when structural unemployment occurs.

'...when there is a "mismatching" between the unemployed and the available jobs in terms of regional location, required skills, or any other relevant dimension'.

(Lipsey, quoted in Raffe, 1985(b):1)
Particularly important for authors who emphasise the structural nature of youth unemployment are factors that may worsen the relative position of the young vis-a-vis the older in the labour market. For if these are significant, if there are 'factors over and above the recessionary influences which caused adult unemployment to rise' then, 'even if adult unemployment were to fall to the levels of the 1960s', 'youth unemployment would remain high' (Raffe, 1985(b):1).

Rees and Atkinson (1982:3) outline some of the factors they think have contributed to the exacerbation of the problem in the 1970s. Apart from the growth in the numbers of school leavers joining the labour market, the increased rate of trained women's involvement in the labour market, they also suggest that it is those sectors of industry which young people traditionally enter (like manufacturing, distribution and transport) which have experienced the greatest number of net job losses. (10)

Finn (1982a:4) argues that

'The combined strategies of rationalisation, concentration, redeployment, productive bargaining and associated changes in the labour process have precipitated a massive "shake out" of labour'.

And, in a time of increasing labour supply, there is no need for employers to employ young workers. Rees and Atkinson (1982), and Frith (1980) argue that youth unemployment is partly due to changes in the kind of workers employers are demanding. In the Coventry area Frith found

'... an increasing demand for responsible stable workers and a declining demand for casual labour'.

(Frith, 1980:29)
Raffe is critical of the pessimism surrounding the assumption that youth unemployment is so entrenched, structural and permanent. He argues that the problem is somewhat less deep-rooted than that.

'Had aggregate levels of unemployment remained constant since 1970, there is little reason to believe that youth unemployment would have been significantly affected by these changes'.
(Raffe, 1985(b):20)

He is critical of authors (for example Finn and Frith, 1981) who claim the problem is structural, claiming that their work is not based on rigorous empiricism.

'Such evidence as they do refer to is obtained largely from employers' own accounts of their employment policies and none of their evidence is based on direct study of trends through repeated observations over time.'

'At best, the alleged trends are either supported by second hand evidence ... or based on an allusion to an unsubstantiated past'.
(Raffe, 1985(b):13)

He argues that their evidence of changes in the labour process, of employers discriminating against young workers, of the losses of jobs being concentrated in young workers' jobs, rests on the study of a single labour market (Coventry) and that labour market is atypical. Raffe claims that these effects are much less even and more complicated. He suggests that 'total employment in the more youth intensive industries has not declined substantially more than in other industries' (Raffe, 1985(a):23). Nor, he claims, is there real evidence that employers are deliberately discriminating against young people (Raffe, 1985(a):26).

Raffe claims that youth unemployment is a cyclical phenomenon and largely the result of the recession.
Whether youth unemployment is largely structural or whether it is cyclical is open to debate: I don't propose to analyse the debate and come down on one side or the other here, though it is certainly important to establish. I do take Raffe's point, that the story of deskillling, and effects of changes in the labour process are both difficult to establish and not straightforward, that indeed 'different processes may be found at work in different localities or in different sectors of the economy' (Raffe, 1985(b):13) often simultaneously.

However, although it is important to establish whether or not youth unemployment is structural or cyclical, and it is important to account for the nature and causes of youth unemployment, what is more important for the purpose of this study is to try and establish the aims and assumptions about youth unemployment which underlie the nature of state provision. And it is here that it is valid to report employers' understandings and definitions of youth unemployment (as Finn and Frith (1981) do), for it is these which have come to structure much of the provision in relation to the young unemployed.

The Manpower Services Commission

The Manpower Services Commission (MSC) was set up by the Conservative government in January 1974. Initially there were two main divisions, the Employment Services Agency and the Training Services Agency. The Special Programmes division was set up in 1978 (it amalgamated with the Training Services Division in 1982 and dealt specifically with the escalating problem of youth unemployment). (11)

At the level of the state, youth unemployment was (at least initially) understood to be short term and cyclical. Measures
introduced to cope with the problem at this level (in the form of subsidies and inducements to capital), The Job Creation Project, 1975, (12) The Work Experience Programme, 1976 (13) were originally set up for three years. They constituted contingency plans in anticipation of an economic revival (Markall, 1982:82).

In the face of escalating youth unemployment and when these temporary measures should have disappeared, the analysis was changing. The Holland Report, published in 1977 and out of which YOP emerged, if not assuming youth unemployment was deep seated and permanent, was defining it as a 'medium term feature of the economy' (Holland Report, quoted in Markall and Gregory, 1985:65).

'There is some uncertainty among labour market analysts whether the current high level of unemployment among young people is "structural" or "cyclical". In past recessions young people's employment rose more quickly than total employment as the recession set in and fell more quickly in the recovery from recession. It is not clear whether this pattern would still hold, but in the context of the Commission's planning assumptions the issue does not really arise. Since unemployment seems likely to remain high, so too will young people's unemployment'.

(MSC, 1978(a) in Markall and Gregory, 1982:65)

Youth unemployment was established at an official level as a long term problem and a priority in terms of funding. The subsequent rise to prominence and rapid expansion of the MSC has been commented on by a number of authors.

'From an original nucleus of twelve civil servants, the MSC has expanded rapidly throughout the 1970s to pay the salary cheques of over 25,000 people and enjoyed a budget which had more than quadrupled from around £125m to over £600m in just five years'.

(Finn, 1982(a):3)

Even so, Rees and Atkinson (1982:1) point out that if its
achievements are remarkable as an organisation it remains 'modest':

'The MSC acts, then, as a mobilising agent; it shapes the problem to the solution. While remaining a modest sized organisation, in terms of staff and overheads, it distributes the resources whereby a massive programme of schemes are actually implemented by other organisations'.
(Rees and Atkinson, 1982:1-2)

'Its tentacles now reach forward into factory and office, restructuring training, and at the same time they reach back to reorganise the lives of working class fourteen year olds still at school'.
(Allum and Quiggley, 1983:6)

The state's response: individualising the problem

Given that a number of sections of the community have also been hard hit in terms of unemployment, why the overriding concern about youth?

'Why have so many of (the MSC's) more radical and extensive overtures in the labour market been made exclusively towards the young unemployed'.
(Markall and Gregory, 1982:58)

There are many reasons why youth unemployment was politically problematic, why the state had to be seen to be doing something. David Raffe (1984a:189) lists some of the reasons why young people's unemployment presented a problem for the state and why public concern was running high. Unemployment rates were higher among young people than adults and this inspired feelings of compassion and injustice. Since young people were not responsible for Britain's social and economic plight, why should they be made to suffer? Also, as Markall and Gregory (1982:59) point out, young people 'cannot be blamed' for their own unemployment in the same way that older workers are held to be 'losing' jobs with 'excessive' pay demands and 'restrictive practices'.
The focus on 'youth' may also arise partly from the limitations inherent in the situation of a body such as the Manpower Services Commission. However great its concern for the unemployed, it cannot simply create a job for every unemployed person. Part of a state in a capitalist society, it does not possess the freedom to pursue whatever course of action it pleases, and would not even under a government less committed to 'market forces' than the present one. (15)

'In a "free" capitalist labour market the state can only induce and encourage capital, it cannot direct and impel. Thus capitalism could not be forced or obliged to employ the young, and its requirements and tendencies had to be taken as given. Thus the explanation had to be sought amongst youth themselves'.
(Finn, 1982(a):7)

Finn spells out the consequence. Youth unemployment had to be treated as a youth problem, and not, as it were, as an unemployment problem.

'... in political/policy terms, youth unemployment is a youth problem: the state cannot change the labour process to fit existing school leavers, it has to try to fit school leavers to the available labour process'.
(Finn, 1982(b):49)

Employers' definitions of their requirements are and have to be taken as given, and any response of the state has to be in terms of youth as the focus of attention and the problem.

A number of factors pertaining to youth have given coherence to the state's response and the threat of political and social unrest by idle, bored young people has undoubtedly been a major theme structuring the nature of provision. Geoff Mungham (1982) argues
this particular concern has long historical roots. From the 19th century, at least, the idea of 'workless youth' and the idea of crime and moral degeneration have gone hand in hand. Examples from literature at the time express sentiments about (male) youth that has a contemporary ring to it. 'Loose, single, men', '... with no commitment to or a stake in the prevailing order', '... in danger of contaminating respectable and industrious youth' (Mungham, 1982:30).

Yet, he argues, that the fear of youth as 'socially' explosive is without substance, a 'moral panic' (Mungham, 1982:38). He argues that today, even in the face of widespread rioting over the past few years, youth does not pose a real threat in any potentially insurrectary sense. Youth troubles in this country, he claims, come in specific packages. Their struggle is essentially intra-class, turning anger and impatience not onto society but against themselves (Mungham, 1982:36).

'... insofar as youth raises its voice at all, the cry is for jobs, for incorporation; their concern is not to subvert a social order but to join it'.
(Mungham, 1982:37)

Whether this analysis has credence is open to debate, and almost beside the point. Moral panic or no, it is widely held assumptions like these which have justified the focus on youth and structured programmes like YOP.

The great debate

If the threat of social disruption has structured provision, there is another major concern about youth which has been equally
important.

If industry itself could not be changed, if employers were refusing to employ young people, if state intervention was an attempt to make young people more employable, then the needs and definitions of industry and employers were taken for granted and structured the content of what was offered to young people. Employers, it seemed, were blaming schools for their failure to produce young people of the calibre they needed, to properly equip pupils for the world of work and it justified the extent of state involvement in youth unemployment.

The 'Great Debate' about education inaugurated by James Callaghan accused schools of failing to equip their pupils with the necessary basic skills and attitudes to enter work.

The Holland Report (1977) included a survey of employers' attitudes to young workers.

'Holland found about half of the employers the MSC interviewed referred to the declining calibre of the recruits in terms of basic education'.
(Frith, 1980:32)

'Most employers share a low opinion of school leavers. They are particularly critical of the lack of willingness and poor attitude to work, especially among those doing apprenticeships. The ability of the young to read and write competently or to do simple arithmetic was also mentioned by employers'.
(Frith, 1980:33)

Schools, it seemed, were producing young people set against industry. (16)

The taken-for-granted assumption was that schools were failing to meet the needs of industry. There was a 'mismatch' between the kind of worker that schools were producing and what industry
wanted (Finn, 1982(a):21). And it is this notion which has meant that the MSC won for itself a new area of expansion in terms of sole responsibility in terms of the education and training of 16-18 year olds (Finn, 1982(a):20).

The Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP): what it was about

YOP, introduced in 1978, offered work experience to unemployed 16-18 year olds. Work Experience on Employers Premises (WEEP) constituted the bulk of provision (80%), trainees were also placed in Training Workshops and Project and Community Based Work Experience. There was also an input (usually Social and Life Skills) from Further Education.

A number of authors have offered critical assessment of YOP as an attempt not to offer real quality training to young people, but rather, behind the breakdown of the traditional 'institutional separation between the state’s responsibility for education and industry’s responsibility for training' (Frith, 1980:36), there has been created new arrangements which both remove young people from the unemployment register (and the streets) and attempts to resocialise them with the kind of attitudes and skills employers are believed to want (Frith, 1980:36).

In this definition of YOP, 'training' in any traditional sense of the word has lost all meaning.

'The thrust of the MSC's proposals and courses is not simply the transmission of "objective" skills or a response to the real needs of individuals, rather it is primarily work socialisation - an attempt to inculcate forms of competence which carry an acceptance of workplace discipline, legitimation of workplace hierarchies, and so on.' (Finn, 1982(b):29)
'Skill' in this context is an attempt to create young workers who could float from job to job at the bottom end of the labour market, to be recruited as and when employers wanted them (Finn, 1982(b):33).

The onus is firmly on youth and on altering the personalities and attitudes of young people to suit what it is that employers are now in a position to demand of them.

Of course, though analyses like these are helpful and important they are fairly abstract and conducted at the level of the state. There is as yet very little detailed empirical work at the level of the young people’s everyday experience of schemes which allows an understanding of what new arrangements are actually meaning to the young people experiencing them. What happens when these new institutional arrangements meet the culture that young working-class people bring to schemes?

About the Workshop

The place I chose to study to answer these questions S... (S/F for short) was a training workshop, not one of the statistically dominant YOP Work Experience on Employers’ Premises schemes. So it was not a 'real' firm. It occupied an intermediate place in the continuum of training workshops, which range from workshops close to community-based schemes through to technical/industrial training.

In practice, YOP was organised somewhat hierarchically; the more 'able' young people being assigned to the WEEP element of YOP (by 'Careers'), the less 'able' to other aspects of the scheme, Community or Project based schemes, for example, and these were often used as a stepping-stone to WEEP rather than to real jobs.
S/F was something of a model scheme and an MSC showpiece. It had, at that time, a reputation for placing a high percentage of its 'graduates' in full-time jobs. Its trainees were reputed to be hard working and productive. S/F had a reputation to maintain and as such was unprepared to take on 'problem' young people. On balance, the workshop contained a fairly ordinary selection of working-class young people.

S/F was an old building broken up into different workshops. It housed and provided work experience for up to sixty trainees. It contained an office, the public face of the workshop, well decorated and housing the manager and three administrative staff. There was never more than one trainee in the office.

The workshop proper was actually three workshops, each in different parts of the building and with separate staff. 'Knitwear' was exclusively for girls; each trainee having access to her own knitting machine and being trained to produce hats, scarves, jumpers and socks. Here there were three supervisors. Boys were apportioned either to the 'Paintshop' where they learned the basics of the decorating trade, or the 'Joinery shop' where they learned about joinery. Boys' workshops had two supervisors each.

On their first day at 'work', each trainee is given a written list of rules.
Hours: 8.15 - 4.15 Monday - Friday

Clockin: If you are over 3 minutes late (8.18), 15 minutes will be docked from your wages. If you are over 18 minutes late (8.33) 30 minutes and so on

Lunch: 30 minutes (a hooter sounds)

Teabreaks: 2 x 10 minutes (not allowed to leave the workshop)

Absence: Have to phone in 1st day off

Sickness: Over the year, 3 separate days are allowed without a doctor's line

Holidays: Over the year, 12 days paid holiday; 5 days of which must be taken at Christmas and New Year.

Plus: 10 public holidays

Discipline: Warning system. Oral then written warning. All start on one month's trial. Can be dismissed anytime

Wages: £23

Management were young and progressive and were already anticipating the shift to YTS and gearing themselves up to being a Mode B scheme. The 'trainee contract' was drawn up in readiness for this and provides some insight into the aims of the workshop and its general ethos. Some extracts will be helpful.

S/F workshop is set up to give trainees the best possible preparation for a working life

It's a place to improve your chance of getting a good job by working hard and following the advice of your supervisor

S/F provides:

training, help with problems, help in looking for jobs

S/F will help you develop the qualities employers seek - honesty, enthusiasm, effort, reliability, realism, acceptance of authority (accepting someone else will be giving the orders and understanding why you have to do what is asked)
Trainees have to:

attend interviews, attend college, attend outdoor trips (to develop extra confidence and skills), look at a newspaper every day, visit the job centre once a week (the day you forget to do this is the day someone else gets the job you could have had)

Personal presentation - you will be expected to look clean and smart. You will get a personal report every month. Your progress will be assessed and you will be told how you match up to the above.

There is a taken-for-granted assumption that S/F works, and it is believed that the main reason it works is because of 'discipline'. It is a word you hear a lot at S/F. When I went to discuss access to the workshop with staff before I began fieldwork, I was warned that S/F had a reputation for being strict. And I had been at the workshop for less than a week when two people (separately) pulled me aside to justify it.

Cath: (knitwear supervisor)

In this place, the skills they learn are more or less redundant - at least for the girls - all we can give them here is work discipline. If we can send them out of here with a reference saying they've been punctual and hardworking, then this is actually quite a lot. It does help them get jobs. S/F kids do get jobs.

Joe:

The best we can do for them is to be able to say 'he attended', 'he was punctual', 'he worked hard', and a reference that says that'll get them jobs. It's a lot.
Some Methodological Considerations

What I actually did

Altogether I spent five months in the workshop, two and a half months with boys and two and a half months with girls. Although points of method are discussed throughout the thesis (I discuss my acceptance into workshops in my discussion of each workshop), it will be useful to make a few remarks here.

Participant observation as the basic method was dictated by my interest in the culture of young people. As Roberts (1975) argues,

'The advantages of participant observation lie in the quality of knowledge about the field which it yields. The researcher gets to know both the intimate surface of his (her) "field" and also how the real world runs under the surface. He (she) picks up the "informal" as well as the formal culture'.
(Roberts, 1975:246) (my brackets)

The ideal of participant observation is 'to depict and describe faithfully, without distortion or preconception: to arrive at a faithful reflection of a social world' (Roberts, 1975:247).

I used participant observation as the best way of understanding the events and people I was studying. For my purposes the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages. The disadvantages, however, should not be dismissed. The problematic issues are well known: the way in which the presence of the participant observer itself influences events; the problems of analysing data; and so on. The extent to which it is possible to know the extent to which empathy with subjects clouds judgement, or the extent to which it is possible to know how much events are affected by the presence of the researcher are limited. Apart from taking precautions while still in the situation for myself (for example, continually assessing my
impact on situations, watching young people's behaviour from afar, towards the end of my research asking my closest friends how they first saw me and reacted to me, how they thought others did and how much they thought I changed the situation). What I have tried to do for the reader is to explicitly write myself into the research to allow people a certain amount of insight into my role and character in the workshop, to allow a certain amount of room for people to assess for themselves my involvement in the situation.

In the workshop itself, I decided not to use a tape recorder. In a situation where eating natural yogurt for lunch sets you apart as an outsider, there would be little hope of acceptance for someone trying to record their conversations. In the event, I would also have felt extremely uncomfortable with a notebook and pencil. I used none of these props and relied heavily on memory. I wrote nothing in the workshop. I developed a technique whereby if something cropped up that I wanted to remember, I would distance myself from the group at a time when nothing much was happening and recall it in my head. I remembered key words. By the end of my time in the workshop, I could recall whole long conversations with ease. This was the skill I developed by far the most in the workshop.

In terms of analysing data, at the end of my fieldwork the 'data' took the form of a daily diary. I spent a few months familiarising myself with the content of the diary. I made a list of themes, built up either from previous knowledge of the literature or themes which had become interesting as a result of my experience in the workshop. I systematically reorganised by field notes around
these themes. For the most part, these themes constitute the main sections and chapters of the thesis.

I wrote 'key incidents' in a complete form, using them here to highlight important issues. I also constructed biographies of key characters and a list of activities associated with them. This was important for various sections of the thesis.

Taken as younger than I was, I participated in the workshop as someone of their own age and as a girl. I made firm friends with several of the girls and felt close to them and their culture. Many of them travelled to the workshop by bus; I lived near enough to walk. But some of the main insights into their lives I learned outside the workshop, waiting for the gates to open, in the clocking-in room, walking up the road home or walking to the shops at lunchtime. I spent a lot of time in the toilets smoking and passing round 'fly' cigarettes or standing on the balcony doing the same. By the time I left the girls' workshop I was meeting them in shops on Saturdays and going round the shops after work. I felt that I knew a lot about how they lived, outside the workshop, what their families were like and what they felt.

I was close to a number of boys too but in a different way. I only observed about them what teenage girls did. I knew very little about what they did outside the workshop or about their families and their relationships to them. My way of relating to them was in a bantering, jokey way and I never felt I got to the bottom of their culture in the same way as I did with girls. For example, in relation to girls, I knew how it felt to have sexist comments directed at me and how girls really felt about boys. With boys, when they made sexist comments about girls, when they appeared
to relate to them only as objects of sex, I was never sure how deep this went; what they actually wanted from girls. It is information like this that boys do not give up easily and I suspect to find out you have to be one, and I was not. It is certainly a limitation of my study.

The way I participated in the different workshops is discussed in the relevant chapters.

In S/F, girls and boys inhabited different worlds. They occupied different space, and did different jobs. The way they responded to what was offered, differed as well. And to do justice to their separate worlds needed separate studies.

I had not always intended that my study take this form. At many stages, alternatives were more tempting, quicker, neater (theoretically and methodologically) and would have been personally less telling. And following other cultural studies, I could have concentrated only on class. (A neutral celebration of the responses of working-class youth in their daily struggle with the state would have made lively and interesting reading.) One week in S/F had me thoroughly preoccupied by gender though, and extremely concerned about the way teenage boys discussed and related to teenage girls. An understanding of gender was imperative.

A purely feminist study at the cultural level also seemed an attractive option. As mentioned, existing literature on youth culture is largely about boys. A piece focusing primarily on women highlighting the sexism of schemes and outlining the separate fate teenage girls meet at the hands of official sources (the state), and unofficial sources (the boys), could have helped right this balance.

Yet, however sexist were teenage boys, being around them
continually for months made it very difficult for me to downplay or ignore the enterprising nature of their daily struggle and ultimately the decision to study S/F in a total way (taking account of both gender and class) seemed an obvious one.

Most social science literature would probably now agree that the researcher is never neutral and so often the information you get is the information you can get, and this is structured by who you are. Class and gender have enormous implications, affecting what is seen, collected and how it is interpreted.

Class differences between researcher and working-class people present real difficulties in knowing about the reality of working-class life. Firstly, people feel stigmatised and ashamed of their lives and their culture and they keep it to themselves. The problems for middle-class researchers, of trying to uncover a reality which people hide even from their closest friends, are not inconsiderable. It is incredibly difficult for researchers to get any real feel for the subtlety and complexity of how working-class people live, how their lives are structured and how this is changing. Working-class people unrecognisably alter accents, they change what they say and how they say it, in the presence of middle-class people. And it is no accident that most of the recent studies of YOP/YTS, the MSC and of unemployment generally are pitched at the level of the state. That there are still few cultural level studies reflects, I think, this difficulty of knowing.

Class and me

One of the main aims of my research has been to get beyond these problems. I have tried to look behind the easy-going, happy
facade that this particular group of young working-class people presented to the world and tried to uncover deeper aspects of their lives; the parts of their lives which tend to slip through the net of traditional social science methodology, which do not filter up and become part of taken-for-granted social knowledge until much later. And this was partly possible for me for a whole series of unexpected (and not so unexpected) reasons.

Who I was in the world in general, structured and eased my acceptance in S/F. Yet, who I was (to working-class teenagers) was, at first, unknown to me (and a major source of initial anxiety). My acceptance happened on the basis of assumptions made about me which I did not understand until much later. My role was fixed by things I was not immediately aware were important. In my first weeks there I was asked a few key questions. On the basis of my answers my image was built. It stuck for all of the time I was at S/F.

The first and most important question was whether or not I had a boyfriend (they assumed I was childless and unmarried). That I did not, was probably the biggest single factor which put me on the same footing as themselves. I was no threat. Had I had a boyfriend (or been married) my research would have taken a different form.

Next they asked how much money I got to attend S/F. My grant, I told them, was slightly higher than their wage. This was disagreeable but not much of a threat. They asked what my father did. He was a bricklayer and this did nothing to set me apart. They placed my accent after a week.
'Yer no' fae Edinburgh ur ye'.

'Bit, yer no' fae Glasga' either. Yer fae wan o' tha' places in between. Bet yer fae Whitburn?.

Whitburn is two miles away from where I was born. They placed me more efficiently than any sociologist could have done.

I was assumed to be young. I didn't wear make up and was not so familiar with their culture as I had once been. They thought me simple and naive. But my naivety was more than made up for by my kindness. (Participant observers do anything to keep in with people!) And I was generally liked.

For many reasons, then, but mostly because their culture was the culture that had made me (I was rusty but incredibly familiar with it), I became integrated into S/F (more or less) as one of them. Their behaviour was not modified for me more than it would have been for any other working-class sixteen year old. To find myself unexpectedly able to relive my own adolescence like this, felt like a unique and privileged experience. I would, I think, have embarked on it with a lot less relish had I known with foresight, the humbling, traumatic, daunting and undermining task it would prove to be.

Yet, despite being accepted and in many ways familiar with their culture, I was constantly aware of the enormous problems of knowing. I touched (and could only touch) on one tiny part of their lives. And had I appeared in their world as anything else (as someone with money, for example, or as someone who was married, as a supervisor or as anyone who was a threat to them), I could have missed getting close to their culture stall. I could easily have spent five months in S/F, knowing them in a completely different way and on a completely
different level. What I ultimately came to think of as the important things about their culture could have remained hidden.

Indeed, for the first few weeks, until I had made friends of my own, like most newcomers, (I found out later) I lived in isolation. I had little idea of what their lives were really like and what was really happening. I barely remember the content of early conversations. They were utterly different from the ones which filled my days in later stages. What I do remember are general impressions. Trainees seemed confident, happy and easy going. This image of them did not last. By the end of my time there, these impressions had been completely transformed. Each and every one of them seemed to carry around with them 'a burden of misery. Indeed, a lot of my time in the workshop was spent unpicking the painful and miserable conditions that were really their lives.

Implications of gender

If class creates problems of knowing for middle-class researchers, then gender creates even bigger ones. Teenage girls fall at the bottom of every hierarchy. The reality of their lives are modified and hidden from every other group. The lack of literature and detailed study of this group is testimony enough that their culture is little known about and little cared about. As McRobbie and Garber say (1975:222)

'... girl culture, from our preliminary investigations, is so well insulated as to operate to effectively exclude not only other "undesirable" girls – but also boys, adults, teachers and researchers'.
This group has simply never had a voice. For working-class boys there have always been traditional (albeit limited) ways out. There are tried and tested escape routes to the middle-classes and to situations which provide opportunities for becoming articulate. There are outlets for sharing experiences which then become better known about and more widely appreciated. What I studied involved more than rational, academic choices. Like everyone else, personal preoccupations and personal biography are inextricably tied up in this piece of work. I studied the culture that made me, both because I could do it and because I wanted to. The extent to which my study is unusual is directly related to how unusual I am as a sociologist.

The culture of working-class girls is deeply hidden. It is a process of socialisation from which so few escape. The number who escape to new situations of independence and confidence and to positions which provide time, space, money and the skills required to reflect on and want to share an analysis of their own culture, are minute. For reasons of a very quirky biography, I escaped. I now find myself with time, money and skills enough to give a voice to the group I came from. In essence, I was provided with an opportunity to relive and to update my own adolescence. On a personal level, I reduced a gap in myself, between the social science person I am now and a much older self. The older self provided the opportunity to participate in the first place. The social science self, gave me the chance to think about it, to digest and ultimately share a culture whose rich, poignant and courageous lives have been largely ignored and hopelessly neglected. I hope that the traumatic and humbling experience it was for me comes through in this piece of work.
PART ONE

"BOYS!"
CHAPTER 1

Girls Among Boys

In the previous section I talked briefly about how I conducted my research. Here I want to discuss in more detail how I came to be accepted in the paintshop. Previously I discussed how my age, sex and class eased my acceptance into S/F in general and helped my understanding of the situation. But who I was shaped my access to different workshops in different ways. Being a 'girl' in a girls' workshop was very different from being a 'girl' with boys. That I was a 'girl' shaped my access to and understanding of what happened there. And this section says as much about how girls fare in male workplaces as it does about male trainees.

Stages of Acceptance

No place for girls

Me: Do girls do painting and joinery too?

Jan (training officer)
Not really. Well actually, we do have a girl starting. It's our first and none of us is very keen. To tell you the truth, I'm always suspicious of girls who claim they want to paint. They usually only want to do it for really flighty reasons. Anyway, there are so many boys desperate for apprenticeships and experience that that has to be my priority. We just don't have places for girls. But this girl was so determined to paint that we decided to let her.

My first few days at S/F were anxious. I spent them observing trainees from the safe distance of the office. I watched people come and go, tried to discover how the place worked and to imagine a role for myself. Hopes of studying boys and girls together
vanished in the realisation of how complete sex segregation was in S/F. Girls and boys occupied different parts of the building, the division of labour was by gender (boys painted, girls knitted), lunch times and breaks were staggered in time and the sexes never (officially) met. The experience of being a girl in S/F was an utterly different one from being a boy.

Boys' workshops were cold, male and uncomfortable. Upstairs, girls knitted in warmth and feminine comfort. In the abstract, working with girls seemed like a possibility, while my first real contact with boys reinforced a growing feeling that studying them was going to be impossible.

It was my third day in the office. I tentatively approached Tam (the supervisor in the paintshop) to ask if he would show me around the boys' workshop. I reminded him I was being careful not to be seen as a member of staff or as an official of any kind. Hope of access faded completely at Tam's attempt to introduce me.

Tam: Right you lot. Ah want ye's tae meet somebody. This is a Miss Anne Stafford. She's the new assistant here, an' she's here tae keep an' eye on ye lot. An' ye's better treat her wi' the same respect as ye's treat me. Dae ye's hear, or ye's '11 huv' me tae answer tae'.

Next day I made one last ditch attempt to find a way to study boys.

Me: Tam, dae ye' think it would be possible for me tae spend some time in your workshop? Dae ye' think ye' could find something for me to do?

Tam: Ah dunno'. See, these are boys' workshops. There's no' an' awfy lot fur a lassie tae dae here. It wid be handy if ye' could type or somethin'. It'd be handy tae get somebody tae type ma estimates, but a' the rest is boys' work.
The paintshop had been set up as a place for boys. It was no place for girls. Tom could almost conceive of my presence there as an office worker, but as a painter, with status equal to boys, it was unthinkable.

The structure of the workshop in general, its general ethos, was set up as near as possible to resemble a real workplace. Nowhere was this ideal more rigorously pursued than in the paintshop. In real decorating firms (limited by constraints of the market) there is little time for niceties such as training girls. Neither did it happen in the paintshop. Here, the aim was to reproduce workplace conditions and workplace social relations and to turn out trainees fit for the world of work. It meant that the paintshop was as offputting to girls as a male workplace would have been.

*Trish and me: a frosty reception*

Traditionally, participant observers succeed when they have something to offer and my fortunes changed when this became possible for me. My access to the paintshop was blocked because I was a girl. Trish negotiated her own access. (17) It was eventually and reluctantly given. No one wanted her there and certainly no one wanted her there alone. I leapt at the opportunity of being the second girl in the paintshop.

We met for the first time outside the paintshop at eight fifteen one Monday morning, too terrified to go in. It was an unlikely alliance (a twenty seven year old feminist, a sixteen year old school leaver). Yet throughout the two and a half months I spent in the paintshop we were inseparable. For either of us alone, the situation would have been impossible.
My experience of the paintshop was structured through Trish, her experience was linked to mine. Interpretations of what was happening, we worked out together. Analysing boys' relations with each other and with us, was our full time occupation. My age and (slightly) more confident air were important in coping with initial hostility. And without her I would never have come to such a close understanding of the culture of boys. Trish fed me cues and brought me faster to acceptable behaviour. She gave me legitimation in the eyes of boys that I would have found difficult to obtain for myself.

And what was an alliance based on need and dependency, ended in close friendship based on mutual trust and respect for two very different ways of life. A friendship which unfortunately lasted only as long as our time together in the workshop, before our different lifestyles took us along very different paths.

We moved inside the paintshop when the hooter went. We met a solid block of silence and hostility. It took a long time to unravel and understand the forces which created this atmosphere and which indicated the extent of the threat that we posed to boys by our presence. Supervisors and boys alike seemed unable to relate to girls in this setting. For my part, I wanted nothing more than to walk out of the workshop and never come back. Our first days were a nightmare. We were tested, tried and challenged from the beginning. Our first obstacle was Tam. Persuading him to allow us to stay seemed like an impossible task.

Tam: Right you lassies, fur the first few weeks ye'll no' get near a paintbrush. Ye'll be cleanin' up. Then we'll see how ye' shape up. Ah'm pitten' ye's can cleanin' door handles. A few days oan that an' ah'll bet ye' never get paint oan a door handle again.
For the first few days we did not see a paintbrush. We hardly saw a boy. Tam's initial tactic for dealing with our presence was to keep us apart from boys and pretend that we did not exist. We spent these days with steel wool and scrapers, removing paint from every door handle in the building. This was interspersed with breaks in the canteen where we were met by a wall of boys' stony, silent, hostility. No one spoke a word. We very obviously disrupted all of their usual daily interaction. Boys were embarrassed and unable to say anything or to carry on as normal. I found the situation unbearable. Trish though was more relaxed about it than I was.

Trish: Oct, they'll get used tae us.

To me there seemed no way boys could or would want to relate to us. Tam escalated rather than minimised what was happening. Our first few days were confusing and embarrassing. It took a long time to understand the deep rooted reasons for their singleminded determination to keep us out. And it was Trish who first (intuitively) grasped the situation and who first took steps to counteract it. What was obvious from the beginning was that so much of the hostility towards us was expressed in terms of our (threatening) sexuality.

For example, on our very first morning, as we entered the workshop we were immediately given new overalls. For boys, putting on overalls was neutral. For us, in front of a sea of staring boys, it felt sexual, embarrassing and degrading. And from then on, not for one moment were we allowed to forget that we were girls, that we were sex objects and that we were out of place.
Tam: Right you lassies, when ye's come intae this wee back room, ah want ye's in here two at a time. Dae ye's understand. Ah dinnae want ye's in here yersel's.

Trish and I were both angry at this remark.

Trish: Diz he think we're gaunnae rape him or some'at?

Tam's nervousness about us was a concern about boys and reflected generally held ideas about them and their unformed and as yet uncontrollable sexuality. Stereotypical ideas about sexuality also extended to include Tam himself. Embarrassed about the above remark, he tried to justify it to me later.

Tam: Ah dunno' whit ye' made o' that remark ah made earlier. But, call me auld fashioned if ye' like - but ye's cannnae deny it - ye's ur' attractive wee lassies. Dae ye's ken whit ah mean.

At the beginning of our second week, Tam took us out on our first job. It was something of a breakthrough and our first taste of 'real' work. Of course the breakthrough came with a sting in the tail. It did little to make me feel more optimistic about our situation.

Tam: Right, Elvis, Pete, Punk Pete, Mo, in the van, we're gaun't oot tae a job in L... Anne an' the wee lassie tae. Take yer' stuff wi' ye', ye'll no' be back - handbags tae, fur those o' ye' that hae them.

Out on the job, Trish and I felt so uncomfortable that we spent our first few lunches wandering the streets. The laughter and easy banter we heard from the end of the hall on our return, stopped
abruptly as we appeared in the doorway. Their 'normal' way of relating (it seemed) could not take place in front of girls.

Ideas generally held in society, ideas about women, men and sexuality, structure the exclusion of women from male workplaces generally. And, because the workshop emulates rather than challenges what happens in real workplaces, these ideas also organise the way S/F operates.

Schemes like S/F have come to take employers' definitions of the problem as given and are about fitting young people for the world of work. Trainees are seen to be problem youngsters and their problems are also problems about their morality and sexuality. And the problem of containing and controlling young people comes to be about controlling and containing their forming and problematic sexuality as well. A vital factor built into the disciplinary structure of S/F has to do with, and is built around generally held ideas about teenage sexuality and how to contain it.

In S/F, the sexes, then, were kept apart. Boys have sexual urges that girls have to be protected from. This had many implications. Keeping boys and girls apart created in S/F the kind of workplace environment around which could be built a boys' culture that was exclusive of girls. Boys were brought to feel that they were doing work that was male, work that girls could not do. They could feel positive about themselves in relation to and at the expense of girls. Sex segregation was the basis upon which was built the superiority of boys, the subordination of girls in S/F. It created the basis upon which an atmosphere could be created where daily interaction was exclusive of girls, indeed, inappropriate when girls were around. Our presence challenged, a very basic tenet upon
which the acceptance of S/F by boys, was organised. Our acceptance meant, on the one hand, convincing Tam that our sex and morality were not a problem, on the other being able to work there without undermining the notion that work in the workshop was too difficult for girls. To me it seemed like an impossible task. I had reckoned without the determination of Trish.

Tam's lassies

I felt increasing pessimism. If the situation as it was continued it seemed that our days in the workshop were numbered. My despair at the situation was formed by my own ideals. Acceptance for me implied acceptance as equals. Trish was much less pessimistic and had other ideas, and her strategy was effective (though not one I would have used myself). She determinedly set about creating a role for herself that was not on the same basis as boys but rather one which meant behaving in ways that were feminine. She set about fitting in as a girl and used feminine ways of turning sexism to her (short-term) advantage. For example, Tam turned up at breaktime. There was no spare cup for him.

Trish: Ah'll jist finish ma tea Tam then ah'll make you wan.

Trisha's first aim was to win round Tam and she set about it by trying to make herself as pleasant and as helpful as possible. She was pleased to be allowed to do the smallest and most menial of tasks, tasks that boys would never have done. She made paste for the wallpaperers, just as they needed it and without being asked. She continually swept shavings, wiped up, passed scrapers. I busied myself in much the same way but much less avidly. Trish tried to
make herself acceptable and indispensible as a woman. She softened the harsher aspects of men-only workplaces and in an astoundingly short space of time she was indispensible and her presence (and mine) taken for granted. Suddenly and for reasons about which I felt dubious, staying seemed all too possible.

Trish had become Tam's assistant. In womanly ways she made his life in the workshop more comfortable, making tea for him and keeping the place tidy. He fell into entrusting her with tasks he would not have entrusted to the boys.

Tam: Trish, you see tae the keys. Look up and make sure sure everything is pit away.

Tam: Trish, make sure tha' laddies dinnae make a hash o' things in there.

Tam: Make us a cup o' tea, eh Trish?

Trisha's tactics had paid off. And she had been successful in another way as well. Trish became widely respected as a 'good girl'. She was aloof from boys and indeed ignored their presence. In doing this she quickly alleviated Tam's worst fears while at the same time dissociating herself from the reputation of girls in Knitwear who were generally held to be 'wild'. Trish and I became known as 'Tam's lassies'.

Tam: (to me in confidence) She'll be a' right eh, the wee lassie? She's quiet, thank god. God knows whit ah wid huv' done wi' a wild yin. Any amount o' wild laddies ah kin handle, ah could knock ony laddie inae shape, bit ah widnae know whit tae dae wi' a wild lassie.
We now had a basis for staying and were beginning to feel like we belonged. My heart positively soared at this conversation.

I asked Tam about the up and coming football match. Naively

I asked if girls went as well.

Joe: (supervisor in joinery)
Naw, we've decided no' tae let them go. They got goin' the last time an' ah'm tellin' ye' they were wild. They're jist no' interested in fitba' tha' lassies. The last time they didnae even watch the match. They spent the whole time wrestlin' wi' each other oan the grass. They really waste it fur themselves tha' lassies. So they're no' gettin' goin' this time.

Tam: Aye, bit ma lassies are goin' Joe, ah'll make sure o' that.

Trish had done well. In my own way so had I.

Tam: (in confidence)
Ye've done well. Done me a favour actually - oan the wee lassie. Ah'll tell ye' the truth, ah didnae want her. If she'd come hersel' ah couldnae huv' coped. Ah wiz gaumnae gie her a month's trial, then she wiz oot. Noo she'll fit in, she'll dae her year noo.

Trish the painter

I was relieved to be able to stay, even on this basis. But in accepting this I had in fact badly underestimated Trish. She had more ambitious plans for herself than merely being Tam's domestic servant. Her tactics were more sophisticated than I had originally given her credit. The disquiet I felt about her initial role was dispelled in the realisation that hers was an ongoing struggle, part of a continual effort on her part to better her position in the workshop. Trish knew what she wanted. She wanted to be a painter
and she intuitively knew the obstacles to be crossed, the painstaking work that had to be done to get there. When she was established at one stage, she pushed further.

When Tam did eventually allow Trish to paint, she proved competent with a paintbrush and as quick to learn as any boy. Her jobs were always well done and meticulous. She never left a gloss brush in water or failed to clean an emulsion brush. She always used the appropriate brush. Her jobs were well prepared, sanded, all the holes filled. She slowly gained the reputation of being a good painter. We progressed to 'real' jobs alongside boys and Tam began to imagine a new role for Trish.

Tam: The wee lassie's gaunnae make it. She's gaunnae be wan o' them. An' ah'll make her a damned good painter. There's nae other scheme aboot here wid take can a lassie. Ah huv'. She'll no' get a joab, bit wan day, when she's got a hoose o' her ain, by god, she'll kin dae it up, fae top tae bottom. An' if she's goat tradesmen in, by christ, she'll know whit's gaun' can.

When the boys too started to relax around us, we felt we had really arrived. Because Trish had initially been 'cool' around them, and related to them in their own terms, they slowly began to accept her as someone who was sexually neutral, a sister and a tomboy. The role suited me too.

Our biggest breakthrough, though, happened when two new boys started and Trish and I were no longer the newest trainees. They started into a situation where girls were painters. Indeed it was Trish and I who were initially responsible for their initiation. They looked to us as sources of information and looked to us for tips.
Tam: You new laddies, go wi' the lassies. They'll show ye's whit tae dae.

We spent the first day with them chatting, at the same time doing heavy manual jobs. We confidently carried benches down from the canteen, sanded them down and varnished them. That we were experienced, they took for granted. They questioned us about S/F, chatted about their lives, about music, about clothes. Our long struggle to be allowed to do this, they knew nothing about. And at this stage Tam's ideas for Trish progressed another stage.

Tam: (casually to Trish) There's a job gaun't as a sales assistant in the M... paint shop. Ur' ye' wantin' tae go in fur it?

Trish: (emphatically) Nut!

Tam: Aye, that's whit ah thought. Ah jist thought ah'd ask ye'.

Next day.

Mo: (to Trish) Did ye' no' want that job?

Trish: Naw!

Mo: Aye, that's whit Tam said. He says ye've goat yer heart set oan bein' a painter.

Trish: If ah'd wanted a joab in a shop, ah widnae huv' come here.

Tam now had aspirations for Trish as an apprentice. His thoughts were on the publicity for S/F and the status of having been responsible for turning out one of the first girl apprentices in the decorating trade locally.
Trish blows it. A question of morality

To fit into the workshop, Trish had to participate in the daily culture of the paintshop in a way that was sexually neutral. She created a role for herself that was daughter to Tam, sister to the boys and as a girl set apart from and better than girls in knitwear. Keeping everyone happy was a balancing act which became more difficult to manage as time in the workshop went on.

Tam liked Trish best when she was new, awkward and unconfident, when she was ignoring boys and servicing him. In the long-term, this was untenable. As we became more established, more confident about being allowed to stay and as we increased the amount of contact we had with boys, our relationship with them changed. We inhibited boys less and less. And after a time, their daily interaction seemed barely affected by us. Soon, boys were swearing, fighting, sloshing each other with paintbrushes and discussing girls, whether we were there or not. Gradually, we were sucked more and more into their culture and we began to participate in the general carry on, discussing everything from politics to nights out.

But our new found confidence with boys brought its own costs. The double standard once more raised its ugly head. What was acceptable behaviour for boys, was not acceptable for Trish, and the difference was to do with morality. Disruptive behaviour from boys was seldom connected to questions about their sexual identity (if it was, it enhanced it). For Trish, her behaviour was always closely tied to questions about her morality.

For example, when Pete chased Mo with a paintbrush, this was sexually neutral, the implications of being caught, relatively minor. When Trish chased Pete, a sexual motive was assumed. She appeared
cheap', immoral and the consequences of her being caught would have been severe.

Trish learned fast when it came to grasping what was and what was not acceptable behaviour. Some lessons, though, she had to learn the hard way. To be allowed to stay, she had to be seen to be sexually neutral. The importance of this lesson she did not learn fast enough and the learning of it almost had disastrous consequences. Tarn picked up her increasing ease with boys, faster than she learned the importance of hiding it. Inevitably perhaps, as Trisha's confidence grew, as her relationships with boys eased, she lost sight of her earlier caution. She began to see them as potential boyfriends. She settled on Elvis and set about letting him know she was interested. Her initial role of being cool and disinterested was replaced by a new one. Trish became giggly, coy and embarrassed when Elvis was around and more and more preoccupied by him. This change in her behaviour had widespread implications. For it was not only Elvis, but all of the boys, who treated her differently. Trish ceased to be a sister to them. She became a sex object and available.

The workshop buzzed with interest. If Elvis did not succeed, it was obvious that more boys were waiting in the wings to take his place. Sexual feelings were around and Tarn picked up on it fast. His worst fears were beginning to be realised.

I stayed off work one day. When I came back, Trish was subdued and sulky.

Me: What's up wi' ye?

Trish: Nuthin'

Eventually she told me what had happened.
Trish: Tam took me off workin' wi' the laddies yesterday. Ah spent the whole day workin' by masel'. It wiz horrible.

Trish felt punished. She knew Tam was aware of her increasing interest in boys. The situation worsened as the afternoon progressed. Later that day, seeing Trish working by herself, Frankie (in a genuinely friendly way) had gone over to the window where Trish was working to have a chat. Tam had walked in at that moment, rushed over to Frankie and pushed him roughly away.

Trish: Tam says ah wiz tae leave the laddies alone. He says ah distract them. He says he wisnae accusin' me o' anythin' an' that if anythin' did happen it wiz likely be their fault, but he telt me ah wisnae tae flirt wi' them or ah wiz tae lose ma job.

Ah telt him it wisnae fair, ah hudnae done onythin', it wiz them. He says he ken't that, but ah wisnae tae encourage them.

She said to me later, with great bitterness:

Trish: It's no' fair. Ah git the row fur whit they dae. They kin sleep wi' a thousand burds an' it's OK. You jist need tae look at wan o' them an' yer a slag.

Trish did flirt, but boys' behaviour in relation to her was no better. Yet when things did get out of hand (in Tam's terms) boys' behaviour went unsanctioned. Her behaviour was judged on a different standard. Her morality questioned, her reputation badly affected.

After a long build up (the details of which are the substance of another chapter) and during which excitement mounted, Trish did eventually go out with Elvis. It happened only once. It only took once for Trish to realise how vital it was to be seen in the workshop
as someone who was sexually neutral. The advantages of this were sharply brought home to Trish on her first date.

Trish: If ah go oot wi' a guy fae here, the rest'll a' ken aboot me. Elvis'll talk, ah ken he will. An'-ah'11 no' know whit tae dae. Things wid be awffy different at work, he'd be watchin' me a' the time when ah'd be jist talkin' tae the other laddies. Elvis is a barry guy an' that, an' we'd a barry time, bit, ah duno' whit's wrong wi' me, ah jist dimnae want tae go oot wi' him noo.

To be taken seriously as a worker meant that Trish could not have a boyfriend in the workshop, more than this it meant not showing interest in boys as boyfriends at all. Trish learned this lesson the hard way. The learning of it came almost too late.

Next morning, Trish was called into Jan's office and reprimanded.

Tam: Look hen, ah dimnae care whit ye' dae ootside, ye' kin go oot wi' whoever ye' like, bit jist keep it oot o' the workshop, an' dimnae let it affect yer work.

Had she continued going around with Elvis, her stay in the workshop would have been short. She stopped in the nick of time and Tam and Trish settled into some kind of uneasy compromise. In Tam's eyes, Trish had blown it, she'd let him down badly. She was no longer 'Tam's lassie', special and set aside from girls in knitwear. She had, however, established herself enough as a painter to be allowed to stay. She worked alongside boys, participating in their daily banter and conversation. Tam had lost his high expectations of her as a model trainee, but by this time she was established and taken for granted nonetheless. Her new position in the workshop I think she preferred and I certainly felt easier about it.
Trish and me

In this section I want to talk about the development of my friendship with Trish. I do it here, not as self indulgence. For describing how and why I fitted into S/F is the most straightforward way I know of providing insights into my methodology. But talking about my relationship with Trish is important for another reason as well. Changes between Trish and myself were affected by and also reflected changes in the process of our acceptance into the workshop generally. And I want to draw out these connections. It says a lot about the formation of girls’ identities generally.

To understand the detail of the shift from nervousness to confidence, I have to map out the links between how we were seen by boys on the one hand and how this effected changes in our friendship on the other.

It was as I say, an unlikely relationship. Born out of need, it ended in mutual respect and friendship and it developed through many intermediate stages.

We will focus on the need aspect first. Initially we were both nervous and at sea. In terms of confidence, at that stage, I had the edge on Trish. Faced with blanket hostility, my age and experience in the world (in some things), and because I carried with me a positive image of myself from friends, because I was a postgraduate, all meant that I was slightly more equipped to meet a vanload of hostile boys, a room full of silent ones. Without a doubt, at a time when Trish was nervous and unsure of herself, my presence helped her through a situation she might otherwise have been unable to cope with.
Irish:

That's the thing that amazes me about you Anne. Ye' dinnae get bothered by muthin'. Ye' kin dae anythin' wi'oot gettin' embarrassed. Ye're dead confident. Ah get embarrassed at the least wee thing. Ah'd huv' run right hame the first day if ye'd no' been there.

On another occasion.

Me: Trish, ah'll no' be in the morra'. Ah huv' tae go tae the university.

I wanted to attend a local conference on the state.

Trish: God ye'r jokin', ye' cannae leave me masel' wi' the laddies.

We negotiated all day and I ended up taking off half a day.

Trish: Mind an' be here at ten past ei^it. Ah'll wait oan ye' ootside the gate.

Trish: Ah've tae go up fur paint, gaunnae chum me?

Trish: Ah'm gaunnae meet ma ma at break tae gie her ma pay, ye' gaunnae chum me?

When we were new and had no relationship with boys, when we faced blanket hostility, I was confident. Trish was nervous and shy.

This pattern changed and it changed because of the way we ultimately came to be seen by boys. The description of this provides, I think, a good illustration of how women's identities and images of themselves are formed in relation to and through men.

It became obvious from early on that boys were interested (sexually) in Trish and not in me. She was seen to be good looking, 'cool', 'hard to get'. Having me as a girlfriend would have impressed no one. I was not held to be attractive. Rather, boys
thought I was a bit slow and naive. I was always Trisha's nice but unattractive pal. As these things unfolded, the situation changed between Trish and me. As boys came to define her as popular, her confidence in relation to me increased. My standing fell. And the more sought after she became, the more she became independent from me, the more she came to define what happened between us. Trish took on board definitions of herself from boys and related to me accordingly.

Trish: See you Anne, ye're that naive.
Trish: God Anne, yer' slow oan the uptake.

From being dependent on me to be able to function in the workshop at all, as our friendship developed in relation to boys, I came to be treated (and felt myself to be) young, naive and uninteresting.

Trish: 'Ur you eighteen yet?
Me: Ah'm twenty four.
Trish: Ye're nut, ye're a fuckin' liar.
Me: Ah'm no'. Ah'm twenty four, honest.
Trish: God, ah cannae believe it, ye' dinnae look it. Nae offence but, it must be 'cause ye' re sae wee, an' 'cause ye' dinnae wear any make-up.

At the time, I was actually twenty seven.

Trish: Hoi, guess whit age she is?
Kenny: Sixteen.
Mo: Seventeen.
Craigie: Eighteen.
Trish: Tell them.
Me: Ah'm twenty four.
Kenny: Aye, ye' arse, don' gies it!
On another occasion, before Trish did know my age.

**Trish:** Dae ye' ever go tae the dancin'?

**Me:** Aye, sometimes ah go tae the Reggae Club.

**Trish:** Dae ye'? Dae ye' no' hae trouble gettin' in, 'cause ye'r sae wee?

**Me:** (adamantly)
Nut!

I had been effectively pushed into a subordinate role in relation to Trish and it was now she who offered advice and was protective.

**Trish:** Huv' ye' goat a boyfriend?

**Me:** Nut!

**Trish:** Ah ken't ye' widnae. Bet ye're the type that never bothers wi' boys.

**Me:** Naw no' really.

**Trish:** (sympathetically)
S'funny, some lassies ur' jist like that. Ah quite like laddies masel'.

Had I started in the boys' workshop without Trish it is impossible to know what my role would have been. What I do know is that being seen to be Trisha's pal gave me access, legitimation and closeness to boys' culture and cultural meanings which I never could have achieved by myself. Trish initiated me, protected me, pointed out aspects of teenage culture that were new and reminded me of aspects that I had forgotten. These were the benefits of my friendship with Trish and the role I had in the workshop. On the other side, the costs were high. To take on this role meant putting myself into the most personally undermining situation I had been in for ten years. And as I became more integrated, it became harder.
Mo: Stafford's goat can that gobbin' jersey again.

Pete: You eatin' again Stafford? Dae ye' never gie ye' r stomach a rest?

Coupled with sheer hard work, the early start each morning, the daily writing up of notes meant that by the end of my time there I felt flattened. I took a week off before moving on to the next workshop and wrote this:

'The workshop has really gotten to me. The cumulative effect of hard work, authoritarian structures, sexism, boredom and the relentless task of writing up notes, because I'm too exhausted to go out at night means that I feel at the very limits of my endurance. I feel as if I've suffered a massive crash of confidence, about class, about gender, about my appearance and my friendships. I've been out of the workshop for a week now and I'm only beginning to feel human again'.

I left the paintshop feeling exhausted and depressed. Trish, on the other hand, through her popularity with boys, increased her status, independence and confidence particularly in relation to me. The benefits to her, though, were temporary and fragile and were bought at the high cost of being ultimately undermined in the relationships she did have with boys. I shall discuss this fully in the section on teenage sexuality.
CHAPTER 2
The Politics of the Paintshop

First Impressions

The paintshop housed fifteen boys and two supervisors (Tam and Robbie). The centre of life for painters was the paintshop itself - a huge room, every inch a male workplace and more of a stockroom than a place to work. It stored scaffolding, tins of paint, ladders, paintbrushes, dust-sheets, tools. It was cold and bare, the walls were covered with graffiti. People reported here in the morning to leave coats and possessions and to put on overalls. It was here that the tasks of the day were given out.

I have already discussed S/F as a model scheme. And it was in the paintshop that this reputation was formed. Painters had the image of being well-behaved and hard-working.

In the workshop in general, painters were high profile. Boys in white overalls were everywhere, busily transporting ladders and scaffolding, rushing up and down stairs, transporting tin after tin of paint, loading and unloading the van. Groups of boys would descend on one room after another and transform it with earnest determination. They seemed competent and mature.

Part of S/F's reputation was based on its very real (at the time) ability to place boys in jobs and apprenticeships with local firms. This was widely attributed to S/F providing boys with 'a bloody good training'. Superficially this seemed true.

It is taken-for-granted statements like these that participant observation as a methodology is best designed to unpack. And I want to provide a different story as to the basis of S/F's
reputation and production of 'model trainees'.

Tam's Personal Aspirations

For anyone spending time in the paintshop, it is tempting to attribute the hard-working, well-disciplined atmosphere to the force of Tam's personality. Tam took the job of disciplining trainees more seriously than any other supervisor and the paintshop had a regime which felt positively authoritarian. To understand 'Tam's rule' you need to know a little about his personal background.

Tam was working-class, a tradesman and nearing retirement. Most of his working life had been spent in the decorating business. When the job came up at S/F, Tam was relieved to get out and into lighter work. He took up the new post enthusiastically, wholeheartedly embracing the aims and ideals of the workshop. The seriousness of his commitment was impressive, his attitude best summed up by example.

Some of the boys, Trish and myself had been painting a long corridor in a nearby church. We were there because a previous generation of YOPs from S/F had already completed a piece of work there. Tam pulled me aside one day and beckoned me to follow him. He took me into the church proper and showed me previous jobs done by S/F YOPs. It was awesome and difficult to believe that it could have been done by a group of sixteen year old boys, not professionals. Long bannisters had been varnished, scaffolding had been raised, high ceilings painted, cornices were gold and perfectly painted. In the quiet of the church, Tam turned to me and said with real emotion:

Tam: An' Ah did that wi' a bunch o' laddies.
Tam had worked all his life as a manual worker, training apprentices to the highest standards. The 'lighter' job in S/F could have left him feeling demoralised, that it represented a step down. Instead, Tam managed to make and to keep this job challenging and male. And for him, self respect came from transforming and moulding a 'bunch o' laddies', unable even to find jobs, into a group of exceptional workers. For his own pride, he took his job and S/F seriously.

Tam: These laddies ah turn oot, if they'd beards and moustaches, if they looked a wee bit auld, a' could pass them off as tradesmen, never mind bloody apprentices.

In the paintshop, then, supervisors were male and working-class, used to dealing with apprentices and training them to the highest standards. Their own identities as men were tied up in manual work. To make the job culturally relevant for themselves meant recreating manual work conditions here.

However, if the attempt in this particular workshop was to transmit practical skills in a similar way to the old apprenticeship system, this had to be mediated through YOP, with an ideology of its own which meant there were also important differences. If behind these schemes lies the assumption that young people do not get jobs because they lack the appropriate skills and personal qualities, this will have certain material implications.

Tam saw his job both as passing on relevant practical skills and also as helping young people who were deprived. These ideological arrangements provided space and justification for a regime which, though understandable in terms of YOP ideology, was at the same time idiosyncratic. At times it felt harsher, more authoritarian than
would have been experienced by his old apprentices. At times it felt positively punitive.

**Tam's Discipline**

*Tam goes 'raj'*

In the paintshop, the limits of acceptable behaviour were narrowly defined and rigidly set. Order was kept in a regime partly based on fear.

Tam going 'raj' was an unpleasant experience for even the toughest of boys. I would give a verbatim account of this but unfortunately (or fortunately, I am not sure which) as 'girls' Trish and I were excluded. We were always sent out of a room where Tam was about to loose his anger on boys. My accounts are second-hand.

**Frankie:** See Fergy, he wiz six feet six, the toughest guy that's ever been here. See Tam, even had him greetin'. Tam could get anybody greetin'.

**Mo:** Ye' want tae huv' seen Tam this mornin'. We were a' skivin' an' in he walks an' catches us. Must huv' jist had a row wi' the missus or somethin' 'cause he went completely berserk, fuckin' an' blindin' a' owt the place. Ah thought he wiz gaunni burst, an' his false eye jump oot. We were shitin' it.

Part of the effectiveness of Tam loosing his temper stemmed from the fact that his outbursts were neither consistent nor predictable. Onslaughts directed at a whole group one day, were directed at a single culprit the next. Behaviour which provoked a violent reaction one day would be ignored and passed over without comment the next. His behaviour was unpredictable. Boys had to be continually on their toes.
Tam was everyone's guardian angel, the watcher at everyone's back. When he left a room he never said when he would be back. His arrival was never announced, instead, he would creep up to a room and suddenly, he would be there. He turned up in the oddest of places at the oddest of times. Boys for their part took all the precautions they could, posting lookouts, misbehaving in ways which could be stopped at a moment's notice.

Tam knew boys skived. This was acceptable. Men in workplaces did this all the time. It was a game. It was, though, a game with limits. Sometimes Tam won by catching them and the repercussions were fairly minor, sometimes boys won by being clever enough to cover up and be caught at nothing. And sometimes the game got out of hand, transgressed the limits and the repercussions were severe.

Tam had silently crept up to the paintshop door and caught Punk Pete 'keepin' shotty'. He prevented him warning the others. Tam was almost gleeful when he strolled into the workshop and caught all the boys on the hop, scurrying about picking up work just a few seconds too late.

Tam: Whi's gaun' oan in here?

The collective response was one of dumb silence. Tam went around each boy individually asking him to account for what he had been doing. Each stumbled to some kind of answer.

Tam: Whi've you been daein'?

Cogs: Cleanin' up.
Pete: Lookin' fur gloss.
Craigie: Cleanin' brushes.
Trish: Gettin' mair putty.
At this point, Tam's wrath was contained. His anger more ritual than real. At this stage he is merely pleased to have caught their lookout napping. Events took a more serious turn when, mid sentence, he realised that one of the boys was missing.

Tam: Where's Wee Rab?

No reply. Tam's anger rapidly increased to danger point.

Tam: (roaring at the top of his voice) Where's Wee Rab?

Still no reply. Tam stormed out of the room, rushed upstairs to check if he was there. No sign. Tam returned in a rage. Wee Rab by now was standing in the paintshop. The atmosphere was heavy and tense. Tam's temper had reached danger level.

Tam: (roaring) Where have you been?

Wee Rab: Through the back, gettin' a drink o' water.

Tam knew and accepted that boys skived. So long as boys stopped as soon as Tam appeared he was satisfied. To deliberately remain hidden while Tam charged around the workshop trying to find you was a gross violation of Tam's limits. It made Tam feel like a fool, that boys had massively undermined his authority. The incident with Wee Rab set him off on a rage which lasted for days and terrified all the boys. He shouted on and on at Wee Rab, on and on at all the boys. He wound himself into a fervous. He accused them of being lazy, worthless and untrustworthy, of being thick and stupid, claiming they would never get jobs. And he rounded off the performance by suspending everyone. His parting shot was to me.
Tam: An' pit that in yer memoirs!

His anger spilled over into the next day. He suspended Punk Pete and Wee Rab again for some minor infringement. In all Punk Pete was suspended four times that week, leaving him with a take-home pay of nine pounds. Financially it had not been worth his while being in the workshop that week.

Apart from the atmosphere of outright fear which Tam so easily could create, there were other tactics he used to discipline boys. Sarcasm was one.

Tam: (gently)
C'mere sonny, where's yer scraper?

Davy: Left it at hame.

Tam: (gently, with sarcasm)
Ye've left it at hame? Well never mind, ye' kin jist supervise this job instead. You jist be in charge o' this job, eh?

Tam: (now roaring)
Ye've left yer' scraper at hame. We'll ah've ah good fuckin' mind tae make ye' clock back out an' get the fuckin' thing.

Tam's sense of humour was essentially linked to undermining boys and, for that matter, Trish and myself.

Trish and I had been standing on window ledges undercoating windows for the best part of two days. We were bored. Late on Friday afternoon, Tam paid us a surprise visit.

Tam: How are ye's gettin' oan? It's a real shame ye've bry' been daein' this fur sae long. Ye's must be sick tae death o' this. Ye's look, like ye's need a change. Tell ye's what, ah'll gie ye's a wee change oan Monday. Ye's can gloss them a'.
On another occasion, Tam came in to find that someone had ruined the chamois cloth. They had left it soaking all night in water or in turps.

**Tam:** Right you lot. Who the fuck did this tae the cloth? Who did it? Cogs, whit dae ye' call this?

**Cogz:** S'Shammy.

**Tam:** Aye, it's a shammy - a 'c-h-a-m-o-i-s' (spells it) - 0-I-S at the end. Comes from a French animal called a chamois. An' ye' only get six cloths fae the wan animal - eight if it's a big yin.

Tam continued at the top of his voice.

**Tam:** Dae ye's hear me? They're no' fuckin' ten a penny. An' somebody's done this. Cogs, how dae ye' spall Chamois?

**Cogz:** Dunno'.

**Trish:** It's C-H-A-M-O-I-S.

**Tam:** Aye that's right. See Cogs, ye' need a wee lassie tae tell ye' how tae spell it.

All of these things, Tam's temper, his unpredictable nature, his sense of humour, meant that boys' days were spent tinged with a certain amount of fear and anxiety. They were aware of Tam's every move. Continually they tried to work out when he would turn up, how he would react. They misbehaved in ways which would least incur his wrath. He, on the other hand, continually looked for new ways to catch boys out.

**Punishment exercises**

To outsiders, boys in the paintshop could easily be seen to be equally gainfully employed. In fact, the nature of tasks was very
graded. Some tasks were punitive and existed almost as a form of direct sanction.

Tam: Right you lassies, for the first few weeks ye's'll no' get near a paintbrush, ye'll jist be cleanin' up. Then we'll see how ye's shape up. Ah'm pitten' ye's oan cleanin' door handles. A few days oan that an' ah'll bet ye' never get paint oan another door handle.

We spent our first day with steel wool and scrapers, removing the paint from hundreds of door handles. We worked furiously, trying to impress Tam in the hope we would be allowed to stay. By the end of the day we had finished. We sought out Tam and told him the good news - without the desired effect. In fact, quite the opposite. Tam seemed positively put out. The problem for him was that now it was up to him to generate more work and that was a chore.

Armed with clothes and pails we spent day two cleaning two hundred or so windows. This job we tackled with a lot less enthusiasm.

In a short space of time we had learned an important lesson. Apart from the real skills we were learning, we were also recognising that being good workers entailed just as much, the ability to look busy, keep out of the way and behave.

Davy and Nits started in the workshop two weeks after we did. They learned the same lesson and just as quickly. Their first two days were spent scraping paint off windows. They worked avidly with the same disappointing results.

Nits: We've finished the windaes.

Tam: Ye've finished the windaes?
Let's huv' a look. Whit's this?
Nits:  Bit o' paint.
Tam:  Ah thought ye' said ye'd finished.

They spent the next two days redoing it.

Tam subjectively assessed that some people need more of this kind of treatment than others.

Mo:  That new guy (McVee) looks far too much like Spikey. He'll never get stayin'.

Spikey was an ex-trainee with a legendary reputation. He had defied Tam. Spikey had lasted a few short months. Like Spikey, McVee never managed to win Tam's confidence, and never got beyond doing tasks which were punitive.

Davy was different. From one of the better housing estates, he looked older than his years, seemed mature, was neatly and well dressed. He was earmarked from the start as a 'good painter'.

Frankie:  That bastard Davy's gaunnae be wallpaperin' in a week - bet ye'.

Davy was painting alongside the other boys in two days.

Punishment exercises, then, were a feature of life for trainees not only at the beginning of their time in the workshop. Jobs that were not jobs (but were punitive) were used to control and reassert control over boys throughout the year.

Sweeping balconies was a classic task of this nature. To outsiders, boys sweeping up seem to be engaged in productive enough work. To a painter, a boy sweeping balconies meant one of two things. Either, boys who were doing it were new,
We've swept the balconies Tam.

Tam: We've swept them son? Well, whit's this?

Nits: Bit o' dust.

Tam: Dae it again son, eh?

or else it meant that boys had misbehaved. Sweeping up was a punishment task and a task without an end. The object to experienced boys was to look busy and to keep out of the way until Tam cooled down and decided it was time to rejoin the others. It was a boring task and mindless. And the amount of time spent sweeping up was directly linked to the severity of the misdemeanor.

'Picking flowers' was a similar job. Not the idyllic task the name suggests, the 'garden' was an overrun patch of ground at the side of the workshop. Being sent to work there was the severest of punishments.

Tam caught Cogs and Pete, Craigie and Nits skiving. Rather than suspend them (his other option) he sent them to the 'garden'. Their brief was to pull all the purple flowers (rose-bay willow-herb). Craigie and Nits, being new, set to the task with a vengeance. Impressively, several hours later, the monumental task was complete. And they set out to tell Tam. The story is a familiar one.

Craigie: We've picked the purple flowers Tam.

Tam: Ye've picked them. Huv' ye' picked the yella' yins? (dandelions)

They set about this with a little less enthusiasm. But several hours later they reported to Tam again.
Craigie: That's the yella' yins Tam.

Tam: Well done boys. But there's plenty of dockins still to be picked. Then there's a' the green stuff (grass).

They rejoined Cogs and Pete and followed their example. They looked busy when it was appropriate, for the rest of the time they hung about bantering and chattering. They stayed there until Tam remembered about them and found them work. Some boys spent up to a week at a time in the garden. They looked productive, but achieved absolutely nothing.

It is difficult to think about discipline in the paintshop without thinking about analogies with the army. Order was kept in a regime partly based on fear. Parallels began on day one. New recruits received the harshest of treatment. For the first while they were subject to a sense of boring, endless and meaningless tasks.

This served several purposes. Tam asserts himself in control from the beginning. Respect for his anger and his discipline start early. His reasoning - if you survive the first few weeks, you survive the course. It also ensures that after the first few awful weeks, when Tam eases off and when there is access to interesting work, trainees feel they are achieving something. They feel lucky and privileged. The tactic (usually) ensured their integration.

It is justified at managerial level like this.

Jan: (training officer)
Tam likes to make sure that new people are really keen.

Yet all of this had a slightly counter-intuitive outcome. Far from discouraging boys and destroying their faith in the workshop, boys in
their own inimitable way actually respected Tam and what he was
doing.

Frankie: Ah like S/F. Ah've learnt a lot
fae Tam. He's really, really scarey
when he's mad. An' sometimes ah think
he'll land somebody wan o' these days.
Bit, if ye' dae ye're work, he's fair.
Tam's a' right. He makes ye' feel like
yer' no' jist pissin' aboot O it's real.

Me: How d'ye like Tam?

Pete: He's an' auld cunt.

Me: D'ye no' like him then?

Pete: Oot, Tam's a' right. It's best fur
yersel' when they're like that. Helps
ye' get joabs.

The Nature of Work

If the boys liked but felt ambiguously about Tam, they also felt
the same about the nature of their 'jobs' in the paintshop.

Frankie: Oot, S/F widnae be a bad job if it
wisnae fur the money. The work's
a' right, an' ye' get no' bad holidays.
Money's rubbish though.

Pete: Ah like it here. Ah'm learnin'
'hings. If ye' did 'hings wrong in
other places they'd jist patch it up
fur ye', as if ye' wir daft, didnae
really matter. Ah'd rather hae a
bollockin' fae Tam than that.

To understand boys' relationship to Tam, their attitude to work, we
have to unfold the story a little further.

General atmosphere

The general atmosphere of the paintshop itself felt like (and
was set up to feel like) real work. Down to the smallest detail, the
Ih.
paintshop was set up to resemble a real workplace. The
organisation of discipline in S/F generally, clocking in and out,
the hooter marking the beginning and end of breaks, the formal
warning system, all fed into and complemented what had been created
at the level of the paintshop. Boys accepted this. And inside
the paintshop the resemblance to real work was even more pronounced.
In the morning boys bantered around outside the paintshop until Tam
or Robbie arrived to open up. This was a meaningful part of the
day for boys. They had an image of men at work doing this and it
pleased them to be able to do the same. They discussed and analysed
what they had done the night before, who went out with whom, what they
did, whether or not they had got drunk. The banter continued as they
struggled into overalls and while Tam doled out the jobs for the day.
They were real men about to embark on work for the day. They were
serious and workmanlike.

Lunches and breaks were staggered in S/F, the sexes segregated.
'Pieces' are highly fetishised in most male workplaces and S/F was no
exception.

'Whit's yer ma' gien' ye' fur yer piece?'
'S'fuckin' cheese again!'.
'Smarties, ah'll swop ye' an' egg piece fur
wan can ham'.
'Anybody goat ory sugar, ma fuckin' ma's
forgot tae pit ory in'.

Painters ate their 'pieces' in a part of the building that was
disused (the canteen). It felt for all the world like 'the hut' on
a building site.

There was a kettle, various assorted dirty cups. Tea was
brewed, 'pieces' eaten and endlessly discussed. There was a large bench around which boys sat. It was more of a caricature of a real workplace than a workplace itself. Ten small men, looking manly in painters' overalls would simultaneously light up ten cigarettes and pick up ten hands of cards.

Painters particularly enjoyed leaving the workshop at lunchtime. They liked to be seen in the street in their overalls as they went to buy cigarettes.

All of these things helped define and allow them to feel like they were manual workers with real jobs.

I want to move on now to discuss the more formal aspects of the work boys were offered in the paintshop. The main division is between what boys did when they were in the workshop and what they did when they were out on jobs.

Jobs out

Boys were regularly sent out to decorate churches, halls, community centres, old peoples' homes, houses and to do other bits and pieces of decorating work.

Jobs like these were commonly generated through supervisors' direct links with friends and trade friends outside the workshop. This is obviously a far cry from a commercial firm giving estimates, tendering for contracts, real wages and contracts. Yet Tam always discussed jobs for trainees in these terms, making an important issue of 'doing his estimates', 'invoicing' people and finding contracts.

For Tam, this provided him with an image of himself that he liked, buzzing around town in the van finding jobs for boys to do, costing them and providing estimates.
And boys responded to this definition of work with alacrity. 'Jobs out' were a central aspect of life for boys in the paintshop. They represented the most prestigious element of work there and the part of the job they most enjoyed.

The painters were the envy of the workshop. They had priority use of the van, impressed everyone as they loaded up (brushes, paint, scaffolding, kettles). Dressed in overalls, they piled into the van and drove off.

'Jobs out' represented the top of the jobs hierarchy in the workshop. To be striven and competed for.

Tam: Right lads, there's a job oan at L...
Cogs, Pete, Punk Pete, Davy, Mo, in the van.

Boys who were seen to be good enough were allowed to do them. Everyone waited with baited breath to see who Tam would choose, desperate to be included in the new job and out of the workshop for a long spell. The rest left behind, despondent to serve a 'pre-apprenticeship' (so to speak) in the workshop.

For boys who were chosen it meant the use of the best equipment in the workshop.

On arrival at a new job, the van would be quickly and efficiently unloaded.

Tam: Right you laddies, Cogs and Mo strip a' the wa's. Loads o' water, right. Sand them doon a bit first. When that's done - these wa's arnae even - so we're gaunnae put up linin' paper. How'd ye' pit up linin' paper Cogs?

Cogs: Roon' the wa', no' up an' doon.

Tam: Right get started.
Tam would typically leave, going back to the workshop to check on other boys. Boys on this job worked unsupervised. They did it in a mature and hardworking way and in a way which impressed everyone who passed by.

On arrival at a new job, the first task was always to find an appropriate place, away from the public eye, to have lunch. (On this particular job it was a small basement underneath the stair.) Here boys relaxed – off stage. They sat around joking, chatting, eating and swopping 'pieces', drinking lemonade and playing tapes. This was one of the highlights of being out on a job, a time when they particularly felt that this is what real work would be like.

Perks

And like workers anywhere, boys lived for perks. Here boys were grateful for very little. Tam allowed boys an hour for lunch (rather than half an hour) when they were out on jobs. Tam justified it to me in terms of real men at work.

Tam: Ye get an hour for lunch when yer oot. It'd be like that if ye' were workin'. It's mair flexible.

Sometimes the small perks they received (and for which they were so grateful) were sad and particularly touching. Traditionally workers leave work early on a Friday to go to the pub. In the workshop, boys were never allowed away early. Out on jobs though (as in real jobs) Tam often let boys away slightly before time. Underage for the pub, they had created their own substitute. Driving back to town, the van would commonly be stopped outside a baker's shop. Seven or eight boys would celebrate the end of the week by devouring synthetic cream
cakes which must have been all of a foot long.

**Jobs in**

Although 'jobs out' were central, in fact trainees spent a large part of their time doing jobs around the workshop. Trainees did 'jobs in' during the long weeks when Tam was unable to generate sufficient numbers of 'jobs out' to keep boys occupied.

Inside the workshop, boys learned in an informal way. Typically, Tam would demonstrate a new task once. After that boys were on their own, learning directly or by watching others. Improvement came with repetition and practice, direct instruction from Tam being rare.

At an earlier stage in the development of S/F as a workshop, activities took on a different form. When the building first became available, large parts were derelict. Professional tradesmen did the bulk of the renovation. But supervisors and groups of boys did a significant amount of work as well. This stage was passed. Now work in the paintshop involved little more than continually decorating and redecorating the same parts of the building (for practice). The canteen had been painted twice in the time I was there and windows in the joinery shop painted by each successive group of YOPs.

Trainees were well aware that the work they did inside the workshop was largely about filling up time. For boys to be in the workshop was second best. For weeks on end they were stuck there with little to do apart from the small jobs that Tam managed to generate.

No one liked these times. An atmosphere hung over the workshop
when 'jobs out' were scarce, an atmosphere of waiting, hoping that something outside would turn up.

Yet the irony of all this was perhaps that boys found this a valid and acceptable part of life in the workshop as 'jobs out'. Boys were almost as well behaved inside the workshop as they were out. And the reasons for this are the same.

For Tam (as well as for boys) the definitive training experience was outside (jobs out). For supervisors, being around the workshop without work was as demoralising an experience as it was for boys. Tam could never raise any enthusiasm for hanging superfluous doors from walls to demonstrate to boys how to paint them. Apprentices do not learn like this, neither would 'boys in S/F.

And boys took on board what Tam assumed to be important aspects of work and shared them. For boys, being 'out' was real work, and provided them (and Tam) with their reason to be in the workshop. At separate times both Tam and Charlie explained to me how bored they got inside the workshop. After a lifetime in the decorating trade, they found it claustrophobic.

It is legitimated and made acceptable to boys like this. What happens in S/F is no different from what happens in real workplaces. Decorating firms in the real world have slack periods. Workers hang around doing very little for weeks on end. This is Tam's explanation. Boys accept it.

Informal work

Apart from the more formal aspects of 'work' in the paintshop, trainees were also initiated into other less formal aspects of work in the real world.
The pace of work

I talked in the section on 'punishment exercises' about how to impress Tam. It was not working quickly and efficiently that was a problem for Tam. In the paintshop it consistently fell back on him to generate more and more jobs. Part of the training in the paintshop involved learning to know which jobs were real jobs, which had to be quickly and efficiently done and which jobs were fillers. The best trainees were not the ones who completed jobs in record time, rather the best trainees knew how to pace work, when to complete a job when Tam wanted it completed. Looking busy and conscientious was more important than actually being busy. And boys who grasped the essence of this were the boys most favoured by Tam. This initiation into the more informal and hidden aspects of the world of work was as important a skill to learn as decorating.

When Trish started, she desperately wanted to be allowed to stay, to please Tam. She worked as fast and as well as possible. All she wanted was to go to Tam and say she had finished. She wanted him to say 'that's wonderful, Trish, you did that in record time'. In fact that was the last thing that Tam was likely to say.

Finishing a job quickly simply meant he had to generate another - and there was a limit to the number of jobs that could be created. What Tam wanted was to be able to go up quietly to a group of boys and to say:

Tam: Wind that up hae you laddies.
There's something else ah want ye's tae dae.

The important thing for him was not so much that everyone was working fast and well as that everyone was seen to be working fast and well.
The workshop had its own pace. A job was given out for a day or for a morning, boys worked on it and Tam decided when it was time to stop. New people, unaware of the informal pace of work, inevitably threw a spanner into the works. They were resented.

The favoured boys looked busy and kept out of the way. Again (as in real work) no one taught new boys informal rules (about the pace of work, about which jobs were fillers and which were punishment exercises). They learned the hard way and boys who picked this up slowly were scorned. Boys who never learned were universally ostracised as ‘sooks’, disliked by Tam as well.

Pete and Cogs were best. They were respected by the rest of the boys and by Tam. What Tam wanted they had down to a fine art. Sometimes it seemed they could almost read his mind. They paced work exactly, did enough to seem good, not enough to seem like sooks or be bored. They made jobs spin out when times were slack and when Tam was short on ideas. They worked flat out when they had to. They were exceptionally skilled.

One Friday afternoon, we had finished the job we had been working on all week. A new job was to begin Monday. We made the few cleaning up jobs that were left last for four hours. Most of the day was spent idly chatting, leaping to attention when anyone was heard approaching. An incomer would have entered a hive of productivity and industry.

This hidden, informal aspect of life in the paintshop was an important factor in making the workshop acceptable to boys. Their attempts to work out how to fit into this aspect of life in the paintshop, to establish the pace to work at, what different kinds of work meant, made boys feel they were getting a taste of what life
in a real workplace would be like and that they were engaged in a project that was challenging and interesting.

**Disruption in the Paintshop**

**Limited resistance**

Simply because boys appeared to be individually competitive and hardworking did not mean they were not disruptive. They were. But because what was offered them in the workshop was largely acceptable to them, the disruption was usually within well defined limits.

Tam: I heard a nasty rumour that some o' you laddies huv' been takin' long tea breaks. Ye's ken who ah mean. (shouting) Ye's ken who ah mean!

Chorus: Aye.

Tam: You guys get enough privileges - ah'm no' huvin' them abused. If ah hear wan mair rumour, ah swear tae god, ye's'll no' know whit's hit ye'.

Sometimes in the paintshop resistance took place simply because Tam allowed it to. It was an acceptable and allowable way for men at work to behave. Here it became something of a game - the limits and rules of which were set by Tam.

For example, as a general rule, smoking was not allowed in workshops. Boys in the workshop were unofficially allowed to smoke. Yet they never smoked when outsiders were around and stopped as soon as anyone came in. They smoked in contravention of general workshop rules but within limits set by Tam.

General carry-on around the workshop took the same form. Tam knew boys carried-on and were high spirited. As long as it stopped immediately Tam (or anyone else) entered the room this was acceptable.
Tam was well aware that work was slack, that often there was no real work to keep boys occupied. Boys were allowed to carry on in these circumstances - so long as no one knew about it. On entering a room Tam was often aware that a second beforehand boys had been skiving, but so long as the place looked like a hive of industry when he walked in he was satisfied.

And part of the richness of life in the paintshop centred around the relationship that Tam and the boys were locked into around the issue of limits and acceptable behaviour. Tam set limits which were narrow. (Acceptable levels of carry on were set at the level of what would have been acceptable at work.) And they relished the challenge of finding ways to resist that did not incur the wrath of Tam.

Resistance in practice

Trish and I had been painting door frames for days. Most of the work involved being outside. We were bored and cold. We went to the toilet - more as a diversion and to heat up than anything else. Once there, we got caught up in conversation with some of the girls from knitwear (also passing time). We were probably away for about fifteen minutes. When we got back Tam was leaning against our ladder waiting for us. This was a major transgression. Trish and I were terrified, my knees were weak with shock at having been caught out this way. Tam was pleased, I suspect, to have caught us on the hop on this occasion and Trish and I got off lightly.

Tam: Where huv' you' lassies been? Don't ever let me catch you's at that again.

As far as I at least was concerned he never would.

On another occasion, Trish and I had been painting windows
outside the canteen. Again we were bored and cold. Our stuff
for making tea lay temptingly inside the doorway.

Trish: Gaunnae nash in an’ stick the kettle
can fur a cup o’ tea. Ah’l make shotty.

Me: Whal! Are ye’ daft? Tam’l make
mincemeat oot o’ us.

We debated it nervously, giggling uncontrollably at the thought.
Eventually I went in and put on the kettle. My heart was thumping.
I do not think a single boy would have done this. With me now
keeping shotty, Trish went in and prepared two steaming cups of coffee
and laid them and two Kit Kats on the window ledge. At the same
moment I saw Tam and Robbie walk along the balcony towards us. I
could not believe my eyes. I panicked, but I did have the presence
of mind (just) to rush in and warn Trish. With more presence of
mind than me, Trish dumped the cups underneath the radiator and
stood in front of them. I tried to paint.

Tam: How’s it goin’ girls? That’s the stuff.

For form’s sake he took the brush out of my hand and in a token way
painted a bit of my door. He then walked off unconcerned.
Unbelievably, we had gotten away with it. As soon as he was out of
sight we collapsed, giggling and laughing hysterically. This went
on all day.

Trish: God, ye’d ’hink we’d robbed a bank
or summat’, no’ fuckin’ made a shitey
wee cup o’ tea.

And it was true, you did not have to misbehave much in S/F to feel
like a criminal. Given all the things stacked against the boys and
against Trish, all credit to them that they resisted at all.

**Tormenting people**

Disruption, insofar as it happened at all in the paintshop, was hidden. It had to be able to be stopped quickly, it could not involve objects which could easily be found. One of the most popular ways of misbehaving was simply annoying people. This commonly started off verbally. It often ended up far from verbal. This formed one part of boys' (small) hidden culture from which Tam was excluded. It was one of their main tactics used to avert boredom and get through the day. And once again, it seemed (superficially) disruptive and challenging. In the long run, however, it made the workshop a more exciting and acceptable place for boys.

A lot of boys' energy went into 'tormenting' people and into creating situations to make this happen. Boys who were skilled at this had standing and status among other boys (as well, incidentally, with Tam).

Tormenting people implied finding out enough about people to know what it was they were sensitive about, then teasing them about it endlessly. Typically, events proceeded like this.

*Craigie:* Frankie's burst his glue bag.  
*He 'hinks ye' sook no' blaw.*

Frankie was Tam's blue-eyed boy. He worked hard, had a reputation for being a good painter. He rarely carried on (even when the coast was completely clear). Other boys spent a lot of time tormenting him. It generally centred around the fact that Frankie boasted.
Me: How come ye's call Frankie, Gibber?

Mo: S'obvious. He gibbers a load o' shite. He's gaunnae be fightin' six boys the morn single-handed.

Frankie: Shur' up.

Mo: Frankie, sure an' you beat up three boys last night?

Frankie: Shut it, ye'r really buggin' me.

Mo: Killed ony mair gorillas yet?

Frankie: Ye wantin' yer' fuckin' face kicked in?

Mo: Aye me an' three other boys an' all, an' you'll hae wan arm tied behind yer' back.

Frankie, pushed to the limit, threw a huge piece of putty across the room. It caught Mo on the right temple. Mo retaliated by throwing it back. Everyone else ducked quickly down behind benches.

Everyone picked up putty and sawdust at that point (and anything else which could be launched). A generalised battle started. Steven, the punk moved outside the door to keep shotty. One sign from him and the place was transformed instantly into the tranquil, hardworking atmosphere of a model workshop.

The ridiculous to the sublime

Resistance, if limited in the paintshop, was at the same time incredibly varied. It ranged from being crass, childish and individualistic, to being collective, clever and well thought out.

What was characteristic about all of it was that it was hidden, separated off from Tam, at sharp odds with how boys normally related to him. I will give two (polar) examples to demonstrate.
Four or five of us were working together to finish a room. We did not have much to do and Tam wanted to make it last until the end of the week. We were bored. A couple of boys disappeared into a huge cupboard at the back of the room. For half an hour hysterical laughs and squeals emanated from the back of the room. I was curious and nervous about the kind of perverse practices that may have been going on there. Eventually I went to investigate. There were three boys so hysterical with laughter they were dripping with sweat. They emerged from the cupboard with red and swollen wrists. They had spent the entire time playing a game that involved smashing each other on the wrists with two fingers. They were greatly amused at their own daring.

Me: God you lot are murder.

Pete: Aye, ah ken, this is wht this place drives ye' tae, playin' like the primary school.

This incident typified resistance in the workshop. It was hidden, it did not overtly disrupt the smooth-running of the workshop and at a second's warning it could quickly have been stopped.

The second example is more sophisticated. On a boy's first day in the paintshop he is given the necessary tools of the trade - ritually handed over into his personal care are a pair of overalls (to be carefully looked after and washed every second week) and a scraper. There is a heavy penalty to be paid for loss of a scraper. And boys (like real decorators) keep them in a special pocket in the leg of their overalls. Despite their preciousness, scrapers invariably go missing. And at any given time there are less scrapers than boys. The 'game' involves every boy making sure that he always has a scraper. If you have one you guard it. If you do not, you
try and find one – if someone is silly enough to leave one lying around, you pick it up and pocket it. Or worse, you steal one out of someone else’s pocket. This is the individualistic aspect of the game. The other side of it is supportive and collective.

Tam: Where’s yer’ scraper sonny?
Mo: S’upstairs.
Tam: Well dinnae leave it lyin’ aboot, eh! Go an’ get it.

Mo goes upstairs and Cogs gives him his.

Tam: Where’s yer’ scraper?
Pete: Frankie’s got it.

Frankie hands his over to Pete. And so it goes on. This is, in a sense, the pinnacle of boys’ resistance in the paintshop. It is a classic example of workplace resistance – cleverly and collectively worked out and in opposition to official definitions.

Yet in this context it demonstrates as much as anything why boys are integrated. It is not only the more formal aspects of work in the paintshop which boys enjoy and which are acceptable, it is the complete culture. And this informal aspect of life integrates them as much as anything. It gives them the sense of identity they want, defines them as meaningfully and gainfully employed and provides them with a daily experience that is never boring.

And, incidentally, it was the smartest boys (in Tam’s terms) who were also best at indulging in their own culture, doing it in such a way which meant they would never be caught.

Wildly hurling putty one minute, work was always to hand at a second’s notice, they could look like they had been diligently working
for the whole of the morning. Any situation could lend itself to 'tormenting' and being 'tormented'. Walking past scaffolding, someone would drop a dust sheet on you, Tam would walk in and the scene could be transformed into one of folding it up. Walking past a ladder, someone would leap on you, near a sink and someone would slosh you with paint. Putty fights continued off and on for days. All these things were instantly transformed into scenes of industry.

The daily culture of the paintshop then was an interesting and highly energetic one. Boys worked hard in a formal sense. They also put a lot into generating a lively and complicated culture of their own. A form of limited resistance, largely separated off from official sources (though at the same time defined by them) and hidden. It was subtle, not indirectly confrontational with supervisors, and always carried out with one eye on being discovered. They had an ability to freeze and transform a situation of chaos into a scene of productivity. They did it with impressive ease. Boys' creativeness and energy in this area was concerned with working (and not working) within acceptable limits. And far from ultimately challenging the status quo, in this context, boys' resistance had the effect of creating a total cultural context which reinforced the paintshop as a place where boys wanted to be.

I want to look now at what happens, in the admittedly rare instances, to boys for whom what is offered is not acceptable. I want to do this using the example of one boy. It is interesting in its own right, but also provides further insights and evidence into what it was about the paintshop that made it acceptable to the majority of boys.
McVee: a case of rejection

I have already described the process through which trainees are carefully screened at S/F. Potentially disruptive young people are selected out at the interview stage. (Driven by 'market forces', there is no commitment to taking problem trainees with a view to integrating them.) In S/F everyone had to pull their weight. Trainees who did not come over as hardworking and keen at interview stood little chance of being accepted. Potential discipline problems were already minimised by this process.

Jan: We only take those we think we can help. If it's obvious they're not going to be keen, then we don't bother.

Tam: We're here tae gie' these laddies a trade, we're no' bloody social workers. We're no' wanting anybody who's no' interested in daein' a hard day's work. Robbie an' me dae a good day's work. We're no' carryin' anybody.

A few though do slip through the net. McVee was one. I learned a lot about S/F through McVee. More than any other boy, McVee pushed Tam's definitions to the limit. Indeed, it was through McVee that I first came to understand the full extent to which boys were integrated and accepting.

And to understand what he brought to the workshop, the attitude to work that he had, it is important to say a little bit about his life outside. McVee was a 'skin'. Outside S/F and previous to it he had hung around on the streets in a gang. He had created for himself a supportive network and a significant culture that was not reliant on school. He had set up a structure and meaning to his life on the dole. I am not arguing here that McVee enjoyed being on the dole. He did not. He hated it. But what gave him some power in relation
to other boys was that for him (in contrast to them) a return to the
dole was unthinkable. It was a realistic, if depressing option.
Unlike other boys, who latched onto S/F, McVee had an identity that
was not formed instantly on arrival in S/F and by S/F. He had an
identity outside, a structured life to return to and good friends.

For example, six of his friends accompanied him as far as the
gate on his first day. They continually popped their heads up and
down over the wall like chickens, grinning and laughing at McVee and
at each other for most of the day. And each day after that several
boys were always to be found, half an hour before the hooter, hanging
around waiting to walk McVee home. Naturally enough this went down
very badly with staff.

From the very beginning it was obvious that he had come on a
different basis from other boys. He had utter contempt for schemes
like this. Had 'careers' not sent him he would never have come.
He had no intention of liking it or trying it and no intention of
staying. From the beginning he leapt around wildly, cursing,
swearing, bantering around. The rest of the boys were amused and
by four o'clock they were laying bets:

Cop: Ah'll gie him tae the end o' the week.
Pete: That man'll no' last tae the morra'.

McVee's energy was impressive. He talked non-stop, bawled, shouted,
one minute lying flat on his back on the floor, the next, leaping on
top of a cupboard nine feet high, from there onto a ladder, off that
and onto a bench. Then he would run around on top of every bench in
the place. As yet (more by luck than good judgement) he did this when
supervisors were out. He took few precautions against being caught,
it seemed only a matter of time before he seriously contravened the rules.

Other boys' reactions to McVee were telling. They generally liked him and enjoyed his patter. They found him immensely entertaining. But they (like me) enjoyed him as a misfit, an aberration that was temporary. They observed him with ironic amusement, interested, more than anything, in how long he would last. But they kept their distance. No one wanted to be tarred with the same brush as McVee. They encouraged him from a distance, as the best diversion from the boredom that had happened in a long while. His behaviour and fate were the central talking point around the workshop for weeks.

\begin{verbatim}
McVee:  Haw, heid the ba', 'hink ah kin hing upside doon by ma feet fae this ladder?
Pete:   Heid the ba'. The cunt's crazy.
\end{verbatim}

Unbelievably McVee did last a week. And even more unbelievably perhaps his behaviour slowly began to change. It was a subtle and imperceptible change, invisible to the untrained eye. As he weighed up what was happening in the paintshop, he modified his ideas and he changed his mind. Slowly he warmed to the idea of S/F as an alternative to the dole. He was seduced by the same thing that seduced all the boys. The idea of being a real painter with a real job began to seem really appealing.

McVee was not allowed a paintbrush to himself. He had, though, spent enough time in rooms with boys who were painting to appreciate how much they liked it. He began to want the same.

\begin{verbatim}
McVee:  Gie's a shot o' that, Mo.
\end{verbatim}
In the absence of Tam, Mo would hand over the paintbrush and McVee would be quiet for ages, concentrating, painting and getting it right.

McVee: How dae ye' dae this again, Mo? Whit dae ye' use this brush fur?

He was still 'crazy', but slowly he became different. Like the rest, tempted by the idea of what it would feel like to wear overalls, to paint and to be allowed out on jobs. McVee had rejected a long time ago the idea of ever finding work, here it began to seem almost possible. He began to care, to want to stay. He still carried on, but began to keep one eye on the door. We all noticed the change.

Our new preoccupation was with whether or not it was too late.

That McVee came to hold a new attitude was surprising. Given the exceptionally (even for Tam) harsh treatment he received from Tam it was even more surprising. All new boys received a harsh initiation as a matter of course. From the outset it was obvious to Tam that McVee was unsuitable, that he had slipped through a net that he should never have. Subsequently he met with even harsher treatment than most. In all the time in the workshop McVee was not given one decent job. The content of all his days were singularly boring, punitive and meaningless. He swept balconies for his first week, for the second he weeded the garden. Other boys mostly never commented on such things. They did in McVee's case.

Cogs: S'no' fair, nae other guy has ever hud tae spend a whole week in the gairden. Tam's really oot tae get him.
McVee's demise

The build up to McVee's demise actually turned out to be a fairly protracted affair. McVee had been given his first painting job. It was late Friday afternoon. Trish, McVee, Graigie, Nits and I had been standing on separate window sills in the joiners shop painting windows all day. We were exhausted, bored and desperate to get home.

Without McVee though the time would have gone much more slowly. He had entertained us all day, jumping around and keeping up a constant stream of patter. He did this in a much more restrained way though, partly due to the fact that he was so pleased with himself because Tam had found him overalls and given him a paintbrush. He had also been taught how to paint a window frame. It was his first taste of the good life, of the things that the rest of the boys were taking for granted. And in between joking around, he worked hard. He had actually been working quietly and carefully for a long time when disaster struck. He accidentally stepped back and kicked his whole pot of paint off the window ledge. There was a deathly pause and we all looked at each other in horror. Our hearts sank. McVee had committed a cardinal sin - paintpots had to be held, never, never laid down where they could be kicked over. An image of Tam and what his reaction would be passed through all our minds. We stared at each other horrified, then, as one, we leapt on the paint, scooping it into our own pots with scrapers, wiping it up with anything to hand - rags, paper, sticks.

Tam appeared at the other end of the workshop ten seconds too soon. The first thing he saw was paint running down the side of McVee's tin onto the floor. He rushed over and grabbed the brush
and pot from McVee, angry enough to burst.

Tam: That laddie's no' fit tae hae a paintbrush in his hand.

It was then he noticed the huge glob of paint on the window ledge. He stood speechless with rage for all of ten seconds, growing redder and redder. Then he let loose at McVee. He yelled and roared at McVee. I was terrified. McVee was kept back after four and Tam gave him more of the same.

I spent the weekend thinking McVee would be fired. Tam had wanted that. The workshop hierarchy insisted that (in accordance with rules) McVee be given a written warning. And now, Tam was really out to get him.

Unfortunately for McVee one of the consequences of his presence in the workshop meant that space had been made for other people to misbehave without blame. The other boys had a scapegoat and used McVee to the full. During that week, there was an upsurge of graffiti. Some of it was certainly McVee, some of it I know was not. It was not McVee who wrote 'Tam's an auld cunt' on the paintshop wall. McVee was blamed anyway.

McVee may or may not have survived in the workshop, but on top of all this he committed the ultimate sin. His fate was sealed. What eventually finished McVee was (significantly) not something that took place inside the workshop, but outside. Like in public schools, S/F boys have to be S/F boys inside as well as out. Outside (it was said) they carry the whole reputation of the workshop.

On one occasion an instructor from an outdoor centre took a group of boys canoeing. Free from the discipline of the workshop, faced with a liberal teacher, and the great outdoors, plus McVee's
encouragement, they all went mad. They deliberately capsized canoes, told the guy to 'fuck off!' and somehow intimidated him into driving them home to their individual houses. They topped everything by leaving the van in an unbelievable mess. In the workshop behaviour like this was bad enough. Outside, it reflected on the supervisor, on this occasion Tam, and he took it as a personal insult. Boys had never acted this badly before. The only factor that was different was McVee and McVee was duly blamed for committing the worst crime it was possible to commit. He was duly called into the office, verbally abused, sacked and he left the workshop in tears. That he had altered all the fire notices in the place before he went was the sting in the tail that was not noticed until later.

'In Event of Fire
1. Throw Tam in.
2. Pick up two big tins of gloss paint and run.
3. Assemble at Robbie's house for tea and biscuits'.

For most of the boys who ended up in the paintshop, their experience of school had been mixed. There, on the positive side, they had friends and an institutional setting from which to relate to them. For most of them, the experience of unemployment had cut this off sharply. They had come to S/F from a situation of isolation and with very few friends left that they saw regularly. By the time they were interviewed at the workshop, most were open to giving the workshop a chance. McVee was different. And boys who have a structure to their lives, an identity and friends outside the workshop, (at least initially) have a different basis upon which to assess the workshop.
Jobs for the Boys: references, qualifications and apprenticeships

The paintshop had one more thing to offer boys which ensured their acceptance of the scheme.

Robbie: OK you guys, o' er here, ah want tae talk tae ye's. Ah've jist heard that Keith (ex-trainee) has been taken oan wi' D... (local decorating firm). He wiz started intae the second year o' his apprenticeship - no' the first year - dae ye's hear - the second year. An' ah jist want tae try an' impress wan thing oan you guys, the reason Keith got tae'n oan wi' D... wiz because o' his reference. Noo, ah jist hope you guys are listenin', especially some o' you guys who are aboot half way through - it pays tae muck in - ah'm tellin' ye's.

If the content of work and the fact that the way skills were passed on was culturally relevant to boys and was an important factor in winning their approval of the scheme, then the promise and the hope of jobs to go onto at the end was an important part of this. This was the carrot held out to trainees from the beginning. The reputation of S/P was partly built on its good record of placing trainees in jobs. And the good behaviour of boys, the acceptance of somewhat authoritarian discipline was bought partly on the basis of this promise.

Boys and supervisors talked continually about references. And in contrast to school, they saw (and are brought to see) the importance of getting good references here. When boys were sanctioned, it was often the first thing they mentioned.

Sharkey had been in the 'garden' for four days. He had been caught 'skiving'. He was subdued when he rejoined the rest of the group.

Sharkey: Ah may as well jist go hame. Ah'll never get a good reference noo.
Trainees were assessed monthly and were well aware that how they performed would reflect the reference they would eventually get. The build up to it revealed a lot.

At the end of the month, supervisors filled in an assessment sheet for every trainee. Trainees were called into the office individually. In the presence of their supervisor and the training officer, their progress was gone over verbally. On the surface boys took it lightly. They joked, poured scorn on the event, but were nervous and affected by it all the same. On the day, trainees lined up outside the office. They questioned each other carefully on the way out.

Coge: Whit’d he say aboot you?

Frankie: He says ah’ve goat leadership qualities. He kin leave me in a room wi’ two or three new guys an’ ah ken whit’s whit. Says ma punctuality’s a bit doon though.

Wee Rab: He says ah’m a great worker, sometimes, inconsistent but ...

Pete: He says ah wiz good can everythin’.

Coge: Bet Stafford’s is glowin’, Stafford’s a sook.

Jobs to go on to

At the time of the study, a significant number of boys did move on to apprenticeships with local firms. Jobs, though, were not set up out of the new vocationalism, out of arrangements set up by the MSC, nor were they set up through the training officer in the office, or the careers service.

Again S/F’s reputation for placing trainees in jobs hinged on more informal arrangements than that. It was built on the informal contacts and knowledge working-class supervisors had with the local
labour market. Boys too were more familiar with local job possibilities than were the office staff. And they were familiar with the workings of local decorating firms. They knew them by name, were aware of the number of apprentices they had and the times of year they took them on. Their knowledge was partly picked up outside the workshop from friends and relatives. It was added to by Tam.

When a 'good boy' neared the end of his year in the paintshop, typically Tam or Robbie started asking round. They kept their eyes and ears open. Personal contacts from the past ensured they heard of vacancies as soon as anyone. Indeed, a big part of their job identity depended on their ability to place boys.

Robbie (about an exceptionally good boy)
Ah'll get that laddie a place if ah've tae get in the van masel' an' take him roon every firm in toon.

Thus, the commonplace assumption that young people in S/F get jobs because it had a good reputation, that trainees were well disciplined and received a good training, were unfounded. Trainees got jobs because working-class tradesmen were well placed to get them for them. The significant thing about boys' behaviour was that the jobs supervisors generated were partly used to wring a standard of work and good behaviour from boys as they were forced to compete with each other for them. Presumably if Tam and Robbie did not work in S/F, they (and others like them) would/could use their contacts to find work for boys elsewhere (relatives of young people or young people living near by). The informal ways in which older men and younger boys knew about the local job market was harnessed here and around it was built a whole new way of organising and disciplining young
people. What could be (and has been in the past) an informal arrangement for ensuring that some young people get access to the very limited number of jobs there are has become, for Tam now, his work, and forms the basis of a whole new way of defining and thinking about young people.

To Conclude

To an outsider, the image of S/F is the image of the office. The office is tastefully and well decorated (cream paintwork, brown carpet, plants). In every respect it could have been the administrative centre of any commercial office. The professional image was reinforced by management personnel themselves. All of them were young and middle-class. And it was partly in relation to this that the MSC interpreted S/F as a model scheme.

The reality of the reputation though lay somewhere different and was often at complete odds with the image of S/F that management was trying to build.

In sharp contrast to the office, male supervisors were tradesmen and working-class. They were without training, sophistication and without qualifications. They were rough, ready and unpolished, hired on the basis of trade skills. And boys' acceptance of S/F was on the basis of what they created for themselves and for trainees. The atmosphere was one which boys felt close to culturally and could understand. Boys were learning skills that were culturally relevant to them in a setting that was acceptable. Real jobs as painters and decorators were what boys most wanted in the world. In the absence of this, a close approximation to it was set up in S/F. It provided them with the opportunity to build an image of themselves as real men
with real jobs. For all the reasons I have discussed, the nature of work in the paintshop, the offer and hope of jobs at the end, the complete absence of anything positive in their lives as an alternative, meant that few boys were ever in a position to do anything other than to wholeheartedly grasp what was on offer in the paintshop and they rarely challenged workshop discipline in a way that was directly threatening to order there.
CHAPTER 3

Joiners

In this chapter I want to compare joiners with painters. I want to look at how similar boys with similar expectations and attitudes arbitrarily allocated to one workshop or the other, experience and react to S/F in different ways. I want to try and understand reasons for this. The main differences between painters and joiners is I think best revealed in this incident.

The Football Match

Occasionally in the workshop a football match was organised by supervisors between painters and joiners. Everyone piled into the mini-bus and drove to the local playing fields. Excitement was always high. It was an afternoon without work and with full pay. The joiners' enjoyment of the trip was different from painters. They made the most of the trip, joking, fighting, laying bets on the score, eating rubbish, drinking fizzy juice. By contrast, the painters sat still, grim-faced and serious. Obviously they were out to win.

At the football ground Frankie (the best painter) had already set himself up as leader. And he was angry. Predictably, the two punks in the group (Punk Pete and Steven) and Jed (the Elvis Presley look-alike) refused to play. Playing football is not an image any of them want to project. Frankie was outraged at their lack of commitment. Besides, without their presence on the field the painters were forced to play with ten men.

The joiners were not beset by the same problem. They lay around the grass bantering, making small talk with supervisors.
Supervisors had trouble persuading any of them to play.

Joe: (supervisor)

Come on you lads, they're oot there in a circle talkin' tactics. They're gaumnae run rings roon' ye's. Ye's'll need tae pull yersel's the gither boys. Come on, ye've been training fur this fur three weeks. Ah'm ah gaun' tae huv' tae play masel'?

Halfway through the match, despite the singlemindedness of their approach, the painters were in trouble. Most serious is the problem of the goalkeeper's boots. They nip his feet and he was in agony. A substitute was desperately needed. Frankie scowled at the sidelines. The three substitutes sat tight. Elvis was the first to break. Fear of future retribution overcame his sense of protectiveness for his image. And hurling abuse over his shoulder at the punks, he took his place in the goalmouth.

Elvis: Ya lazy, shitey bastards, ah'll get ye's fur this.

In fact Elvis need not have worried. He managed to maintain his Presley image intact even under these, the most adverse of circumstances. To the fury of his teammates, Elvis' attempts to retrieve the ball were far from vigorous. At most he would shuffle towards a low ball, hands in pockets, hips thrust out, flick back his hair and deflect the ball with his foot. All this to roars of 'dive Elvis, fuckin' dive'. Despite two glorious goals scored by Frankie and Pete (the blue-eyed boys of the paintshop), despite the joiners' giggling and laughing throughout the second half of the game, the painters lost. The goalkeeper had lost the game for the painters and would never be forgiven. Chavvy (one of the joiners) summed up
the painters' efforts:

**Chavvy:** Did ye' see Frankie Gibber? Nearly burst his heart gettin' the ba' past me. Ver' near hacked aff ma legs. The painters ur' a' sooks.

Painters and joiners approached the game in very different ways. Painters were serious and competitive. For joiners the event took on a much less serious air. For them, winning was much less of a priority than 'carrying on'. The same attitudes were reflected by the two groups in their approaches to work.

Neil, one of the joinery supervisors, had his own explanation for this. Different workshops had different recruitment patterns. Painters were taken on one by one throughout the year. They started into a structure that was ongoing and already established. Individually they had to find their own way of fitting in. Neil saw this as creating an atmosphere of rivalry, hierarchy and a sense of competition among painters.

Joiners, on the other hand, began their year together as a group. As a result they were more cohesive. They set themselves up in opposition to supervisors. Undoubtedly this was one important factor in explaining the differences between painters and joiners. It was not the only one. I want to look at this in more detail.

No Place for Painters: no place for girls

The culture of the paintshop was lively, interesting and energetic. The idea of real jobs provided painters with the feeling that the content of their day was meaningful. It gave them the cultural identity they wanted. This both structured and limited their resistance and ensured that the harsh and controlling regime they faced
was acceptable.

The joinery shop was similarly structured and many of the issues and outcomes I discuss are familiar. However, differences between the workshops were not insignificant. A comparison of the two adds weight to my analysis of the paintshop. And it is for this reason I studied joiners at all.

For many reasons it was tempting to say nothing about joiners. A study of painters on the one hand and girls in knitwear on the other would have been neat. Even although boys were over-represented as a proportion of all trainees in S/F, I did not want to reproduce this bias in my study and give extra weight to boys.

There were more personal reasons for wanting to exclude joiners. When finished in the paintshop, I had been in S/F for two and a half months. I was depressed and exhausted. I had planned a week’s holiday. The prospect of returning to the joinery shop was not tempting. The thought of making myself known to and accepted by a new group of boys in a new male environment (and this time without Trish) left me cold. Knitting with girls felt like a refreshing and more comfortable change.

For all these reasons I made a decision to become involved with the joiners for a short time and in a limited way (two weeks). I did not have energy enough for another full-scale and emotional commitment to boys and I consciously decided not to involve myself in the same way.

To the joiners I was already a familiar and accepted sight around S/F. Indeed I already knew many of them and had some kind of minimal relationship. This had negative and positive implications. First, a lot of groundwork towards acceptance had already been done.
But being a painter and associated with the paintshop also brought disadvantages. Painters and joiners had very different reputations around the workshop and also different images of themselves. They were set up in antagonism to each other. This posed problems for me as well as for them. I found it difficult not to take on board (as a painter) painters' assumptions about joiners. Nor could they see me as anything but a painter (and a girl). Because my stay with the joiners from the outset was a temporary one, neither they nor I had any real commitment to overcoming preheld assumptions. To be truthful, I did not enjoy my time in the joinery shop. Boys there seemed less fun. And though they never treated me with the same hostility I faced when I first joined the paintshop, I never got 'inside' the culture of joiners in the same way. I felt always an outsider and an intruder. Because I did not make the same emotional commitment their sexism and their aggressive behaviour overwhelmed me. I felt alienated and distant. My time there was stressful and especially undermining.

These personal things explained why the joinery shop was a less pleasant experience for me than being with painters. But there were structural differences between the workshops which meant that being a joiner was a less pleasant experience for everyone. I want to look at these things now.

The Joinery Shop

Like the paintshop, the joinery shop housed fifteen boys and there were two supervisors (Joe and Neil). Again supervisors were working-class and tradesmen. This workshop too felt like a workplace - male, stark and (to me) unwelcoming. In this case it was a long room.
One end was filled with work benches, chairs and lockers. Boys left 'pieces' and belongings here. It was where boys spent most of their time, surrounded by mountains of wood, saws, hammers, putty, nails and sawdust. The back of the workshop was the machine room. There was cutting machinery, ancient and variously acquired.

Unlike the paintshop, however, the image of 'model trainees' was not one which could easily be applied to joiners. The good reputation of S/F was not founded here. Joiners had a reputation for being noisy, boisterous and irresponsible. In comparison with painters, they were seen as second-rate, less workmanlike, immature and lazy. This attitude was shared by trainees, management and supervisors.

Fran: Whit did ye' 'hink o' the joiners?
Me: A' right. A bit borin'.
Fran: The joiners are horrible, they're dead babyish.
Cath: Sometimes ah wonder whit Joe and Neil are up tae doon there. Tha' laddies get away wi' murder.

From the vantage point of the paintshop this was the image of them I had. Where painters' disruption was hidden and contained, joiners carried on in places that were public. Their noisiness and boisterousness annoyed. I want now to explain why this was so. Again I will begin by looking at supervisors.

Joe

Joe and Tam were similar in many ways. Joe too was working-class and a tradesman - he had spent most of his working life as a site joiner. When the job at S/F came up he was only too pleased to have
lighter work.

Joe: Ah used tae go here there and everywhere lookin' fur the big money, leavin' ma wife tae bring up the six weans hursel'. It wiz really cut throat - ah'm tellin' ye. Ah'm really glad tae be oot o' it noo. This is a much easier job.

Like Tam, the way Joe structured boys' days and what he thought of as important and meaningful in terms of work came out of his own needs in terms of his own job satisfaction. Insofar as boys in the joinery shop were integrated at all they were integrated by the same things as painters. That they were less integrated was because these things were simply less achievable in the context of the joinery shop.

Indeed, it is tempting to attribute this to differences in the personalities of the two men. For all their similarities, Tam and Joe were very different. In the paintshop boys behaved partly because Tam was tough and authoritative. Joe was lenient and boys misbehaved. We have debunked this simple causal relationship in the context of the paintshop and likewise the story is a much more complex one here. Insofar as Joe was soft, it is important to understand why. And it is important to unravel the complicated way Joe's different attitude to boys created for them an experience that was different.

Joe and politics

Tam and Joe had different ideas about trainees and it is tempting to explain these in terms of politics. How Joe structured boys' lives in the workshop was partly the result of his cultural and political background. His attitudes were partly wrought out of his
disillusionment with his own attempts to change things.

Unlike Tam, Joe grasped the aims and ideals of S/F less wholeheartedly. His response to S/F had varied over time. When he first took the job he had been actively involved.

Joe: Meetin' after meetin' ah've stood up an' said, "it's a bloody disgrace". Ah don't say much noo right enough. A couple o' times Cath (supervisor in knitwear) has dragged me tae meetin's aboot it - gettin' them mair pay, gettin' them intae unions - an' ah'm a' fur it. But ah've a' ended up embarrassed at the meetin's. They've always turned out tae be political sorts o' things. Cath's a bit like that. Ah'm a bit o' a socialist masel; but ye' get fed up wi' it after a while - ah dinnae go tae meetin's noo. An' we're no' bloody social workers. We're jist here tae gie them a good trainin' - it's a' ye' can dae.

For Joe, working at S/F was fraught with contradictions. Personally, he liked the job and was glad to be out of the building trade. But he was aware that the job involved imposing on trainees something that was unfair.

Joe: Ah couldnae punish them hard, no' fur £23. It's a bloody disgrace.

Initially he had gone to meetings to effect change that way. But traditional structures on the left put him off. Meetings left him more impotent than ever. Subsequently he felt alienated from his work and in the absence of a commitment to wider political activity his strong feelings about the scheme were slowly defused, routinised and institutionalised. Political disillusionment now took a different and more individualistic form. Joe put very little into the job. All too often he would be found at the back of the workshop at the machines. The products of these hours were
impressive - exquisitely made boxes of different kinds of wood, inlaid and ornate. For Joe, whose definitions of real work did not include this - 'benchwork' - the activity was meaningless. He used time like this to fend off boredom. He had no inclination to instruct boys in these skills and boys had no inclination to learn.

Joe's discipline

Where it was easy to apply metaphors about the army to the way boys were organised in the paintshop, this was far from true for joiners. This was not a regime based on fear. Discipline was much less rigid, boys had much more leeway to resist, and did.

Contrast this incident with something that would happen in the paintshop. The joinery shop was a long room. It was always possible to hear people approaching. Joe and Neil both wore 'noisy' shoes. Sometimes, though, if trainees had been sitting too quietly for too long, Neil would tiptoe the length of the workshop and catch them. This was different though than anything that could happen in the paintshop. It was an occasion for laughter. The joke was shared by everyone.

Chavv: Aye, yer a sly bastard when ye' get goin' Neil.

Marc: (laughing to me)
Ken whit that bastard did the other day? We were a' skivin'. Neil takes his shoes off an' creeps up oan us. Whit a laugh.

Among supervisors, Joe had a reputation for letting boys off with murder. When I worked in knitwear, some girls noticed that ten minutes after the hooter sounded to end break, joiners were still
playing football in the yard. Because an extended break was a privilege denied them, they were put out. They complained to Cath. Cath rushed downstairs to find Joe. She met Tam on the stairs, intent on the same mission.

Tam: (to Cath)
Ye canny allow that sort o' thing.
Joe should ken better.

Within the limits and constraints of an inflexible workshop, Joe was lenient. But policed by trainees and supervisors alike, the possibilities were minimal. And even when Joe did find himself with more to be angry about than Tam, his response was very different.

Joiners were working 'out' in a local school. They were partitioning a classroom and making it into two. At this point, the frame had been raised and plasterboard was being nailed to it. Joe demonstrated the technique, warning boys to hit only the nail once, and not the plasterboard which was easily dented. Marc, it seemed, had not heard. He held the nail in place, struck it, missed, then struck the plasterboard hard about twenty times. The plasterboard was hopelessly dented. Joe noticed what had happened and rushed over and took the hammer quite roughly out of Marc's hand. Firmly (but in a restrained way) he repeated that that was not how to do it. This was as angry as I ever saw Joe. He was obviously worried about it.

Joe: (to me later)
God ah dinnae mean tae lose ma temper like that. Sometimes ah forget they're jist laddies.

Joiners then faced a regime that was a lot less rigid than the paintshop. Joe rarely lost his temper and boys were given a lot of
leeway. He rarely used wit to put boys down and demoralise them. Boys did not live in constant fear of Joe. The atmosphere was freer, the limits of acceptable behaviour much less narrowly defined.

Boys rarely bothered to stop carrying on when Joe walked into a room and they rarely took the precautions to avoid detection that boys did in the paintshop. Disruption was public and open, not separated off and hidden from supervisors. Life here was much less uncertain and predictable.

What this meant for boys was an atmosphere which was neither challenging nor interesting. There was little to do and little to hold their attention. That disruption did not have to be oppositional or clandestine meant that boys rarely had the motivation to do it at all. And this, far from winning their commitment and acceptance, meant they were disinterested and bored.

Boys' experience of joinery was then partly organised through Joe's (idiosyncratic) understanding of YOP and the way he coped with imposing on boys a scheme that was unfair. It partly explained their own attitude to the workshop. But there were other structural reasons which also explained why boys here were less integrated.

The Nature of Work

Collective start

One structural difference between boys' workshops (and I mentioned it at the very beginning of this section) was that unlike painters (who join their workshop in a staggered way throughout the year), the intake of joiners happens all at once. They begin together on the same day. This is not insignificant. It happened for reasons of history and of habit.
Where individual painters entered an already established work routine and have to fit themselves into an atmosphere where boys are already well behaved and hardworking, each successive generation of joiners together and in opposition to supervisors create something that is new. Joiners learn about the workshop as a group. They are more cohesive and less prone to tactics of divide and rule.

This feature of life in the joinery shop undoubtedly had a part to play in explaining why joiners were more disruptive. The relationship though was not a simple one. Joiners were cohesive, but this group atmosphere did not account for the existence of an oppositional culture in any straightforward way.

Painters starting into their workshop faced a recruitment situation similar to work. Joiners experienced something a lot less novel - it felt more like school than work and was subsequently less of a direct reflection of what they wanted.

**Overalls, 'pieces', breaks**

What joiners wore at work was another small detail which contributed to creating them as subordinate in relation to painters and slightly less satisfied with their lot in the joinery shop. Again for reasons of habit and history, boys in the joinery shop were not supplied with overalls. They wore work clothes but they never attained the symbolic significance that overalls did in the paintshop. Unlike Tam, Joe never capitalised on or attributed fetishised significance to what boys wore. There were no clothes specific to joinery that were exchanged for boys' good behaviour. As much as painters, joiners wanted to be defined as real workers and as real
joiners and it was for small reasons like this that it is possible to understand joiners' lesser commitment to their workshop.

In the paintshop painters were created as workers in relation to breaks and lunch and where and how they had them. This was also true for joiners. In their own space, they liked nothing better than to discuss and swap 'pieces'. And insofar as joiners were integrated they were integrated by things like this. But once again the opportunity to maximise this in the context of the joinery workshop was denied them. Arrangements for lunch were, in the eyes of the joiners, a second-best. The equivalent of the painters' 'hut' did not exist. They ate lunch in their own workshop and this denied the full-scale fantasy about being real workers.

'Jobs Out'

Supervisors and boys in joinery loved to be on jobs. Here too this provided them with their reason to be. It gave boys work that was meaningful and a sense of self that they wanted. As much as for painters, they loved to jump into the van with wood and tools, hammers, saws and drills. They raised frames, laid floors, put up extensions and revelled in the whole experience. And insofar as they behaved at all, it was in order to be able to do this. They lived for the special perks times like these afforded (and, as for painters, this was an important factor in winning their acceptance). They particularly liked time spent in the van travelling to and from work. They finished early and took longer breaks. Most of all it allowed them to feel like real men with real jobs.

Yet there were several features about 'jobs out' in the joinery shop which meant that the experience was less satisfying for them than
it was for painters. Joe was not intent on using every mechanism at his disposal to create the illusion of real work where it did not in fact exist. He never referred to these jobs as if they were commercially competitive. There was never talk about invoices and tenders. Jobs out were a training exercise and boys knew it. Consequently there was much less around which boys could hang and build up personal fantasies. Joe had no intention of attempting to integrate boys on the basis of something which did not exist. In the absence of real work, the illusion of it was not created here.

Subsequently, though boys in joinery did enjoy being out on jobs, it did not feed their wildest dreams, nor did it provide them (completely) with the cultural identity they wanted.

Another aspect of 'jobs out' and something which again helps to explain why joiners were less integrated was that when joiners went out on a job they all went. In the context of the joinery shop (unlike the paintshop), 'jobs out' were not something to aspire to and compete for. There was not the feeling of elation for some, disappointment for those left behind. If there was work out to be done, everybody did it. And in this sense too 'jobs out' felt a lot less like the pinnacle of achievement and more like an enjoyable training exercise. But the biggest problem of winning the acceptance of joiners concerned something different. For joiners, 'jobs out' were scarce. It was, I think, simply more difficult to generate the kind of jobs joiners could do 'out' than it was for painters. It is more straightforward to allow a group of boys to decorate a hall than it is to allow them to lay a floor. In all the time I was there, joiners only did two jobs out. Thus, the main thing that defined them in the joinery shop hardly ever happened. And this more than
any other factor explained their lack of commitment.

'Jobs In'

The role that 'jobs in' played for joiners was not unrelated to this. 'Jobs in' constituted a much larger part of their time there than it did for painters. Painters found 'jobs in' meaningless (but acceptable on the basis of being a necessary evil to be tolerated at slack times). Joiners thought the same way and much of their time was spent hanging around waiting for something which happened very infrequently. The experience of being a joiner here was subsequently both negative and boring.

This negativity surrounding 'jobs in' was further compounded because the content of 'jobs in' for joiners was even more meaningless than it was for painters. What passed for 'jobs in' in the joinery shop was 'benchwork'. A far cry from male manual labour, it smacked of school and was held in contempt by supervisors and boys. Everyone experienced 'benchwork' as 'cissy', tedious and irrelevant. Aspirations were to be joiners on building sites, raising frames and staircases, building partitions and laying floorboards. Doing 'fancy joints' at a bench was what happened in schools and boys hated it.

Unlike painters, where the daily culture seemed (at least superficially) energetic and exciting, joiners' workplace culture was for the most part boring. Partly to do with Joe's personality, it was also the result of structural constraints on the nature of what it was possible for joiners to do. For even 'jobs in' allowed painters to feel busy and look productive. They had a high profile in the workshop, rushing around continually with ladders and
paintbrushes. For painters, it was always possible to find something to paint (regardless of how often it had been painted before). There were simply fewer jobs for joiners to do. Joiners spent all their time in their workshop doing work that was even less meaningful than repainting the canteen. There was no commitment to benchwork in the joinery shop from supervisors or boys. The energy that went into it was small.

For example, boys were engaged on the task of making small tables throughout the time I was in S/F. None was ever completed and no one ever took one home. When Joe did try to pass on skills to boys in the context of the workshop, it generally fell flat. On discovering after several months that many of the boys still found it impossible to use a ruler and measure anything accurately, he tried to do something about it. Providing paper, rulers and pencils, he set a test. Boys spent hours joking about it. No one finished it. Joe never marked it.

During my time there one ongoing task was taking old planks of wood and sawing them by hand till they were straight. The job was a 'filler' and it could have kept boys busy for years. It was picked up and left off continually, depending on what else was happening. These 'filler' jobs were used in a slightly different way here than they had been in the paintshop. Boys were still expected to look busy for visitors - and generally did. Other than that, Joe would allow them to sit around for hours, insisting they take up work only when their behaviour was disruptive enough to impinge on the rest of the workshop. Sometimes as he walked past a group of boys looking bored, he would suggest they find something to do.
Joe: Come can you laddies, ye've done nothin' a' day.

Sometimes they would pick up work, mostly they would not. Here, 'filler' jobs appeared for what they were - boys looked busy for management, there was no game involved with supervisors.

Less Limited Resistance

In part, it was boys' boredom that structured their resistance. The formal content of their work was irrelevant and neither did they learn the informal things about work that so endeared the painters to their workshop. This, in addition to Joe's limits being a lot less narrowly defined, meant that boys here had neither the need nor the inclination to develop the subtle, hidden culture that made life for painters interesting.

In sharp contrast to painters, the day-to-day culture of joiners was boring. The extreme aspects of their disruption that I had witnessed as an outsider happened in fact only infrequently. I spent most of my time standing in front of a heater, freezing, living in my head. Mornings I spent reading the 'Daily Record' from cover to cover. Boys spent time in the same way. Hours would pass and no one had the energy to speak. Boys would be engaged in some kind of small repetitious behaviour. Someone would be swinging on a chair for hours, someone else would be rhythmically and systematically banging one nail after another into a bench, another boy would be removing the nails that had been hammered in the day before.

Chavy sat one day and meticulously took apart a plane. He removed the blade and skilfully and neatly reduced a padded, cushioned
chair to the woodwork. (Stripping a chair took on a whole new meaning!) When Joe walked by, Chavy did not bother to stop.

Joe: That's no' very clever, is it son.

This was the hidden side of life with the joiners. The stultifying atmosphere which made up the experience of most of their working day. These long silent times were interspersed infrequently by bursts of energy. And it was this that gave the joiners their public reputation.

For example, Douggie, swinging on a chair, would suddenly fall off. This would set off a flurry of activity — as it would have in the paintshop. Douggie would pick himself up, pick up the chair, throw it around and the melee would spill over into the yard. Before long they would be, for example, wheeling each other around in wheelbarrows, leaping wildly in and out of puddles. And it was at this point that Joe would react. Aware that their behaviour was visible, and more as a token gesture than anything else, Joe would suspend someone.

Wee Rab: (a painter. Humorously)

Four o' the joiners got sent hame yesterday — they were in the canteen makin' a cup o' tea. They left the electric fire can a' night but.

A recurring theme was swotting flies.

Marc: There's a fly.

This activity took place in the middle of winter and the flies were imaginary. The objects that were used to swot them were six foot planks of wood.
This happened infrequently and quickly died down into the usual silence and boredom. The overwhelming experience of being a joiner was of being silent and bored. The formal and informal aspects of their work were irrelevant, they lacked the necessary motivation, commitment and energy to generate a culture in opposition strong enough to overcome this general feeling.

For many reasons, then, the joiners were a lot less integrated than painters. For one thing, they were disruptive because they could be. Joe's limits were a lot more flexible than Tam's. Disruption happened also because the content of their day was less interesting. They were afforded much less of an opportunity to take on and build around the workshop an identity they strongly identified with.

The question arising from this is why in the face of all this joiners were not a lot more disruptive. Their resistance fell between several stools. They were more disruptive than painters, though their disruptive behaviour never reached the proportions of McVee (or for that matter girls, though that is a story for later).

**Real Men/Real Jobs**

Joiners wanted the same things as painters - to feel like real men with real jobs. In the context of the joinery shop this was not achievable. They were, subsequently, less satisfied. They did have, though, enough to ensure that they wanted to be in the workshop and they wanted to stay. In its own way, joiners' resistance was limited too and this can be partly explained in the fact that joiners wanted to be allowed to stay in S/F as much as painters. The main difference was simply the different limits set by Tam and Joe.
Joiners were more disruptive because Joe allowed them to be.

The bottom line for boys in both workshops was an abhorrence of a return to the dole. And the boredom and dissatisfying nature of what passed for work in the joinery shop reflected that boys were in fact prepared to put up with quite a lot to be allowed to stay.

It would certainly be unfair to give the impression that boys got nothing out of the joinery shop. They did. It did give them some flavour of real work which allowed them partly to feel like real men. They did enjoy jobs out. The problem was that this feeling was neither strong enough nor sustained enough to integrate them completely. It was though enough to make them want to be there and be allowed to stay. They did within the limits set by Joe, behave.

We talked about painters' integration and outlined that one big factor which won their acceptance was the ability of Tam to provide jobs for boys to go onto at the end of the year. The way this worked out for joiners was slightly different.

The promise and the hope of something at the end was also a big factor ensuring boys' acceptance of the joinery shop. And Joe and Neil were as successful at generating jobs for boys as Tam. In fact they found more jobs.

As we already noted, it was not the simple generating of jobs that was the important factor for life in the paintshop. It was what Tam did with the jobs he did generate that was important. And unlike Tam, Joe never structured life for the joiners around competition for jobs. Even although there were more jobs available for joiners, boys here were less individually competitive for them. Joe never used jobs in exchange for good behaviour. Neither was there the same emphasis on references and qualifications. Boys
discussed them from time to time, but there was less awareness that a good reference was closely connected to a job. Joiners as a group were much less differentiated in terms of ability. Jobs that were available were allocated more or less at random and given on the basis of things that had a lot more to do with chance and circumstance than they were to do with ability and achievement.

To Conclude

Tarn wholeheartedly embraced the aims and assumptions of YOP. He accepted that to make boys employable meant creating a regime that was as close as possible to and resembled a real workshop.

Joe was much less accepting of the official aims of YOP, and much more aware of its potentially exploitive aspects. Consequently he did not push boys hard nor was he generally punitive. He created a workshop that felt a lot less like real work than the paintshop.

The implications of this were somewhat counterintuitive. Where it is easy to be critical of the paintshop and the way boys learned skills, they did learn things about work that were impressive. They were rarely bored, they gained confidence in themselves and a sense of themselves that they wanted.

The joinery shop was not challenging in anything like the same way. Boys here were more dissatisfied and bored than painters, learned fewer skills and competences. It seemed that, at least for boys, the nearer a workshop came to resembling boys' ideas of a real workshop, the more accepting of it they were, the more positive sense of themselves they received and the better they liked it.
Boys and Sexuality: their daily preoccupations and fantasies

See that burd wi' the skin heid an' the nae teeth, she's absolutely unbelievable.

Haw Hammy, did ye git it last night?

Haw Chavvy, ye still gaun' oot wi' that burd wi' the great tits?

Ah canny stand lassies wi' nae tits.

I have talked about various aspects of boys' preoccupations and culture. They came to the workshop with identities already formed in terms of being real workers with real jobs (Paul Willis describes this process at school). In the absence of this as an immediate possibility on leaving school, I outline the desperation (almost) with which boys grasp any alternative to the dole upon which they can create this image. I have though saved one of the major preoccupations (girls) for separate discussion.

Before I begin it is necessary to make a short methodological digression. Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (1976:209) in their discussion of male researchers' discussions of girls remark that:

'When girls are acknowledged in the literature, it tends to be in terms of their degree of, or lack of sexual attractiveness'.
(McRobbie and Garber, 1976:209)

They quote Willis about unattached girls in the motorbike culture he studied:

'What seemed to unite them was a common desire for an attachment to a male and a common inability to attract a man to a long term relationship. They tended to be scruffier and less attractive than the attached girls'.
(quoted in McRobbie and Garber, 1976:209)
McRobbie and Garber argue that there are problems in interpreting what remarks like these actually reflect. They ask whether or not they simply reflect 'the dismissive treatment of girls typical of a masculine researcher with a natural rapport with male respondents' (McRobbie and Garber, 1976:210). Or, more than this, whether or not the researcher actually takes on board (in the context of their rapport with boys) boys' attitudes to girls (McRobbie and Garber, 1976:210). So when girls are reported as displaying behaviour which is 'giggly' or when they are described as 'retreating into cliquishness', they ask

'... are these typical responses to a male researcher, influenced by the fact that he is a man, by his personal appearance, attractiveness etc.? Or are they responses influenced by the fact that he is identified by the girls as "with the boys", studying them and in some way siding with them in their evaluation of girls? Or are these responses characteristic of the way girls customarily negotiate the spaces provided for them in a male dominated and defined culture?' (McRobbie and Garber, 1976:210)

These were some of the problems of interpretation which also preoccupied me. I think I did get close enough to girls to understand and unpack some of these aspects of their behaviour. I think I did so because I had been one and close to it myself.

On the other hand (like male researchers in relation to girls) my relationship with boys was less close as a 'girl'. And although I did not threaten boys or interest them enough to cause them to greatly modify their behaviour in relation to me as a researcher, it was modified in relation to me as a 'girl'. I did not become close to boys as one of them. Where girls had a very hidden culture which took place without boys and where they discussed sexuality
and of which I was a part, if boys had an equivalent, I missed it. All I was able to discuss in relation to boys was the behaviour I witnessed as they related to girls (and to me as a 'girl'). What I describe in relation to boys' sexuality existed on a more superficial level than my analysis of girls. And, I think, to begin to interpret what girls really meant to boys, what really lay behind their continual references to girls as objects of sex, it would have been necessary to have been a boy. I was not.

Men then are defined in the world as workers. Paul Willis (1977) argues that the idea of real work is inextricably linked to ideas about masculinity. For this group, work is denied then - and if you cannot be a real worker, you cannot be a real man. I want to argue that when boys cannot be workers, the implication is not a lessening of their assertion of masculinity, rather there is an exaggeration. Aspects of masculine culture get heightened. The paintshop (and the joinery shop) were modelled on the idea of real workshops. In fact, it bore less of an approximation to a real workplace than a caricature of one. Boys played at being real men with real jobs. Ten boys would sit around in spartan workplace conditions and simultaneously light up ten fags. They played endless games of poker and discussed daily and ritually what they had to eat for their 'piece'. Traditional symbols, like clocking in and out, the provision of free overalls, the collection of 'wages', assumed huge, fetishised importance. In the workshop boys created themselves and were created as hard real men with hard real jobs.

The franticness and desperation they created around this was also manifest in other aspects of their lives. Aspects of their personal relationships were exaggerated and caricatured too.
For example, male workplaces are renowned as places where women are objectified, discussed and ridiculed. It happened at least to the same extent in S/F. Everyday chat inevitably returned to discussing women as objects of sex to be used and abused. Girls existed in terms of their appearance. They were pieces of anatomy, to be discussed and commented on.

Boys feelings of inadequacy, the sense of failure they felt about their lives was, unfortunately, also put onto a preoccupation with sex, scoring and undermining girls. In a world where there are so many material hardships for these boys (bad housing, no jobs and no money), the way they live and laugh through their difficulties is in so many ways admirable. Yet it is difficult to hold onto and appreciate these positive things when so many of the ways in which they cope with their own situations are marred by sexism. So much of the energy and effort put into avoiding and diverting authority was at the same time concerned with degrading and abusing girls.

S/F bingo

Here is one example of the way in which daily class resistance is invariably reduced to petty sexism.

A severe attack of boredom in the joinery shop was offset one day by a game of bingo. Number boards were made from blocks of wood, numbers by hammering in nails. Chavvy was the bingo caller. He did a slick and clever job of transforming traditional bingo calls into calls which were more relevant. Each and every call was sexist.

All the twos : tits and two, twenty two.
One and one : skinny Liz's legs eleven.
All the sexes : sixty sex.
Their game was enterprising. But sexism was deeply ingrained in every aspect of their culture. Russell was in awful form one day. It was easy to tell. He spent the morning staring at the bench, swinging back and forth in his chair, hands in pockets. He rose only to give the locker door a periodic smash. Chavy homed immediately into the root of the problem.

Chavy: Ye didnae score last night did ye?
Russell: Na, she wiz feart hur auntie wid come in.

The night before had been Russell’s big night. It was widely known. Failure meant that he had to cope, not only with his own disappointment, but also with the humiliation and embarrassment of facing his pals.

He did, though, manage to engender a fair amount of support, sympathy and advice from his friends, who obviously identified strongly with his predicament. Practical help took the form of finding him a replacement. (His girlfriend had been dropped like hot bricks for her cowardliness.) Chavy (to the rescue) confides that his own ‘burd’ has a ‘nice lookin’ pal’.

Russell: Whit’s she like?
Chavy: She’s dead nice lookin’ - ah’im tellin’ ye!
Russell: Ah, bit - wid you go oot wi’ hur?
Chavy: Aye, ah’im tellin’ ye!
Douggie: Dimnae listen tae him, ah ken hur, she’s gobbin’.
Chavy: Naw, she’s really nice lookin’, ah’im no’ kiddin’.
Russell: Well, tell me exactly whit she’s like.
Chavy: Well she’s wee, goat a nice bum.
Russell: Is she thin?
Chawy: Aye she's thin.
Russell: Whit aboot hur hair?
Chawy: It's broon an' wedged.
Russell: Huz she goat big tits?
Chawy: Well, she's goat tits. Ah're tellin' ye ah'd go oot wi' hur masel'.

John: Ah've been gaun up tae S... a lot the now, ma burd stays there - s'reawlin' wi' nice lookin' burds. Ye kin come up there wi' me if ye want.

In all the time I was with the boys, I do not think I ever heard a girl discussed in terms of anything other than her appearance or as an object of sex. Girls as people were never mentioned.

Marc: Whit's your burd like?
Douggie: Mine? Well, she's wee, goat big tits - well quite big, goat a nice arse - ah widnae go oot wi' a burd that didnae huv a nice arse. Wears makeup, tight jeans. She's a' right.

Chawy did not appear for work. Next day I asked him where he had been. He told me he had been up at court for nickin' cars.

Me: Whit oan earth did ye start nickin' cars fur?
Chawy: (laughing, tongue in cheek) Ah dunno'. Ah wiz depressed.
Douggie: Ye wir depressed! Yer still gaun oot wi' that wee burd wi' the big tits.
Chawy: Aye.
Douggie: An' yer depressed! How kin ye be depressed when yer gaun oot wi' a burd wi' tits like that?
Chawy: Aye ah ken. We're supposed tae be gettin' engaged in March.
Douggie: (Can hardly speak for laughing)
    Yer whit! Yer gettin' engaged!
    Away an' no' be stupit.

Marc: (smuggly)
    Ah ken why he's gettin' engaged.
    There's only wan reason anybody gets
    engaged. Ye get it easier if yer
    engaged.

Chavvy leant back smuggly in his chair, he did not deny it. John
entered into the conversation at this stage. He used to be in the
joinery workshop. After his year he went to do WEEP with a local
decorating firm.

John: Aye, ah could imagin' masel' gettin' engaged - but ah'd never, ever git
married. Some o' that boys at ma work,
ye want tae hear them, they'd pit ye off
fur life. Some o' them are only twenty,
an' some o' them have been married fur
years - an' they fuckin' hate, they
fuckin' hate their wives. Ye want tae
hear some o' the things they say aboot
them. They dimae even get oot fur a
pint. Their wives jist go oan at them
the whole time. They fuckin' hate their
wives.

So much of what is absorbed, the whole of their culture, inside and
out of S/F, is laced with sexism.

Video fun and sexism

Craigie arrived one day with a tape recorder borrowed from his
father. It was played in the workshop for one entire day. First
one side, then the other, then back to the beginning. It was a live
recording of a night club spot by a local comedian. Listening to the
tape was, for the boys, a relatively unimportant mundane event.
These feelings were reinforced and validated by supervisors (who also
enjoyed the tape). The tape was particularly appreciated because the comedian was local, he had accents and mannerisms like their own. He began with a series of racist jokes (against blacks, Jews and Irish people). This was followed by a series of anti-gay jokes, then a whole lot more about and against women. The only jokes about 'normal' people (white, heterosexual men) celebrated drunkenness. These jokes were, of course, the jokes the tape ended on.

I spent the whole of that day with my stomach in knots of anger and frustration. Futile attempts to protest were interpreted as prudish and served only to double my anguish. The boys strutted around smugly, feeling like real men, reveling in 'normality'.

From every side these boys absorb abusive and objectified images and messages about women. They pick it up from the daily banter which exists among themselves, from fathers and brothers at home, as well as from external sources of popular culture, television, cinema and to an increasing extent from the soft porn videos they spend so much time watching with their friends and families. The culture is extended into the workshop where boys endlessly discuss what they have been watching, what is available and worth seeing.

**Pete:** Huv' ye seen this yin called ...
Well there's a bit in it where ye actually see them cuttin' this wumin up. Ye should get it, ah'm no' kiddin', it's absolutely horrible.

It is important not to lose sight of the implications of all of this for girls. The preoccupation and obsessions of men/boys, their needs and fantasies are concerned with women as objects. As the material
conditions of men's/boys' lives get worse, these tendencies are escalated and exaggerated.

I think a short discussion about my own experience of S/F might be valid here. I was in the presence of teenagers constantly for five months.

When I began I was unaffected by thoughts of my appearance. By the time I left, I was paranoid. The ideal standard (to which all of the girls aspired and several came close to achieving) was blonde, flicked back hair, make-up, tight stretch jeans, flimsy sandals, thin jackets and to weigh a pre-pubescent seven and a half stones.

I was not alone in weighing considerably more, wearing baggy jeans, sweat shirts, ankle boots and heavy jackets and those of us like this suffered together.

It is one thing to accept that teenage girls are nothing but the way they look, to experience it (or, as in my case, to re-experience it) hammers home the slogan very firmly.

Kenny: Colour's ye'r hair Trish?
Trish: S'fire red. S'barry, eh?
Kenny: Aye. Whit colour wiz it before?
Trish: Ah'd it blonde. Ah like it a' different colours.
Kenny: Dae you dye ye'r hair, Arne?
Me: Nut.
Trish: Dae ye' like it the way it is?
Me: Oct, no' really, ah never really think aboot it.
Trish: Dae ye' always wear it up?
Me: Naw, jist in here.
Trish: It'd be better doon. Ah always take mine doon at lunchtime, you should tae Arne.
Comments like these hurt. I felt worthless. And girls themselves are not unaware of the unfairness and oppressiveness of the structures of their worlds.

**Trish:** Ye should wear make-up Anne. Lassies dae look better wi' make-up oan.

**Pete:** Lassies look absolutely gobbin' wi'oot make-up. If ma burd came doon the stairs tae go oot wi' me wi'oot any oan, ah'd send hur right back up tae pit it oan. Ah widnae go oot wi' hur.

**Trish:** Ah widnae go oot the door wi'oot ma make-up oan. Ma ma disnae even see me wi'oot ma make-up. Even if ah huv' a bath, the first thing ah dae is tae go an' pit it right back oan. Wi'oot it ma face is dead white, an' ah've gaot dead wee horrible eyes.

**Me:** Oot ye dae mit Trish. Ye widnae look any different wi'oot ma make-up. Ah think lassies wear make-up cause laddies expect ye tae. It's jist whit folk think 'nice-lookin' is, it disnae make any difference really.

**Trish:** Aye ah ken. If naebody hud ever wore make-up ever, then it wid be OK no' tae wear it. But everybody does wear it an' ah'm no' gaun' tae be the only burd no' wearin' it. Ah'd feel really shitty.

See ma pal Pammy. Like, if ah'm gaun oot wi' hur, she'll never come up for me. Ah've tae al'ways go doon tae hur bit so she kin see whit ah've gaot oan - then she kin wear somethin' better. Jackie wid never dae that tae me, but some lassies ur like that. See you, Anne, yer dead naive.

I know the personal cost to me of being a 'girl' in the workshop. Yet I was twice as old, numerous times materially better off, surer of myself and my life than anyone else. I still found this aspect of the workshop one of the most personally undermining experiences of my life.
Me: My God, you lot are disgusting. Ye's are sittin' aboot here talkin' aboot lassies as if they were like a bunch o' animals or somethin'.

Chavy: (unabashed, laughing)
Aye, ah ken, we're awffy, we're talkin' aboot them like they wiz big slabs o' meat.

The effect of this on sixteen year old girls, the other side of the coin, I will discuss in a later chapter.
PART TWO

'GIRLS'
CHAPTER 5

Knitwear

'Knitwear' generally held twenty or so girls and three supervisors. There were three separate but connected areas, each with a supervisor in charge of half a dozen or so girls.

If boys learned skills that were traditionally male, girls were offered a skill that was as distinctly and traditionally feminine. They learned to operate small knitting machines. Each area possessed a machine for every girl, sewing machines, ironing board and iron. Every inch a workplace and environment for girls.

Process of Acceptance

When I first arrived in S/F, I spent my first few days in the office. I felt awkward and disoriented, observing trainees from this safe distance and trying (unsuccessfully) to imagine a role for myself. From the office I moved to knitwear, spending two weeks there before it was decided that I should accompany Trish to the paintshop. My main time in knitwear was at the end of my time in the workshop, after I had been with painters and joiners.

I was initially in knitwear when I felt new and awkward in the workshop generally. And I felt as uncomfortable initially among the girls as I later did with boys (though not for the same reasons). I felt out of place and ignored and I had little faith that I would ever get to know any of them.

From my fieldnotes:
I honestly don't know how I'm doing. Sometimes I feel that they will accept me, sometimes I feel like a nuisance, sometimes I think they quite like me being around, sometimes I feel in the way.

The above largely understates the depths of my insecurity. This was the beginning of my fieldwork. A lot hinged on it. Another snippet from my fieldnotes captures more honestly how I felt:

They don't like me, they'll never like me, I don't fit in. They think I'm horrible.

I felt paralysed, unable to relate to girls. It seemed that my presence prevented them from doing what they wanted to do, from saying what they wanted to say. I was wrong. And only with hindsight did I come to understand their initial response. During my first week there all I did know was that no one was speaking to me. When they did, it was merely to elicit the information they needed to place me.

Because I was small and wore no make-up they assumed I was young. And that I did not wear 'trendy' clothes (rather jeans and a duffel coat) meant I was not interested in boys. They assumed I was naive and immature.

They saw me and related to me from the very first as someone who was not too different from themselves, the same age, from the same background, a bit slow and wet behind the ears. They ignored me initially, as they ignored all new trainees.

Towards the end of my first two weeks, there were an increasing number of small signs that suggested I was being accepted. A slap on the back from Linda on the way past, a joke made at my expense.
Lena: God, Anne, yer slow oan the uptake.

Fran: Bet Anne wid never dae a thing like that, eh!

I ended my first stint in knitwear with an increasing understanding of the way the workshop was organised, the role I was creating for myself and that was being created for me. In many ways it was untimely that I was whisked away for two and a half months to be with Trish and the boys.

My time with painters and joiners had left me feeling unconfident and undermined.

Between workshops I took a week's holiday. Throughout the week I was anxious about my return to knitwear. The night before I did not sleep. I thought carefully about what I could wear. Having wandered around with painters in overalls and jumpers, I was nervous about joining the girls who all looked glamorous. I knew whatever I wore would be subject to comment and I would feel awful. In the paintshop I had been defined as Trisha's kind, dull-witted pal. I was aware that in knitwear my role would be similar. And to be defined in any situation as someone who is dowdy is undermining.

On the plus side, I started back in knitwear without fear of rejection. By then I was a familiar and accepted part of S/F. I knew all the girls and had talked regularly with them. Some of them I knew well, all of them had an idea of what I was like. I also knew how I would be integrated into the group. And it was in a way participant observers seldom are - as part of the outgroup.

Classically, participant observers make for the ringleaders. In my case this was impossible. I neither looked, nor could I play, the right part. There were, however, a number of girls in the same
boat. They neither looked punky, nor did they look glamorous. Like me they wore jeans and jumpers. They felt bad about their appearance in relation to other girls and felt bad about themselves in relation to boys. They were very decidedly the outgroup and I was very firmly part of it.

An incident happened during my first week back in the workshop which affirmed, to me at any rate, who my friends were going to be. Mary was quiet, wore brown cords and a brown jumper continually. She was far from being popular. If anything was stolen everyone immediately thought of Mary. She knitted very little and showed little interest in learning. She kept herself to herself and had few friends. One day, when I had been in the workshop only a short time, she pulled me aside.

Mary: Ah'm scunnered wi' this place. After break, ah'm no' comin' back.

I chatted to her for a bit, assuming that what she had told me was common knowledge. When the hooter went at break she made a special point of saying 'cheerio!' to me. I was totally unprepared for the fuss her absence caused in the afternoon.

Cath: (supervisor)
Where's Mary? Has anyone seen Mary?

It was only when Cath phoned her mother that anyone realised that Mary was not coming back. I was the only person in the workshop who had known about it.

Louise, Jen, Ruby and Pat became my special friends. They were quiet and unconfident. The girls who did not make it in anyone's terms, least of all their own. And somewhat uncharacteristically
(for participant observers) I was closest to and came to understand best, girls whose culture, lives and expectations remained (usually) most hidden. And it was from this vantage point that I came to understand the culture of the ringleaders and the workshop in general. I did not regret it. Unorthodox it may have been, but I relaxed about it when it quickly became apparent that the outgroup had no less a finger on the pulse of the workings of S/F than the ingroup. The ringleaders were visible enough and I had every opportunity to observe their behaviour. Without my close association with the outgroup, however, the finer points of their lives would surely, and as usual, have been missed.

I had high expectations of what I wanted from the workshop the second time around, surer of what I wanted to create and more confident that I would not reproduce earlier mistakes.

Initially I had been nervous about attaching myself to one room. I was anxious about being identified with any particular group and that that would limit my access to general information. At that time I did not have a machine of my own, rather I spent my time wandering between workshops, helping out in small ways - sweeping up, pressing garments, sewing ribs.

I had an inkling at that time that conversations between girls were mainly about boys and boyfriends (teenage girls are supposed to be preoccupied by that sort of thing and also I had at one time spent a great deal of time doing it myself). Initially I saw no evidence of it. Little conversation was directed at me personally. What I overheard was mainly about clothes and records.

Fairly quickly I established that my strategy was not ideal. Defining myself as someone with this kind of freedom (to move between
workshops, not being tied to a machine) set me apart from girls and opened the door to future resentment. It was an obstacle to getting to know any of them really well. I simply did not stay in one workshop long enough to build up close relationships. In effect, I took the easy way out. When girls wanted to have private conversations they merely had to wait until I disappeared. And rather than push relationships, I made it easy for girls to exclude me. Friendships remained on a fairly superficial level.

This time I attached myself to one room and by doing so to one particular group of girls. I was allocated a knitting machine and learned to use it in much the same way as any other trainee.

In knitwear girls were not allocated to rooms randomly. Cath was the head supervisor and had a reputation for being strict. She kept the most unruly girls with her to keep an eye on them.

Girls nearing the end of their time in the workshop were in Sue's room. They knitted mostly Fair Isle.

In Margaret's room were girls who were quieter, girls who were unsuccessful in their own eyes and in the eyes of their peers. And it was no accident that I was allocated to this room and that it was with these girls I became firm friends.

In Margaret's room I learned to thread the machine and I struggled with my first scarf. When the going got tough, Louise the trainee who sat at the next machine, came to help. She would push me aside, shake her head at my stupidity and pick up my dropped stitches. She pulled back the rows I had knitted in the wrong colour, picked up my work from the floor when I had swept every stitch off the machine.

This probably represented the only power Louise had in the world.
She liked her role in relation to me and we became close.

Jen started in the workshop a week later than me. Her machine was on my other side. And while she cursed and swore and swept her knitting onto the floor, I would patiently hang her stitches onto the machine. Louise, Jen and I were all friends.

Ruby detested knitting. She was rough, tough and had had a hard life. She never managed to knit anything passable. She had an amazing sense of humour and kept us amused for hours. All four of us spent a lot of time together.

And from this basis the conversations about boys which I initially only guessed were happening around me, gradually crept up on me. At first I merely heard snatches as I passed by girls talking on the balcony or in the toilet. Suddenly, almost overnight, I had enough information about girls to know what they were talking about and to participate.

From then on I never talked about anything else. We pooled together bits and pieces of information about boys, discussed who was 'fanciable' and who was not and what to do about it. And once again I participated as someone who was young, naive, neither knowledgeable about nor into boys.

**Girls' Supervisors**

Before talking about girls, I want to talk about their supervisors.

**Cath:** The most we can do for them in S/F is to be able to write a reference at the end that says - she attended, she was punctual, she worked hard - and it is, actually, a lot.
I have already discussed how attitudes like these worked themselves out in relation to supervisors and boys in the paintshop. This attitude had different implications in the context of girls.

Boys' supervisors were working-class and tradesmen, hired on the basis of trade skills. They passed on these skills to boys in a way boys strongly identified with.

Girls' supervisors too were hired on the basis of practical skills. Cath had spent most of her adult life as a single parent, struggling to support herself by knitting on a small knitting machine at home. Like Tam, she had trade contacts of her own and supplied local craft shops with jumpers. Like Tam, many of these contacts were friends. These skills and contacts she brought with her to S/F. The stripy and Fair Isle patterns she had originally used (and that were so popular with the middle-classes and tourists in town) were the basis of what was now knitted in the workshop. Her old contacts (craft fairs, stalls, local shops) were outlets for what was knitted.

Margaret too had spent most of her married life at home. Part of her working life had been spent as a demonstrator and sales representative for a firm who sold knitting machines.

Sue had a college background and was also a skilled knitter who had a machine at home.

The similarity with boys' workshops was more apparent than real, though, and the way in which supervisors and girls related was fundamentally different.

Cath

Though all three supervisors had different ideas about girls and how the workshop should be organised, Cath was the senior supervisor
and through her discipline, discipline in the workshop generally was mediated.

Although most of my time was spent in Margaret's room, Cath was the supervisor I felt personally closest to and most identified with. Her lifestyle outside the workshop most resembled mine. Indeed, although I did not know her before I came to S/F, we did have friends in common. Like Joe, Cath was fairly sceptical of TOP and like him she lived a lot of contradictions. She coped with them in a different way from Joe.

Cath's roots were working-class. She understood, and empathised with, girls and genuinely cared about trainees. She was often the first to draw my attention to things about the circumstances of trainees' lives that would interest me. Caring, though, in the context of MSC schemes took on (and had to take on) specific forms. This is best illustrated by example.

Cath first drew my attention to Tina and pointed out to me that Tina was not altogether what she seemed. On the surface Tina seemed like the trainee with the least problems. She was always immaculately dressed and had boundless energy. In the workshop she was loud, noisy and funny. People either loved Tina or hated her. She was fairly productive in terms of knitting, but most of her time was taken up talking, annoying people or thinking about ways to annoy people. She seemed not to have a care in the world. Nothing could have been further from the truth. And over time I gathered enough information to determine that Tina's life had not been easy.

Tina had six siblings and she was the oldest. Her father was a drunk and had made life at home intolerable. He was violent and had deprived the family of money. Eventually Tina's mother had
thrown him out. His influence over their lives had not stopped there and over the past few years he frequently returned to the house to beat up the family and ransack the house.

To support the family, Tina’s mum had three jobs – she cleaned the local school from six until eight in the morning, worked in a shop during the daytime and had another cleaning job at night. Tina loved her mum and at home she took a lot of responsibility for the younger children.

Cath knew this and first drew my attention to it. And unlike other supervisors who disliked Tina, Cath was tolerant. Tina’s mum was in fact, and not surprisingly, ill. Her stomach was incredibly swollen and she had a lot of lumps. ‘She could not eat. She was nervous about going to a doctor and anxious that if she had to go to hospital, this would be catastrophic for the family. She was afraid of losing her jobs and afraid that her husband would take advantage of her absence to return home.

Tina had spent a lot of time talking to Cath about it. She suggested that Tina put a lot of energy into persuading her mother to see a doctor. Tina succeeded and took a morning off work to accompany her. And although no one doubted the validity of Tina’s excuse for being late, it resulted in a long discussion among supervisors about whether or not she should have her wages docked. She did in fact lose a morning’s wages. Cath justified it like this:

Cath: I know Tina had a good excuse but if you start letting one of them off with excuses like this you’d have to let them all off. It would be chaos.

The incident did nothing to endear supervisors to Tina.
Behind Cath's caring attitude lay the ideology of the workshop. For their own good, for the good of their employability, it was necessary to be strict. In the context of S/F a genuine concern for trainees and their welfare took on an element that was strongly coercive. Ideas about YOP and YTS built into Cath a strong conviction that to be kind, to make them employable, first of all you have to be cruel. And, in many ways, Cath was the strictest of all the supervisors. And she illustrated this very directly in relation to Tina.

Cath: When I first came here I used to get really upset when girls came in and told me they were late because they'd been up all night cause their mother's had been getting beaten up or something. I used to get upset for their mothers and be really soft. Now I'm really hard. I put trainees first and tell them to put themselves and their jobs first. No employer would take that as an excuse and we can't do it here. If you were late for work all the time because your father beat up your mother, you'd get your books, no question. So I make them come in here, no matter what's happening at home. They're better off here anyway.

In their own interests, in the interests of keeping them off the streets, for their own protection and future job prospects, Cath created a regime that was strict and authoritarian. Girls were never allowed home early, and they never had long breaks. Limits of behaviour were narrowly defined and trainees were suspended and docked for very little.

Joyce had been noisy and had been playing up all day. A box of pins had been dropped on the floor and Cath had told her to pick
Joyce ignored Cath and a shouting match ensued.

Joyce: Ah didnae drop them an' ah'm no' pickin' them up.

Cath ended the argument by asserting that unless she picked them up she'd be suspended.

Joyce: This is too much. Ye're gaunnae suspend me fur no' pickin' up a box o' pins. Some fuckin' place this, s'like a fuckin' prison.

Joyce eventually picked up the pins but got herself suspended later in the day for refusing to clean out the bucket in the toilet.

Joyce: Ye're askin' me tae clean oot the bucket in the toilet. Ah no' daein' that, it's crawlin' wi' maggots. You widnae clean it oot either.

Margaret

Margaret was the newest of the supervisors. She had started the job only a month or so before I came to the workshop.

My own role in relation to Margaret was somewhat difficult. Though I disagreed with her, I respected her kindness in relation to trainees and her willingness to help in relation to me. She spent a lot of time teaching me to knit, to use the machine. She corrected my mistakes, suggested patterns and colours for the things I did knit and gave me every freedom to do what I wanted in her workshop. I was extremely grateful.

At fifty, Margaret had spent a lot of her married life bringing up one child. Her husband had never wanted her to work. Only when he died did she take on a full-time job. Margaret had led a sheltered life and found girls in the workshop something of a shock.
Margaret: I had no idea girls like this existed before I came here, some of them have had terrible lives. It took me a long time to get used to it.

When her husband died, Margaret resented that she had to go out to work and she firmly believed that the place for married women was in the home.

Margaret: I blame unemployment on the women. I spent all my married life at home and that's where all women should be. Cath doesn't agree with that right enough.

Margaret admired Mrs Thatcher and her policies.

Margaret: She's bringing the working-class into line and that can only be a good thing.

The background that Margaret brought to the workshop meant that she was genuinely shocked by girls, at their behaviour and at what she knew about their lives.

The myth about youth employment - that it is the young people themselves who are the problem - is widespread. And Margaret was the representative of this view par excellence. Far from seeing trainees like ordinary teenagers who are jobless, girls took on the character something like pupils at a List D school. For Margaret, the reason for young people being in S/F was because they were deficient and delinquent. Ironically, in spite of and partly because of these views, Margaret felt sympathy and sorry for trainees. Subsequently she created in her workshop a regime that was a lot less strict than Cath's. Margaret was soft and with a few notable exceptions the quietest and least disruptive of the trainees (including me) were in her room. And somewhat surprisingly, in their
own way, trainees protected her from the worst aspects of their lives.

Margaret operated a swear box, on a sliding scale according to the seriousness of the word used. And indeed, most of the money collected had been collected for minor violations. Margaret was so genuinely upset and hurt by trainees swearing that they rarely used the worst words in her presence. Margaret often talked about them as though they were naughty children. She would have been horrified to discover how sexually experienced many of them were and at the adult responsibilities many of them had.

Ruby was one of the toughest trainees. She had been involved with a boy who had been charged with serious assault and Ruby had been (so she said) with the boy when the incident had happened. She took one day off to appear in court. She told me about it later.

Ruby: God it wiz that embarrassin'. Ye'll never believe it. Ah've never been sae embarrassed in ma whole life. Ma 'ax' wiz supposed tae huv' beaten this guy up, right. An' ah'm supposed tae go along an' say that he couldnae huv' done it cause he wiz wi' me, right. An' this guy asks me whit we wir' dain'? - ah mean, ah jist look at the guy — ah wiz that embarrassed, ah couldnae believe he's asked me — CHRIST — whit did he think we wir' dain'? Playin' cairds?

Margaret seemed blissfully ignorant of the heavier aspects of Ruby's life.

Margaret:
Ruby's got an' awffy tongue in her head. Underneath though she's as good as gold.

Trainees related to her as some kind of soft mark aunt. They pushed her, wound her up, but they did have their limits. And they did
appreciate her care.

Margaret sucked sweets throughout the day and she always handed them round to girls. If someone did not have lunch (usually this meant that they had spent their money on cigarettes), Margaret would give them money and send them to the shop to buy some. If someone had a sore throat, she would send them to the shop for lozenges. Margaret related to them as though they were deprived and needy. She reacted to it by mothering them. Outside the workshop she worried about them all the time.

I will use this incident to illustrate one implication of Margaret's concern, mediated through the wider discipline of Cath. The background to this story is again Ruby. This time it is a concern about her attendance and her punctuality.

It was the particular week when Ruby had already had time off to appear in court. Throughout the week, she had complained of toothache and had already taken a morning off because of it. Like many working-class people with a history of bad dentistry, the experience of going to a dentist is a rare event taking place only infrequently and then only usually with the onset of toothache and a tooth which has to be removed. Ruby was terrified. She was prepared to suffer the pain of toothache rather than go to a dentist.

This attitude evoked no sympathy from supervisors. They penalised her heavily and would not accept toothache as an excuse for being off work.

Margaret had had regular and good dental treatment all her life. At fifty one, she had not yet lost a tooth. She was thoroughly bewildered at Ruby's attitude. Cath felt the same.
Cath: I've got no sympathy. I just don't understand how someone can be in that much pain and not go to a dentist.

The saga of Ruby's tooth dragged on for days, Ruby taking more and more time off work because of it. When she was in, she was in no state to work and nothing anyone could say would induce her to go to the dentist.

After a few more days of this, Ruby came in one day and announced that she had been up all night with toothache and that she would go to the dentist. Too scared to go on her own and with no one at home interested in taking her, she had brought the problem to the workshop.

Having procrastinated so much, however, the question of whether or not Ruby should be allowed to go was now at issue.

Cath: In a real job, you have to go to the dentist in your own time. I'll let her make an appointment, but she'll have to go in her lunch break.

This decision was taken purely on the basis of a principle. Even through the agony of toothache, trainees (for their own good) were taught work discipline. Ruby meanwhile spent the morning sitting by the heater, a woollen glove pressed to her face. She did no work that morning. An irrational outcome of the conflict between care and coercion that operated in the workshop became even more irrational.

Margaret gave up her lunch break to take Ruby to the dental hospital. They were both gone for a couple of hours. When Ruby came back she was deathly pale, dazed and in a state of shock. The event had obviously been physically and psychologically traumatic. Again a decision was made not to send her home.
Familiar murmurings went up among trainees.

Jen: They widnae let ye' go hame in this place even if ye' were deed.

Supervisors' justifications were different.

Cath: There'd be nobody at home. She's better off here.

Margaret made up a bed for her of fur fabric and woollen blankets beside the heater. Ruby slept for hours. I was worried about her. Ruby was tiny (she weighed six stones) and I knew she had eaten no food since six in the evening the night before. A 'normal' dose of anaesthetic in conjunction with her terror of dentists had been too much.

By mid-afternoon, however, Ruby was sitting up. She still looked dazed and pale. Kindly, Margaret sent Ruby along to the canteen for hot milk. I happened to be walking along the balcony as Ruby was walking back with the milk. She staggered and lunged towards me. Just as I reached her and took the milk, she fainted. I dragged her back to the workshop and she lay down. Once again she was out cold. Jan (the staff officer) eventually came and drove her home. This time Ruby's wages were not docked. Though not dead, she was seen to have a legitimate excuse.

Sue

Sue had been hired on the basis of a qualification from textile design college in the hope of injecting creativity (in the form of new designs for jumpers and new patterns) into what girls produced. At twenty four she was younger than I was, though (in a traditional
sense) and in the eyes of the trainees, she was more accomplished. She was tall, blonde and slim. She owned a house in the suburbs, a car and a husband.

Like Margaret, the workshop had been a rude awakening for Sue. Unlike Margaret, I think Sue felt ambiguously about most of the girls and had little understanding of their lives. The overriding factor for her was that they hated knitting, worked little and 'skived'. She saw them as lazy, that they did little to help themselves. To her, S/F was offering girls a good opportunity and most of them were throwing it away.

Trainees felt ambiguously about her. Of all the supervisors, Sue had the most antagonistic relationship with them. There were continual references to the hard time Sue had to begin with, when she saw her main task as designing and she had not been able to handle girls and their attitudes to work. Now she followed a different strategy. She was tough. Girls both envied and hated her. The situation was most pronounced in relation to Tina. As we have seen, Tina had had a hard life and she took on a lot of family responsibilities - looking after kids, putting money into the house, being protective of her mother.

In her own way, Tina had ambitions for herself. She wanted to get out of her situation and she did not want to end up in the same mess as her mother. In this she was singleminded. Like her mother, Tina worked herself into the ground. She too had three paid jobs. The 'job' in the workshop and two cleaning jobs. She gave a large chunk of her wages to her mum and the rest went on her appearance. She contrived to spend as little as possible on food, rarely eating lunch and being very nervous if she had to buy anything else.
Unlike the rest of the girls, Tina had no interest in boys. She intuitively grasped that a boyfriend would hinder her plans for her life rather than help them on their way. Tina’s driving ambition was money and more than anything in the world Tina wanted a full-time job.

Sue only saw one side of Tina. To her, Tina was superficial and on the make, interested only in money and clothes. Tina seemed loud-mouthed and aggressive; her personal ambition, her drive to ‘get on’ were distasteful to her.

Sue: Tina’s so mercenary. She never thinks of anything but money. She makes me sick sometimes. I came in here the other day and she was actually sitting counting her money. I wouldn’t be surprised if she was taking home forty pounds a week now.

Tina rose every morning at eight fifteen to get herself ready to come to the workshop. In the evening she cleaned offices from five until eight. For a sixty hour week, Tina’s take home pay would be less than forty pounds a week.

I think though the main impact Sue had on trainees was neither intended nor deliberate. When Sue chatted to trainees, she talked about her own life, about her husband, her possessions. And unlike Cath or Margaret, trainees envied her. What she had was beyond their wildest dreams. Sue’s very presence in the workshop, her appearance, her confident manner stood in sharp contrast to their own lives. It did little to build up their confidence.

For example, Sue was young and newly married. She had recently moved into a new house and bit by bit was acquiring things for it. She often went shopping in her lunch break. On her return, trainees invariably asked her what she had in the bag. Often it was some very
expensive item of furnishing or clothing from some very expensive store.

Sue: We’re having some people over at the weekend for dinner. I bought this dress to wear.

Sue: I thought this would look good in our sitting room.

The world of home ownership, dinner parties and even sitting rooms was beyond trainees. They were fascinated by Sue’s stories about her life, but they would comment about it when she was not there.

Louise: Wha’ diz she hink she is – the queen mother or some’at?

Part of the fascination of Sue came from the fact that she was newly married. She talked a lot about John, her husband, about their friends, about the things they did together, their holidays skiing and so on. Still caught up in the newness of it herself, she enjoyed talking about it to trainees.

One day they persuaded her to bring in her wedding photographs. The wedding had taken place in a Cathedral in the town. It was a grand, polished, tasteful and extremely middle-class affair. Sue’s parents had flown over from Canada to be there. Everything was perfect. The weather was bright and sunny. Sue looked like a princess. Trainees were impressed. To them it was something that happened in Hollywood.

Next day Jen brought in her most important photographs – her sister’s twenty first birthday party.

Jen: Ma ma wanted tae gie her a big pairty. She didnae get a right weddin’ ’cause she’d a’ready hud the wean.
Jen produced a more lively, if less polished set of photographs. Kodak snaps, shaky and blurred, of drunk men with pint mugs and their arms round women. Couples danced in the background in a hall that was dingy and dark. Jen was unabashed and passed around her photographs as eagerly as had Sue. The contrast was poignant.

In all, the effect of Sue's presence and behaviour on trainees was to undermine them and make them feel bad about their own lives.

Linda: Huv' you ever thought aboot suicide Sue?

Sue: Look, get on with your work, I don't want to hear this nonsense.

Linda: Ah huv', a' the time. Ah hate ma life. Ah wish ah wiz deed. Ah wish ye' could start again. Dae you ever wish ye' were deed Sue?

Sue: No, I'm quite content with my life really. Well I'm not quite. I will be when John and I move into our new house, it's a really fantastic house.

To Conclude

All three supervisors then were very different. Together, though, they seemed more involved in and concerned about the personal aspects of trainees' lives and their welfare than were boys' supervisors. However, structured by the aims of the workshop generally and by ideas contained in YOP about improving trainees' employability meant that what was set up here was less the impersonal relationship between an employer and employee (this more characterises boys' workshops) than a social work model. Supervisors related to trainees as having problems, the role they took on was a counselling one. Indeed, and for their own good, 'care' in this context took on a flavour which was authoritarian and strict.
CHAPTER 6
The Nature of Work and Girls' Disruption

General Atmosphere

Generally in the workshop, girls' behaviour was held in low regard.

Joe: Tha' lassies are really outrageous, ah'm no' kiddin' ye'. Ye' walk in there an' they're cursin' an' swearin' at supervisors. Ah've heard folk swear, but ah'm tellin' ye', ah never ken't women could swear like that till ah came here. Some o' them are really uncouth. Ah'm shocked, ah'm tellin' ye'.

Robbie: Tha' lassies are that aggressive it's no' funny.

Neil: Ken whit tha' lassies are up tae noo? They've spent the whole day leanin' owr the balcony spittin' oan boys.

Inside the workshop, the atmosphere was confrontational. In contrast to the paintshop where boys seemed mature and productive, girls were noisy. They were locked into continual battles with supervisors - regardless of who was there. Far from giving the impression of a real workplace, knitwear most resembled a sewing class at school.

Louise: Dae ye' no' think this place is jist like school? Ah dae! They're oan yer' backs the whole time.

Ally: Ah hate this place, it's jist like school. It's too strict. An' everybody, ma uncle, ma ma, everybody gits mad when ah tell them whit ye've tae dae an' whit ye've tae pit up wi' fur yer' twenty three pounds. An' they pay yer' wages intae the bank ye' ken, it's a real hassle.
Jen: Ah'm bored stiff here. Ah used tae 'hink it wiz snobs came here - bit ah hate it.

Of all the trainees in the workshop, girls were seen to be by far the most unruly. Given that Cath operated a discipline structure that was almost as tight as Tam's, what we have to unravel now are the structural and gender factors which account for the differences between boys and girls.

Training was more formal here than in any other workshop. Everyone learned to knit on the machine, machine sew seams, hand sew ribs, finish and press. They knitted first simple garments and proceeded to more complicated ones. Garments were characteristically stripy or Fair Isle. Four of each type of garment had to be completed before trainees were allowed to move on to the next. They knitted first scarves, then hats, socks, jumpers, all in stripes. Then they learned to punch cards for the machine which enabled them to knit Fair Isle.

Garments were sold ultimately as seconds in local shops or at local craft fairs.

Areas of Struggle

I introduce the discussion of girls' disruption at this early stage for good reason. Unlike for boys, it is difficult to discuss the nature of work in knitwear without discussing it in relation to the continual battle over work which raged between supervisors and girls. Boys' disruption was, for the most part, separated off and sporadic. Girls' disruption was an integral part of most of their day.
At the level of the workshop itself, there were many mechanisms and techniques available to supervisors attempting to win the consent of girls. These succeeded or failed to a greater or lesser extent.

**Keep your own garment**

Trainees were allowed to buy the first of every new garment they knitted for the price of the wool (they were allowed to keep for themselves the first scarf, the first hat, the first jumper, they knitted). As an added incentive, on this garment, they were allowed to put together the choice of colours and patterns they wanted.

In many ways allowing trainees to keep the first of everything they knitted was no loss. No matter how hard trainees tried, first garments were rarely perfect. And indeed, trainees often did put a lot into learning how to knit a new garment when they knew it was for themselves. It meant that other garments were of better quality than they might otherwise have been. Without this incentive, trainees might never have learned to knit anything well.

For example, when Ally came to knit her first Fair Isle (she had already been in the workshop for five months) she was an avid Siouxie fan. She persuaded Cath to allow her to knit a Siouxie jumper. Ally brought in one of her album covers and Cath spent a long time transferring the pattern onto graph paper and helping Ally to punch the pattern onto the card for the machine.

Ally eventually knitted a very impressive jumper in black, with Siouxie in profile in black and white. Ally was proud of her jumper. She had put a lot into learning to knit it and was a better knitter because of it.
With other girls the tactic was much less successful and trainees used their first garment to make life easy for themselves - rather than put together the colours and patterns they wanted, they would put together patterns and colours that were easiest. Yvonne knitted her first jersey for her father. It was plain black.

**Machines as isolation**

Where the nature of boys' work often involved them being active and working on their own, this rarely happened with girls. Girls were always in the one room, knitting or finishing off, supervisors were always present. This represented a very basic area of struggle. Supervisors struggled as much as possible to keep girls at their machines, girls tried to find ways to make space for themselves away from them. Machines were noisy and solitary, they preferred to get together in collective fun. They attempted to minimise the amount of time spent on machines, to maximise the amount of time they spent 'finishing off'. They much preferred pressing and sewing up. Sewing machines were in limited supply, their use inevitably meant a wait, a chance to hang about talking to pals. Handsewing also provided an opportunity to wander around, looking for pins, scissors and most of all the chance to sit around the heater in groups, chatting. (There was seldom less than five or six girls at the heater at any one time.) Girls aimed to get off machines as quickly as possible and to spend as much time as possible finishing off. Supervisors tried to keep them at their machines. Invariably though girls spent more time off the machines than on them. They used many strategies to find space away from formal work. They deliberately fouled the machines and bent the combs. This jammed the machine and
it took time to replace it. (19)

What to knit

There was a gap between what supervisors wanted girls to knit and what girls themselves wanted to do. Supervisors pushed girls to knit complicated garments, Fair Isle jerseys with patterns that seldom repeated and with as many colours as possible. Girls aimed to knit nothing at all.

Margaret: Ruby, you've done one hat and a scarf since last week. It's really outrageous. Yvonne's nearly finished four jerseys.

Ruby: Ah huv' nut. Ah've did much mair than that. Ah jist forgot tae pit it oan ma sheet.

Margaret: That's a lie. Where are they? Show me!

Girls and supervisors continually battled over what was to be knitted, what colours were to be used and how long it was to take them.

Margaret: Jen, we need jerseys.

Jen: Ah fuckin' knitted a jersey yesterday - ah'm knittin' a scarf!

Margaret: Jen, we need jerseys.

Jen: Well, ah'm no' fuckin' daein' it - ask wan o' them through there.

Margaret: I'm not telling you again, start a jersey.

Jen: Well if ah knit a jumper, ah'm knittin' it plain.

Left to themselves, trainees would always choose scarves. This involved knitting a long straight piece, with no increasing or
decreasing and without rib. It could be knitted very quickly, especially if, into the bargain, trainees managed to negotiate a pattern with broad stripes and few changes of wool. It meant a lot of hand finishing, a long time at a sewing machine and a long wait beforehand until one became free. Scarves had thirty or so tassels, each one had to be done by hand. In this way, by insisting on scarves as opposed to jumpers, girls negotiated social time for themselves (at the heater) away from the individualising nature of formal work.

For boys, formal work had been their main motivation. Girls spent most of their time trying to organise their way out of formal work.

Margaret: They're not interested in learning to knit. Quite frankly, they just don't care.

Supervisors complained continually about the quality of girls' knitting. Girls were not in the business of producing perfectly knitted, perfectly put together garments. Their skills lay somewhere different; in negotiating themselves into positions where they were allowed to knit simple garments in the simplest patterns, to machine knit them as quickly as possible, then to find ways to spend as long as possible off the machine sitting round chatting to friends.

On the machine, garments were knitted anyhow. Backs were knitted with different tensions from fronts. Backs were longer than fronts, then eased to fit at the sewing up stage. Sleeves were too long, necks too loose or too tight. Stitches were dropped, at best, badly picked up, garments were full of holes. Seams were rarely
straight, stripes seldom matched.

Girls knitted as quickly and with as little care as they could get away with. They hated ripping work back and correcting mistakes. Often they would hide a piece of work and start again rather than rip something back.

Cath: This is really terrible, Louise. You can do much better than this. Take it back and do it again.

Louise: Ah've ta'en it back three times. Ah'm no' daein' it again.

Cath: Yes you are, come on Louise, back to the machine.

Louise: Nut!

Cath: Come on, I'll start it off for you.

Scenes like this left trainees sulking and unproductive for days. They would sit staring at the same piece of work for ages rather than re-do it.

Colours and stripes

Battlelives were drawn around the combinations of colours girls put together in garments. For example, when Joyce knitted her first scarf for herself she was not interested in producing a scarf that she liked, she wanted an easy life. She chose two colours (red and white) and wanted to knit broad evenly spaced stripes. Broad stripes and two colours of wool meant fewer changes of wool. Cath objected.

Cath: You don't really want a red and white scarf, do you Joyce?

Joyce: Ah dae, honest ah dae. M'brother supports Hearts. It's better than any other gobbin' scarf.

Cath: Look Joyce, the point of knitting a scarf is so you learn to hand feed the wool, you won't learn anything like that.
This time Joyce won. Cath backed down.

S/F's scarves typically contained six or seven different colours. For example, two rows of one colour would be followed by six rows of another, four rows, two rows, six rows and so on. And apart from their first scarf, it was only within narrow limits that trainees were allowed any choice. There were continual battles over what was acceptable. Predictably, trainees pushed for the minimum number of stripes and a minimum number of colours. They wanted to use bright colours, where supervisors wanted subtle ones.

Margaret: You need more colours in here. How about adding green.

Jen: Ah hate green. There's enough colours. Ah like it the way it is.

Margaret: Come on Jen, you know fine you need at least four colours.

The transistor

The radio was another area of contestation. Music was of central interest to trainees. It was one factor around which they organised their lives and culture. In the workshop it was an important talking point and the transistor was important in alleviating the monotony of work. I found myself pulled into this as well. Days on which the transistor was banned were particularly long and boring. This provided supervisors with a mechanism of control. Girls continually struggled to play the transistor increasingly loudly. Supervisors aimed to keep it turned down. Throughout the day, the volume crept ever louder. When a 'good record' came on, someone would turn up the transistor. No one turned it down again. Eventually a supervisor would complain.
Sue: Turn that thing down, it's driving me nuts.

It would be turned down. Gradually, the volume would become louder again.

Sue: If that thing gets louder again, it's going off for the day.

Eventually it would be banned. Trainees would sulk until it was switched on again.

Sometimes the transistor was used in a way that was punitive. For example, if girls had been particularly badly behaved, supervisors had lost the head with them, often there was a parting shot.

Cath: And get that transistor off.

Smoking

Smoking was completely banned in the workshop. And girls spent an enormous amount of energy finding space to smoke. They rarely smoked on their own. Indeed, there were frequently two or three girls huddled in a corner, on the balcony, in the toilet, passing one cigarette between them until it was finished. I spent a lot of time in the toilet, chatting and passing round a cigarette. We would stay until our absence was noted and someone came to fetch us.

Sore heads and bad periods

Sometimes resistance took on a form that was specifically feminine. Headaches, sore stomachs, bad periods were used continually by girls to win time and space for themselves and away from the machines.
Sue: I've handed out ten aspirin in one morning; it's a piece of nonsense.

In this context, aspirin took on symbolic meaning. Undoubtedly, girls did get sore heads, but in the atmosphere of the workshop where girls were attempting to get away with as much as possible and supervisors were trying to stop them, everyone was suspect and everyone paid the price. Aspirin were forever after sold to trainees at ten pence each.

When trainees complained of bad periods, supervisors, who in any other context would have been sympathetic, were, in this case, disbelieving and suspicious.

Cath: (to me)
I never know whether to believe them or not. I certain remember how bad I felt when my period first started.

For trainees, the rewards for being believed were high. It was the ultimate skive. They would either be sent home, or spend the rest of the day sitting at the heater doing nothing, on the odd occasion even being given a cup of tea. Trainees went to and had to go to incredible lengths to prove they were ill. Most were expert. They would spend time in the toilet, pressing in on their stomachs and holding their breaths, returning to the workshop white looking and ill. Someone complained of feeling ill at least once a day.

Linda had looked pale and ill all day. She claimed she had thrown up twice. Cath did not believe her and would not let her go home.

Sue: I think Cath was wrong this time. I followed Linda into the toilet at break. I saw her throw up. She didn't have time to put her fingers down her throat or anything.
Like toilet breaks in factories, girls' illnesses took on enormous symbolic significance. When boys skived, it was covert and took the form of carrying on—horse play, bantering, fighting behind the backs of supervisors. Because the relationship between girls and supervisors was confrontational, skiving was not hidden, it was blatant and infused every part of their behaviour.

Wool cutting
Sometimes there were hints of more collective forms of resistance. This particular incident happened when I was with joiners. A rumour raged around the workshop that all of the girls had been 'sent home' (suspended). Everyone was curious to find out what had happened. Eighty pounds of wool had been cut through and ruined. People were appalled. It confirmed everyone’s worst fear about girls.

**Joe:** Pure vandalism, it’s the worst thing.

The most damning aspect as far as supervisors were concerned was that no one individual girls was responsible. Most of the girls had been involved in one way or another and it was impossible to pin the blame on any one person. Certainly all of the girls knew what had happened and no one was prepared to give anyone else away.

Sue's bag
I witnessed another incident at closer range. It had been a hard day in the workshop. Trainees had been unruly and uncontainable all day. Supervisors were hassled and at the end of their tether. One confrontation had followed another and Tina was
central to most of it. She had been suspended the previous day and had returned to work that morning in a foul temper. She was at her noisiest and least co-operative and had been in trouble all day. The last straw happened in the afternoon when everyone was at their most fraught.

Sue came back in the afternoon to discover that someone had cut halfway through the straps of her handbag. All the trainees had known that the bag was an expensive one and a present from her husband. The attack seemed a particularly personal and spiteful one. Supervisors were outraged and determined to get to the bottom of it. The situation looked bad for Tina. It was Sue who had suspended Tina the previous day and Tina had behaved with venom towards Sue all morning.

The investigation preoccupied everyone for the rest of the day. First of all Cath collected everyone together in one room. She talked to trainees about the seriousness of the incident and about the importance of finding the culprit. She asked if anyone knew anything about it. A long silence followed and no one said anything. Cath's last words at that stage were, that if no one owned up, everyone would be suspended for three days. For trainees, to lose three days' wages was catastrophic.

Her next tactic was to call every girl into the office individually and question her about what had happened. Excitement and resentment ran high. Girls talked and schemed furiously. Despite individual interviews, Cath still found out nothing. She was becoming more and more angry and determined to get to the bottom of it. She called everyone together once more. Again no one spoke. She told girls that she would leave the room for ten minutes, trainees
were to discuss among themselves and decide what to do. If no one owned up after that everyone would be suspended.

Trainees deliberated long and hard, putting every ounce of energy into finding some way round the suspension. When Cath got back they told her they had come to a decision. Netta was the spokesperson. She told Cath that four people knew what had happened. That no one else had any idea. It was suggested to Cath that all four of them be suspended. They were desperately trying to avoid a situation where either one of them were sacked, or all of them were suspended. Cath, determined to get to the bottom of the event, refused to accept this as a solution. Trainees were desperate. A long, glum, silence followed and suddenly Pat burst into tears.

Pat: It's no' fair. We're gaunnae get sent hame. Ah ken who did it an' ah ken it wiz an' accident.

At this point Tina too burst into tears. She admitted that it had been her. She was really distraught. She explained that she had been sitting cutting up paper in a temper and Sue's bag was underneath. She said she had been too terrified to admit to it at the time because she was in enough trouble and she knew that no one would believe her.

Trainees were broken and subdued. Cath had gotten to the bottom of it and had backed down immediately. She said that she recognised and accepted that it had been an accident and no one would be punished.
Yvonne

There are other forms girls' resistance took, more hidden and more individualistic.

Yvonne looked younger than any of the other trainees. She wore no make-up and she always looked neat and clean. She wore brown or beige cords and brown jerseys. Yvonne smiled a lot and was unobtrusive. She was painfully shy. Indeed in all the time I was in the workshop, Yvonne never uttered one word. If she was asked a direct question, she answered 'yes' or 'no'. If the question required more than that, she would remain silent, look aside and blush.

Supervisors put a lot of effort into making her speak.

Margaret: Yvonne, go and ask Cath what you're to knit next.

Yvonne smiled but did not move. Margaret was exasperated but did not force the issue.

Margaret: You'll have to speak you know. How do you think you'll ever get a job if you won't speak at the interview?

Yvonne's behaviour had implications for her in relation to work. Indeed, viewed as a tactic for gaining space and autonomy in the workshop, Yvonne's tactic was more successful than anybody's.

Silently, Yvonne asserted her right to knit only what she wanted to knit. Because of her 'disorder', no one pushed her to do otherwise. Of all the girls, Yvonne never used patterns. She put together her own combinations of colours and stripes and they were distinctly her own. They were nice to look at but very definitely not in the style of the workshop. After a time they became
acceptable, indeed, often copied and ultimately became known as
'Yvonne's colours'.

Initially, when Yvonne was told to knit something she did not
want to knit, she would knit the garment but knit it anyhow. It
would be full of holes, the tension would be wrong and so on. If
left to her own devices (which before long she was) and allowed to
knit what she wanted, the garment would be perfect. She knitted what
she wanted, when she wanted to.

For example, one day she had knitted six pairs of socks, all
similar. And rather than knit one pair and finish them before going
on to the next garment, as the other trainees were obliged to do, she
would knit them all one day and finish them the next. Then she would
have a spell of knitting only jumpers. She would knit five or six in
a week. Some weeks she would knit very little.

In this way she quietly built up more autonomy from the boredom
and rigours of formal work than any of the other trainees. The
experience of the workshop for her was creative.

Her tactic though was double-edged. And, as often happens when
women rebel against the structures of their lives, it is in the end
often at enormous expense. Yvonne was seen as abnormal.

Jan the training officer mentioned Yvonne to me before I even
started in the workshop.

Jan: We have one girl here who's
obviously very disturbed.

Supervisors too, often mentioned her.
Margaret: She's obviously got a huge psychological disorder.

Cath: Yvonne shouldn't really be here, she should be somewhere where they can help her.

Unlike painters, girls then were held in low regard generally. And unlike painters too, inside their workshop they were confrontational. They struggled with supervisors over every aspect of work in an attempt to make space for themselves away from the formal aspects of work.

In the next section I give an account of and try to explain girls' attitudes to work, their disruption, their complete rejection of the work that is offered.

Girls and Glamour

I tried to understand boys in terms of their desire for adult status through manual work. If we are to understand the behaviour of girls and what the workshop meant to them, we have to understand their different preoccupations. A critical concept in understanding girls and their ideas about themselves and work can best be appreciated in terms of 'glamour'.

When boys thought of jobs they thought of overalls, tools, 'hooters', pieces and manual work. When girls thought of jobs they thought of 'glamour'.

One article which prompted my thinking in this direction was 'Girls, Jobs and Glamour' by Norma Sherratt (1983). Her study was based on interviews with 16 and 17 year old girls in Further Education in 1977. These girls were middle-class but provide some basis for considering the lives of working-class girls.
In many ways, Sherratt's preoccupations were similar to mine. She was attempting to understand the complicated process through which one particular group of girls came to take their place in the sexual division of labour. She used 'glamour' as a major explanatory concept to look at how and why initial expectations that girls had come to be changed through the process of being in college. In her sample, girls' subjective ideas about glamour changed over time. They redefined jobs they previously scoffed at, as glamorous, in the light of the experience of college.

Initially girls had said that jobs were important (albeit, women's jobs - teaching jobs, physiotherapy, nursing and travel). This changed. Increasingly they defined college as a waste of time. Sherratt claims that, in effect, the day-to-day experience of college lowered their expectations. In terms of outcome, most left college without qualifications in search of more exciting and glamorous lives now. Indeed, she argued that what was important to them and what did not change was the idea of glamorous lives. It was glamour that was not achievable at college and they increasingly defined it as a boring waste of time. Most of them redefined their aspirations, seeking glamour in jobs such as in offices and in shops.

Glamour was also a useful concept for analysing the behaviour of girls in S/F. For working-class girls in the early '80s, their expectations in relation to glamour and glamorous lives was already low.

And where the young women in Sherratt's sample equated college with ideas of being physiotherapists and nurses and air hostesses, the idea of glamorous jobs for girls in S/F were jobs in offices or as hairdressers. However, jobs like these already existed only in the realms of fantasy. The most these girls could hope for (and
were hoping for) were jobs as domestics or cleaners.

Girls too had realistic expectations of the local labour market and their likely futures relating to it. In terms of local knowledge, knitting as a skill and supervisors' contacts were inappropriate.

In S/F, girls' ideas about glamour, glamorous jobs, were not realised in the workshop. The inappropriateness of knitting to girls' lives is I think well illustrated in the following three examples.

Shell design

A Community Workshop Project based on knitting was set up on the same premises as the workshop. Elizabeth, the full-time worker, was fiftyish, middle-class and sophisticated. She had experience both of business and of knitting. Her job was to set the project up, find orders, and she was in charge of design and workers. The idea was to employ people external to the workshop as well as ex-trainees. At its peak, it employed eight or so knitters, four or five of whom were from the workshop. Payment at that time was around thirty nine pounds.

The 'Shell design' felt more like a factory than the workshop. The workforce had fairly rigidly defined tasks - knitters knitted pieces all day long, finishers spent all their time finishing garments off. There was a much more standardised idea of how productive workers should be (i.e. how many pieces should be knitted, finished in one day) than in the workshop.

In many ways, the existence of 'Shell' did go some way towards making the girls' workshop more like the boys'. 'Shell' created some
real opportunity for the best knitters to move onto something that more resembled real work at the end. Like for painters, there was something to compete for. The similarity ended there. This 'opportunity' for girls was ambiguous.

Where boys actively wanted to be painters and decorators and grasped any opportunity which gave them a glimpse of it, knitting as a job for girls was impressive to no one.

Heather was the first of the trainees who was 'sent through' to 'Shell'. Her experience was mixed.

Me: Whit's it like next door?
Heather: Ah quite like it. Some o' the lassies think it's crap an' widnae dae it. It's awfy hard work. Ah'm no' kiddin' ye', ah must work three or four time whit ah did in the workshop. The workshop wiz a dawddle compared tae this. An' ye' only git ten pounds mair. It's no' really worth it. An' ah fuckin' hate knittin'. Bit it's a job ah suppose.

Other girls were much less compromising.

Louise: Ah'd hate tae be next door. Elizabeth drives ye' like a slave an' a' ye' git is ten pounds mair than here.

On the other hand, supervisors were convinced that the opening of 'Shell' had brought nothing but benefits to girls in the workshop.

Cath: Heather used to be really crazy, a nice lassie, but really wild. She's matured so much since she went through to 'Shell'. She's like a different person.

'Shell' did provide some opportunity to girls which they partly accepted as all that was available. It was a job, but an unglamorous one, a poor substitute for what they would like from jobs. Had girls
moved on to become trainee hairdressers, or even to jobs in canteens and offices, the outcome in terms of girls’ integration would have been really different.

In the case of 'Shell', the offer of a job there was not straightforwardly acceptable. Some of them towards the end of their time did try to be better behaved and productive with a view to being sent through to 'Shell'. Most of the girls could take it or leave it and the opportunity to go through to 'Shell' impinged very little on their attitude to the workshop.

The office

Alongside permanent staff in the office, there was also an 'office junior' - a YOP trainee recruited from the ranks of girls in knitwear. For most of the time I was in S/F this was Linda. Of all the girls in S/F, Linda was the only one who ever said anything positive about her work. She obviously loved it. The move from knitting to the office had obviously suited her.

Cath: Linda’s really freaky looking. She used to be really wild when she was in knitting but she’s come on by leaps and bounds since then.

Linda’s positive feelings about the job initially puzzled me. Her tasks were minimal, much less than the duties of a ‘real’ office junior. Linda was never treated as a competent member of the office team. Taking their cue from ideas about young people that defined them as substandard, fundamentally Linda was not trusted. Originally there had been some sort of commitment to teaching the 'junior' to type. Linda rarely touched a typewriter. I was not in the office long enough to gauge what Linda actually did. It was, though very little.
Jobs there were fairly rigidly defined. Jan was in charge of staff training, Alison administered the office in a general way—answering mail, doing wages. Linda hardly participated in these jobs at all. The odd thing she was allowed to do was passed to her to keep her busy, odd jobs, randomly allocated. Taking notes to supervisors, adding up the odd column of figures. She was never allowed to bank money, nor was she even allowed to be in the office alone without the presence of a responsible adult. On my second day ever in the workshop, Alison pulled me aside, told me she had to go to the bank and asked me if I would keep an eye on Linda. I could have been anyone. At that time, Linda had worked in the office for months.

The main function Linda seemed to fulfil in the office seemed to be looking good. Linda was a fan of Siouxsie (of Siouxsie and the Banshees) and she modelled herself on her appearance. That she had been chosen for the job in the office was no accident. She looked ‘punky’ but she obviously took a lot of care over her appearance. Her main function seemed to be a reception one. She answered the telephone, received visitors and informed the person they had come to see.

And, indeed, this was the main reason for the popularity among girls of the job in the office. It seemed glamorous, it was public and provided Linda with the opportunity to build an illusion that it was a real job of the sort that she wanted. Had all the girls been offered similar ‘opportunities’ the story of their integration might have been a very different one.

The canteen

The canteen had never functioned successfully. There was another attempt to get it off the ground while I was there. The room
was painted, a woman hired. Carol’s job was in effect autonomous from the rest of the workshop. Given a float to get started, she paid herself and stocked the canteen out of profits. The hours were short but the pay was minimal. Carol was working-class, lived close to the workshop and saw the job as a way of getting extra money for herself and as a way of whiling away the days when her husband was in the Army.

Her first task was to thoroughly clean the canteen, clean the equipment and to get it working. A trainee from knitwear was given over to help her in the subsequent running of the canteen. To my amazement, the choice of which trainee was a matter of fierce competition. All of them it seemed preferred to be in the canteen rather than knitting.

Fran was the lucky one. The rest of the girls were envious. The canteen was lucrative for a number of reasons (some of them paralleled the paintshop). Where supervisors in knitwear were middle-class, the relationship between them and girls felt like teachers and pupils. Carol was working-class and seemed like an employer. As Fran and Carol chatted through their daily chores, the canteen could feel like real work to Fran, work of the type she could reasonably expect.

When the canteen opened, Fran felt fantastic. She dished out food, took money, gave change, cleared tables. She bantered with the boys during their break and also with girls when it was their turn. In this setting, Fran was given one of the few opportunities to be seen by, relate to and find out about boys in a way that was legitimate.

Fran though enjoyed herself too much. After three weeks she
was brought to knitwear in disgrace. For Fran it was a public humiliation, demotion. She was devastated and never forgave supervisors. She refused to knit anything for weeks.

To Conclude

Thus where knitting failed, it was in the canteen and the office where girls found work which coincided with ideas they had about their futures and with which they identified. What girls most wanted and organised their lives around (glamour and glamorous lives) did not exist for them in the formal content of work in the workshop. They found it elsewhere.

For boys, in the absence of real jobs, the workshop offered the next best thing - an atmosphere that felt like work. Girls, on the other hand, hated what they were offered. Where machine knitted garments can in some circumstances take on an image that is creative and fashionable, to girls, it represented something completely different. It symbolised old women, women whose lives were over, women with boring lives stuck at home.

Girls' definitions of the work were utterly at odds with supervisors. Culturally, supervisors and girls were worlds apart.

Ruby: God, if any o' ma pals saw me daein' this, ah'd die. It's whit auld grannies dae.

The work they offered in the workshop symbolised everything they did not want to be.

Jen: Ma da widnae even wear wan o' these.

'Posers' wore stripey jumpers in pubs. Posers were objects of
ridicule. And girls felt nothing but distaste for everything they knitted. When they did try on a jumper it was for amusement value only.

Netta: Haw Ally, 'imagine walkin' intae a pub like this?

Garments were treated with disrespect. Girls dragged them about the floor by the sleeve, tied them round their heads, round their waists.

Joyce: Ah hate stripes, stripes make me dizzy.

The similar cultural identities of boys and their supervisors in the paintshop meant that boys were well behaved and integrated. In knitwear, supervisors were culturally different from girls. What they wanted for girls was more in line with management and the ideals of the MSC. In knitwear, the craft skills preferred by management were not modified in practice by supervisors with ideas about work that were relevant to girls. Subsequently, girls felt culturally at odds with supervisors and with work and the relationship between girls and supervisors was confrontational.
CHAPTER 7

Acceptance of S/F: involvement in their own autonomous culture

If the last chapter was concerned to outline the reasons for girls' disruptive behaviour, their rejection of the workshop, this section discusses the more positive things girls got from it, why, indeed, they came to the workshop at all.

Appearing Glamorous

Girls were preoccupied by the way they looked. As such, with very little else in their lives, the workshop did provide them with one major social outlet for appearing glamorous.

Like the boys, girls in S/F were a fairly ordinary bunch of teenagers, with no adherence to one specific cultural style. Their tastes in clothes and music were varied.

Linda in the office, for example, dressed entirely in black, black trousers, black twin set, red lips and orange lips. Her black hair was elaborately styled. In relation to Linda I made my first blunder. Linda had a photograph on her desk in the office.

Me: Is that you?

Linda: Me! Dae ye' think that's me? Naw, it's Siouxie (of Siouxie and the Banshees).

Linda modelled herself on Siouxie and the Banshees. Like Elvis, it was an entirely accepted phenomenon. Everyone called her Siouxie and commented on how good she was at it.

Jackie in knitwear was a Debbie Harrie look-alike. She too dressed elaborately.
Not all of the girls looked so exotic. Tina, for example like all of the girls, was incredibly thin. (Many of them weighed in every day on the wool scales - everybody over seven stones felt awful!) She wore tight jeans, her hair was immaculate, henna'd and sleek. She wore a thin jacket and sandals (without socks) summer and winter.

Isobel, Netta, Fran were closest to Tina. They looked similar.

There was another group of girls who were friends. They seemed old for their age, worldly-wise and were renowned for being 'laddie daft'. They wore provocative clothes and were generally seen as girls heading for trouble.

The least sophisticated of the trainees were my friends, Yvonne, Louise, Jen, Ruby, Joyce and Pat. Very definitely they were the least successful of the trainees. Their appearance was the least striking. They wore jeans, jumpers and jackets. They would have liked to have looked like Tina but they did not quite make it. They had very little confidence, were quiet and rarely disruptive. Mostly they felt inadequate about themselves, failures in relation to boys and in relation to the rest of the girls.

Louise was typical. She dressed plainly because her mother was poor and she had but one change of clothes. She was thin, chain smoked and was nervous (her hands shook continuously).

Though different styles were in evidence, what was characteristic of all the girls was the amount of time they put into their appearance. The extent to which girls organised their lives around their appearance was illustrated in the build up to the workshop dance. It dominated conversation for weeks. The burning issue concerned whether or not to go. There was a general atmosphere of
scorn about the event and initially no one was committing themselves to go. The publicly acknowledged reason was alcohol. There was to be none. Girls felt insulted, upset that the works' dance was to be little more than a party for kids.

Louise: Ur' you gaun'?  
Jen: Nut! Ur' you?  
Louise: Ah dunno'. S'fuckin' wild. They're only gaunnae sell us fruit juice.

Alcohol was obviously an important issue but the real reasons for being doubtful about going were more complicated. Public scorn and coolness belied the strong feelings girls actually had about the event. A general worry was with appearance. Looking good is difficult when you only possess one change of clothes.

Cath was aware of the dilemma about clothes and was aware that there was more to them refusing to go than met the eye.

Cath: (to me)  
It's funny, they're saying' they're no goin', but they all ordered clothes to wear to it months ago.

Carol (the woman who ran the canteen) ran a 'club' (mail order catalogue) and all the girls were paying up something from their wages. Everyone had ordered something to wear to the disco. Time was running out and as yet nothing had arrived. A lot of the anxiety about the disco and worry about their appearance was displaced onto the late arrival of the clothes. A few days before the party, it was obvious that the order would not come. Girls were, understandably, upset.
Tina: (in tears)

Ah cannae go noo. Ah jist couldnae go. The only claes ah huv' ur' the claes ah wear in here. Ah cannae go in the claes ah wear every day.

Tina did go to the disco in the end, but she was miserable. Wearing clothes everyone had seen before was humiliating and spoiled her enjoyment.

And seeing so many trainees turn up in their everyday clothes and feeling embarrassed and ashamed about it brought home, to me at any rate, the everyday indignities that go along with being poor, young and working-class in our society.

Boys wore workclothes and overalls and tried hard to emulate men at work. Their ideas of how to dress at work coincided with supervisors. Girls had ideas about appearance and dress which were in sharp contradiction to supervisors. Schemes are organised around employers' expectations of how young employees should dress. Girls clearly did not dress to meet these needs. They were dressing to meet needs of their own. Subsequently they were continually criticised for the way they look by supervisors. Indeed the only 'off the job training' they received during the course in a local Further Education college, was concerned with this.

This negated the extent to which most of these girls organised their lives both outside and inside the workshop around how they looked. Many of them washed and styled their hair (often elaborately) every morning. Often rising at 6.30 a.m. to do it. I certainly found it impressive that summer or winter girls could appear at the workshop at 8.15 every morning looking glamorous. In the absence of much of a social life outside the workshop, many of
the girls spent their evenings watching telly and preparing themselves and their clothes for work next morning. The workshop was (in a sense) their social life and their main outlet for looking glamorous.

**Negative Aspects of Home Life**

Another positive feature of S/F for girls was simply that in contrast to often awful home lives, the workshop simply offered them somewhere else to go. The reality of life for most of the girls outside the workshop was at best boring. At worse, their lives involved circumstances that were depressing and even violent. And having neither the money or anywhere to go, most of them spent a lot of time at home.

In an earlier section, I talked about Tina's home life, other girls' lives were equally dire.

**Marie and Fran**

Marie and Fran were 'sisters'. There were eleven kids in the family. Their mother was thirty four. Six of the kids were the result of a previous marriage, she now lived with a man with five kids.

And, much as they loved their mother, not surprisingly, Marie and Fran were desperate to leave home. They saw their best opportunity to change this through marriage. They had one of the worst 'reputations' in the workshop for being 'laddie daft'. On an everyday level, the workshop offered them both a way out of the house and its responsibilities during the day and the almost only opportunity (however limited) to come into contact with future boyfriends.
Sheila

At sixteen, many of these girls had no family settings at all. Sheila had been thrown out of her house by her father. At sixteen she was homeless. Marie was her friend and she moved in with her temporarily. Marie, Sheila and another of Marie's sisters shared a bed. Marie's mother provided the meals. Later she moved into a bed and breakfast with another friend.

Sheila had a special interest in me. She knew I had what she wanted - a shared flat. She was continually asking if there were spaces in it, questioning me continually about how many rooms it had, how many people I lived with, how much I paid to live there and where I kept my food. She was worried about sexuality and how I coped with the difficulties of living in a 'mixed' flat. She was well aware that in some circumstances a sixteen year old girl is easy prey for men and she wondered how I coped.

Sheila: There're boys in your flat eh?
There's boys where we are tae (laughing), we're scared o' them.
Dae ye' hae locks oan yer' bedroom doors?

Isobel

Isobel too had no family. She lived by herself in a flat. She used to live in the same flat with her father. At one time in the recent flat he moved out and took most of the furniture. Isobel was left there with no one. Isobel was an incest survivor.

The winter I knew Isobel was the coldest for years. She lived in a flat without a bed, without heating and without a cooker. A few months after she came to the workshop, she made friends with Netta. She began to spend a lot of time at Netta's house, sleeping there and
eating there, especially at weekends.

Undoubtedly, the social atmosphere of the workshop, the friends she made there, improved the condition of her life in general. It ensured that the experience of the workshop was preferable to her life before.

**Louise**

Louise lived alone with her mother who was alcoholic. She had no friends outside the workshop. Most evenings she went home, had some tea and her mother would go out to the pub. Louise would spend the evening watching television. Her mother would come home from the pub, in Louise's words, 'pick a fight' with her and throw her out of the house. Louise walked the streets until her mother sobered up enough to come and find her.

**Trish**

Trisha's home life too had never been easy.

**Me:** How dae ye' like livin' at hame?

**Trish:** Oct, ah like it fine again, noo ma da's away back tae the navy. Ah like livin' wi' ma ma. Ah hate it when ma da's here, ma ma hates it tae.

**Me:** How's that?

**Trish:** Oct, it's jist that - well we've goat mair money when he's away. He jist drinks a' the time he's hame. An' ma ma gets fat. We eat chips a' the time when he's here. We eat barry 'hings when he's away, coleslaw an' pasta an' 'hings like that. An' there's lots o' fights. He's ay shouting at her, an' she disnae get oot an' she's miserable when she's stuck in the hoose. Ma ma loves tae get oot. An' a' he diz is sit an' moan.
Me: Where diz yer ma go when she's oot? Diz she go up tae the pub?

Trish: Naw, ma ma disnae drink - she's goat bad healf', she's got a bad heart an' bad nerves. She goes up tae ma grannies maistly, or up tae ma aunties'. Or sometimes she goes lookin' fur ma wee sister, if she hears she's in toon.

Me: Yei' really like yer ma eh Trish?

Trish: Aye, we get oan barry. Ma ma's ma best pal really. 'Specially when ma da's away. She's crazy, she came intae the livin' room last night wi' the dinner in the pot an' she says, 'come oan Trish, booget', an' there we wiz, dancin' a' owr the place. She's really mad, she diz 'hings like that a' the time. When we're up the street she's jist like me, dancin' an' singin'. Only when ma da's away though. She's no' like that when he's here.

Me: How come it's sae different when yer da's away?

Trish: He'll no' let her oot when he's here. He's dead jealous. Ma ma's young an' nice lookin'. An' she's tae sit in the hoose a' day an' night wi' him when he's here. She hates it. An' he's aye goat some'hin' tae complain aboot. He's a' pickin' oan her, 'specialy if he's been drinkin'. Or he picks oan me if ah'm late an' she sticks up fur me an' then he fights wi' her. She's oot a' the time when he's away. She's as happy as anythin' when she gets oot. She kin dae whit she likes when he's no' here. An' there's nae arguments.

Trish came into work one day exhausted. She had not been in bed all night. Her mother had gone out at eight o'clock, saying she would be back by eleven. At twelve o'clock when her mother had not come back, worried about her health, Trish had gone out to look for her.

Apart from her father, Trisha's younger sister is an added source of strain in the family.
Me: What diz yer ma dae when she goes oot?

Trish: She maistly goes tae ma grannies or ma aunties, or else she looks fur ma wee sister. Ma wee sister's at a school in Stirling. But she keeps runnin' away an' gettin' intae trouble. She went there 'cause ma ma couldnae handle her.

Me: Where's she noo?

Trish: Ma ma heard that she wiz in B... She always spends a lot of time lookin' fur hur when she's around.

Me: Whit diz she dae in B...? Is she by hurself?

Trish: Naw. She hings aboot wi' hur pals. She's intae the glue an' she's in wi' a right dopey crowd. Ma ma tries tae find hur afore the police dae. She kens the police beat hur up tae teach hur a lesson.

Me: Where'll she sleep?

Trish: Ma ma heard they were sleepin' in auld railway carriages.

Between her father and her sister, Trish was obviously her mother's main source of support.

Like a lot of girls, the workshop offered Trish a place to escape from what would otherwise be the constancy of domestic strain.

The workshop, then, offered girls an escape from what are often difficult home lives. It was for many of them their only social outlet.

Jen: See me, if it wisnae fur ma pals, ah widnae be here at all.
S/F: A Job Like Any Other

Apart from the social aspect of S/F, another reason girls kept coming into the workshop was because in their culture there is often little expectation that jobs will be anything other than boring, irrelevant and without a future. Many of them saw S/F as a job like any other, to be put up with and tolerated.

Tina was an example. She had three paid jobs (Cath spent a lot of time with her working out her tax). She worked 50 hours a week and for her efforts earned less than forty pounds a week. Her efforts were largely unappreciated in the workshop.

Sue: You don't really care, do you Tina?

Tina: Ah don't care! Dae ye ken whit it feels like tae work for £23.50? Ah'm no' carin' for that!

As far as Tina was concerned, she had three jobs - two cleaning jobs, the job in the workshop, a job like all the others. She worked for money and that largely went to her mother to help her keep house and keep the family together.

Indeed for a lot of trainees, their wages represented a lot more than pocket money. In large households often trainees were the only ones with jobs and what they put into the house often represented a significant contribution to the family income. Indeed, it is very difficult to view the YOP allowance as 'pin money' when week after week mothers would wait outside the gate on a Thursday afternoon to collect 'dig money' from trainees so they could buy food for the family meal that evening.

What the workshop did do for girls was for the first time, probably, provide them with some money that was their own. Until now,
most had been dependent largely upon poor parents financing them. Their clothes (and controlling their appearance) had often been got out of mail order catalogues and provident cheques. Girls could now, through careful management, have independence to do this for themselves. In the workshop they created, through their own efforts, ways to do this.

One very important characteristic of women's workplaces is the extent to which women pay out of their wages into 'clubs' and 'funds'. Christmas or holiday funds organised on a small scale informally or on a large scale are important features of women's work. For women on low incomes traditionally living from week to week, these clubs are possibly the only way women are able to amass lump sums to finance holidays and Christmas. In the absence of jobs for women it is these hidden things that women also lose. And in S/F girls latched onto and created structures like these and in small ways felt like real workers with real jobs.

It was at the girls' instigation that Margaret held money for them in a Christmas Club. And it was Carol in the canteen who ran the mail order catalogue - all of the girls were paying every week out of their 'wages' into Carol's 'Club' for clothes.

Indeed, it was in this that the 'realities of trainees' lives' and culture were recognised and that had most relevance to them and went some way towards providing girls with the images of themselves that they wanted. And unlike boys who got this sense of identity through what was created by supervisors, for girls, the few opportunities that did exist were unintended, created through their own efforts or by the one working-class woman in the building.
Girls' Daily Preoccupation

If the formal content of work in S/F was seen as irrelevant by girls and they rejected it, what they created for themselves in the workshop in their own time was perhaps their major motivation for being in the workshop at all.

In a previous discussion of boys, I discussed the franticness and desperation they felt about their lives and about the way this worked itself out in S/F. It resulted in the copying of stereotyped ideas of adult male workplaces to the extent of caricature. In terms of gender, this exaggeration implied an exaggeration of abusive and insulting behaviour to women.

Girls represented the other side of all this. Where boys were integrated, what girls created for themselves in the workshop was a lot of time and space away from the formal constraints of work to build up and engage in an informal culture of their own.

Like boys, girls felt frantic and desperate about their lives too. Clearly though, anxiety was not about jobs (at least not the jobs offered them in S/F). And the central aspect of life for them in S/F was built around something else.

Space for Romance

The overwhelming memory I took from the boys' workshop was of sexism. Their daily references to and treatment of girls as objects to be used and abused, their scathing disregard and contempt for anything feminine, tainted everything that happened there. Boys' culture seemed harsh and brutal in relation to girls, success came in terms of alienated scoring and objectified sex.

Girls' culture in the area of personal relationships could not
have been more different. Their preoccupations could hardly have been further from ideas about wild sex and scoring. Here fantasies were romantic. Overwhelmingly, they wanted boyfriends and long-term relationships. They wanted someone to do things with, to hold hands with in the street, someone to take care of them.

Netta: He's comin' up for me the night.

Ruby: He's meetin' me after work tae go roun' the shops. He's gaun' me a jacket.

Fran: Davy's comin' up fur me the night. We're gaun' roun' tae see his big sister, after.

Jen: He says ah've tae take a day off ma work fur his sister's weddin'.

Throwaway remarks like these, represented in fact, the pinnacle of success for girls. Girls referred to boys in a downplayed, low key way that masked the fact that girls were thrilled to be able to make everyday comments like these and actually very few girls were ever in the position to make them. The comments masked a whole hidden culture of longing and private failure for girls. Comments like these were often made of boyfriends of two days. They made boyfriends of a few days seem like relationships of long standing.

I want to expand this discussion of desperation. It is not revealed in what girls say, but better illustrated by describing their behaviour.

Creating the Illusion of Boyfriends: the space to fantasise

Where boys' desperation about jobs results in creating the illusion of them in S/F, in S/F, girls without boyfriends create illusions as well. They make them up. In the absence of anything that could pass for glamorous lives, girls made it up. Many of them lived in
elaborate fantasy worlds. Nothing (I think) reveals more than this the importance of boys in their lives.

Mary

Mary talked incessantly about Rab:

"Rab's goat the day off work, ah'm meetin' him at break".

"Rab came roon' fur me last night".

"Rab's buyin' me a new pair o' boots fur ma birthday".

The day Mary came in with a diamond engagement ring was her day of glory. Everyone flocked around her, congratulating her and trying on her ring. She was the centre of attraction.

Two days later Mary's mother phoned the workshop to say the family were having some trouble with Mary at home. Mary had created a stir by stealing her sister's engagement ring. Rab was a fabrication.

Mary had had a dismal life. She was unattractive in conventional terms, surly, isolated and unpopular in the workshop. She fought with parents and siblings, lived in an overcrowded house and spent every night in front of the television. She had neither the confidence nor the opportunity to meet and go out with boys. The engagement ring incident was the event which eventually made her leave the workshop.

Louise

I have already described the worst aspects of Louise's life. Louise lived mostly inside her own head. In the absence of any life at all, Louise invented one.
What she invented was interesting and perhaps a bit surprising. Her fantasy boyfriend was no knight in shining armour, coming to sweep her out of her life and into something conventionally glamorous. On the contrary. Her fantasy relationship was very close to the kind of relationship that she might well one day have, with a few exceptions.

Louise: Ah've finished wi' Rab.

Jen: Whit fur?

Louise: Whit wid you ah done? Ah pours masel' a drink, he pours it doon the sink.

Jen: Ah'd huv' kicked his fuckin' head in.

Louise: Aye, well. Ah jist tel't him tae fuck off an' no' come back. Then he comes roon' wi' this purple jaiket, right, same as Daine's new yin. Ah fuckin' telt him tae take it back.

Louise invents almost exactly the kind of boyfriend she expects to get. It is not a happy relationship. Nor is it romantic. It has a mundane, everyday feel to it. In it she creates the daily ongoing banter and conflict which she believes to be the stuff of long-term relationships. It is acrimonious and unfriendly, yet (significantly) Louise emerges from every scuffle strong and in control. She fights back, she refuses to take the behaviour he metes out. And because he does not exist, she can send him packing and bring him back any time she wants. Unlike in real life, she can always win.

It could be argued that these stories are extreme. I want to argue that they are not. Louise and Mary were certainly among the most materially deprived among the girls. Yet there were other girls, much more deprived, who, because of reasons of style and so on,
did make it with boys. There were also girls who had more going for them materially who fantasised even more. All of them spent some time fantasising, fabricating stories and supplementing reality.

It is important that Louise and Mary's responses to their lives are not written off and dismissed as pathetic. This kind of behaviour could just as easily be interpreted as a valid response to the very real problems these girls face in creating anything decent in relation to boys.

I want to move now and discuss the 'reality' of relationships with boys and as we shall see, the alternative to fabricated relationships (real ones) seems less absurd as the story unfolds.

Space to Relate to Boys

I want to move from my discussion of how girls use the space they create for themselves in S/F to 'daydream', to now look at what they actively create. Here I want to focus on two specific examples. These two girls are something of opposites. They capture, I think, the best that is available for working-class girls and also the worst. First the worst.

How Lena makes it with boys

Netta: Lena's gaun' oot wi' Gavin noo.
Linda: Aw naw! Here we go again. He'll make mincemeat oot o' her.
Netta: Naw, no' Lena. She's as hard as nails.
Linda: She better watch hursel', he's a'ready fancied everybody here.
Netta: Lena's awffy, she'd gaun' oot wi' onybody.
Lena generally wore ripped black tights, a tight black skirt, a white low cut blouse, copious amounts of make-up. She had dyed blonde hair and looked ten years older than she actually was. At sixteen she had been through a lot.

Lena had a 'reputation'. She hung about with a group of about four girls, all of whom had 'reputations'. They were popular and funny but most of the other girls kept their distance. They were much too concerned about their own images to wholeheartedly join in.

Fran: See that Lena, she'd dae anythin' absolutely anythin' tae get oot wi' somebody.

Lena's behaviour was often painfully sad to watch. Her actions seemed to arise out of desperation. In the few months I was in the workshop, Lena had been picked up and dropped by almost all the boys.

Trish confided in me one day.

Trish: See, Lena, she's related tae me sortie. She's sortie ma cousin. She used tae be at the same school as me. Ah couldnae believe it when ah came here an' seen hur. See at the school, she used tae be barry lookin'. She'd dead nice hair an' great skin. Hur skin's gobbin' noo. An' she used tae wear dead nice claes. She's jist a slag noo. Ah wldnae go near hur.

My shift out of knitwear and into the boys' workshop was good news for Lena. Much to my own (misplaced) irritation, Lena used me to the full.

Trish, myself and several of the boys were sitting downstairs outside the paintshop waiting for the van and the rest of the boys to come back. Lena sauntered over. My heart sank. Girls rarely came downstairs. I was her excuse to make the trip. She strolled past
and draped herself around a pole near me. The ensuing conversation, her mannerisms and gestures were constructed for the benefit of boys. Her neck was covered in 'lovebites'.

_Lena_: Are that' marks still oan ma neck, Anne?

_Me_: (reluctantly) Aye.

_Lena_: That wiz some pairty last night. It went oan till three in the mornin'. Then me an' these three guys drove through tae G... It wiz barry.

I bagged off wi' Phil at Joyce's party last night.

_Me_: Phil? I thought you wir efter Steve?

_Lena_: So ah wiz, bit, Steve couldnae make up his mind, so ah jist bagged off wi' Phil.

At work next morning, when Lena went down to see Phil, he completely ignored her.

_Netta_: Lena's hud the K.B (knock back) fae Phil.

_Louise_: Dinnae take it Lena. Dinnae let him get away wi' it. Go up an' say some'hin' tae him.

_Lena_: Oct, ah'm no' that bothered.

(much later)

Ah'm stayin' away fae them noo (boys). Ah never want tae see another one.

_Lena_: (later still) Netta, whi' ts Smarties' phone number? Gaunnae ring him up fur me?

Lena wanted a boyfriend. But she used dangerous and potentially disastrous tactics to get it. And the way she was behaving now would certainly have implications for the rest of her life. With every new
attempt to create what she wanted, the possibility of ever getting it became more remote. Already she was stuck with an image of herself and a 'reputation' she did not want. And the more obvious it became to Lena that she was not going to get a steady boyfriend, the more desperate she felt and the more compromising became her behaviour. She hated herself and could see no way out of her predicament. And behind her funny, jokey and flighty manner, lurked nightmares with which she was forced to live.

Lena: Anne, huv' ye' ever wanted tae be deed?
Me: Naw, no' really.
Lena: Ah huv'. Ah wish a' the time ah wiz deed. Ah wish ah'wiz back at school.

Lena would disappear out of the workshop in the morning, leaving the rest of us to cover up. She would arrive back gleeful at lunchtime.

Lena: Ah'm gaun' oot wi' Colin noo. We're gaun' roun' the shops at break.

Elation would last only until next morning when, of course, she would be dropped.

How Trish makes it with boys

Trish: Who is it up there fancies Elvis?
Lena: Dunno'.
Trish: Who wrote 'ah think Billy's (Elvis) smashin' can the bog wa'? Did you see it Anne?
Me: Nut!
Lena: Sheena wiz gaun' oot wi' Elvis till last week.
Trish: Aye, ah ken, but it's finished noo.

Me: (really surprised)
    Wiz she? How dae you ken that?
    Ah didnae ken that.

Lena: God Anne, yer slow oan the uptake.

Trish and Lena could not have been more different. Lena would undoubtedly end up in the worst of all possible worlds. In fact, Trish wanted a boyfriend every bit as much as Lena. What Trish had learned though was to go about it in an altogether different and more shrewd way.

In her own setting, Trish was cool, confident and sure of herself. This was unusual. She had a reputation for being fussy and careful about who she went out with. At sixteen she had had numerous boyfriends, but she did not have a 'reputation'. Her standards were relatively high. In the workshop she worked slowly in relation to boys, hanging back, sussing out who was who before she risked making a move.

Like the rest of the girls, by far the most important and time consuming work that Trish did was social relations work. She knew all the painters by name after two days (long before I did). She quizzed me continually about what I knew about girls (having already spent two weeks there). She learned which of the boys had money and who had none. Trish's mother gave her a packet of cigarettes every day. And Trish always passed cigarettes to boys who had no money to buy them for themselves. She knew which of the boys had run out of money to buy lunch or who was strung out on glue and fed them food.

Trish: You want a Kit Kat Frankie?

Ah've goat a piece oan cheese if ye!
want it Mo.
Trish was as interested in getting a boyfriend as Lena. But unlike Lena, she carefully built up an image of the kind of person she wanted to be, of how she wanted to appear in the workshop. She thought about what she wanted, developed a strategy and acted accordingly. She covered up her real interest behind a detached, but caring and sisterly facade. She had learned early and somewhere else to be cool, to hide her feelings and to play games in relation to boys. She earned the reputation of being hard to get and fussy. Boys responded to these tactics and were interested in her.

Yet the tragedy of Trisha's story is that for all of this the outcome for her was only marginally better than for Lena.

Individual boys and Trish

Trish:  Ah'm gaun' oot wi' somebody noo.

Me:  Yer' whit! Whit are ye' can aboot. Ye' wirnae gaun' oot wi' anybody yesterday.

Trish:  Aye, ah ken, but ah am noo. Ah'm no' kiddin' ye'. Min' ah wiz tellin' ye' that Andy (Fiona's boyfriend) had a pal ah fancied. Well, Fiona telt Andy an' brung him roon' tae the hoose last night. Ah'm gaun' oot wi' him noo.

Me: (laughing)  God, ah cannae believe this.

Trish: (laughing)  Aye, but, there's a wee bit o' a problem. Ah'm no' sure if ah like him noo.

Me:  Whit! Ye' started gaun' oot wi' him last night an' yer finishin' wi' him a'ready.

Trish:  Oct, it's no' that. He's a barry guy an' that, an' we get oan' barry. Bit, it's jist that, well, there might be somebody else.
And once again I had been slow on the uptake. Eventually Trish dropped enough hints for me to work out what had been going on. Trish fancied Elvis (hence all the interest Trish had shown earlier in her conversation about Elvis with Lena). And it was at this stage, in relation to boys, that even Trish lost her cool. Disappointingly (for me) when Trish decided she wanted a boyfriend, she also wanted it badly enough to risk a lot, to play the same degrading and humiliating games as everyone else.

Her obsession with Elvis, dominated (and altered) our relationship for weeks. And once again (as Trisha's closest friend in the workshop) I had an important role to play. Trish used conversations with me to inform Elvis; I was a substitute for communicating with him directly. Infuriatingly, everything Trish said to me within earshot of Elvis was designed for him to hear.

Trish: (loudly):

    Ah'd like tae take ma jumper off, but ah've goat can a see-through tee shirt an' ah dinnae wear a bra'. Well ah sometimes wear black yins - that's the only colour ah wear.

    Anne, whit am ah guanna dae? Ah've goat this huge problem. Whit wid you dae? Ah'm nearly gaun' oot wi' wan guy, but ah really fancy somebody else?

Relations in the workshop were such that before long all of the trainees knew what was going on. It was public knowledge that Trish fancied Elvis. And before long all the girls had a role to play.

First of all the network of girls (with Trisha's approval) transmitted to Elvis that Trish was interested. He could not believe his luck and responded quickly. He began hanging about where she was, making contact with her and directing comments to her.
The rest of the boys were quick off the mark as well and began directing their own helpful comments at Elvis.

**Me:** Stop moonin' about Elvis, yer' makin' a complete arse o' yersel'.

**Gibber:** Look at Elvis, he's in love.

A side of Trish I had not yet seen emerged. In front of Elvis, she was submissive, coy, giggly and shy. We discussed her dilemma endlessly.

**Trish:** Anne, ah'm gaun' mad. Whit'll ah dae? Ah cannae jist tell him (the first boyfriend, Gerry) ah dinnae want tae go oot wi' him. He kens fine it wiz me wanted tae go oot wi' him in the first place. He'd think ah wiz aff ma heid. An' anyway, he kens where ah stay, he'd jist come up. Whit'll ah dae?

**Me:** Ask Elvis oot.

**Trish:** Ask him oot! Me! Ye' must be jokin'.

**Me:** Well, two time Gerry.

**Trish:** Na, ah widnae dae that. Naebody's ever done that tae me. Well Mikey did, once, bit he wiznae good lookin' enough tae get lassies. Ah wend oot wi' loads o' guys jist tae get him back.

In the workshop things reached fever pitch. Trish and Elvis increasingly directed looks only at each other. Cigarettes as ever played an important role socially. Elvis cadged 'fags' from Trish. Trish bantered about how Elvis was always on the cadge. Matches passed continually back and forth. They joked about work.

**Elvis:** Ye' call that sanded? Ye've missed bits a' owr the place.

**Trish:** (blushing)
It's better sanded than anythin' you ever dae.
Elvis: That bit's no' even touched. Tam'll make ye' dae it again.

Trish: Shut up. Ye' dinnae even ken whit yer talkin' aboot.

Meanwhile, Trish was becoming increasingly tongue-tied and embarrassed when he was around. Sometimes as he passed he would take the brush out of her hand and do a bit of her work merely to assert his authority.

There were several implications for Trish in her involvement with Elvis. Firstly, it greatly increased her standing and confidence among girls. They were impressed. And personally I lost a lot of power in my relationship with her. (20) Initially, because Trish and I had been thrown together, the only two girls in a male workshop, being older gave me an initial advantage. I was slightly more able to cope with the general embarrassment of being in the workshop than she was.

But increasingly, as it became obvious that boys were interested in her and not me, her status in relation to me rose. For example, Trish and I were inseparable at lunchtime. One breaktime, during the time when Trish and Elvis were at their most undecided, I felt utterly worn down by the bantering. I suggested to Trish that we sit on the balcony in the sun to eat our 'piece' (rather than sit with the boys as usual). A new Trish asserted that she was staying inside. I sat outside by myself sulking. She laughed and played cards inside. At teabreak, Trish, me and the boys played cards inside.

Trisha's success with boys and my lack of it continually defined and redefined our relationship. It allowed her to become
increasingly assertive and independent in relation to me and in relation to the rest of the girls.

But of course what Trish gained in relation to me and the rest of the girls, she paid for highly in relation to boys. To get Elvis meant behaving in ways that were compromising and in ways which threatened her whole future in the workshop. Her behaviour with Elvis meant forfeiting being seen as an equal to and treated as a sister by the boys. She was no longer one of them. For the first time she gave boys an opening to see her as silly and coy and like the rest of the girls. Overnight she became an object to be appraised, put down and ridiculed. Her every move, everything she wore, was remarked upon and commented on.

My main anxiety about Trish in this situation was that her job was in jeopardy. She was risking the only role that was possible for her in the workshop. As someone who was flighty, interested in boys and treated by them as available and pursuable, her credibility in the eyes of the staff would diminish.

The saga of Trish and Elvis dragged on.

Trish: Ah finished wi' Gerry last night.
Me: Whit happened?
Trish: Dunno'. Ah jist telt Fiona tae tell him no' tae come back up fur me.
Me: 'Cause o' Elvis?
Trish: Aye. Ah'm funny like that. An cannae get intae one guy when ah fancy somebody else.
Me: D'ye think ye'd still be gaun' oot wi' Gerry if ye' didnae fancy Elvis?
Trish: Aye, likely.
Trish was quiet and unhappy all day. She had finished with one boy to make space for another. Elvis had still not made a move. The other girls again came to the rescue.

**Sheena:** Hi, ah went an' asked Elvis if he fancied you.

**Trish:** Did ye'? Whit did he say?

**Sheena:** He admitted it.

I expected Trish to be upset and angry at Sheena interfering. On the contrary, she was pleased.

**Trish:** (to Sheena)
If ye' see him, tell him ah fancy him an' a'.

This was a significant step forward. A public admission of mutual interest.

Several days later, Elvis had still not taken the initiative. Trish was frantic. Previously she had been certain that she would never ask anyone out. In the face of such inertia from Elvis, her resolve faded. She spent a day agonising about it.

**Trish:** Think ah should ask him oot? D'ye' think ah should? Did you dae it? Should ah dae it at break? Dae ye' think he'll think ah'm a slag? Dae ye' think he'd dae it if ah jist left him?

That day something was bound to happen. Everyone knew it. People grinned expectantly at one another all day. I felt nervous. I was well aware of the potential repercussions for Trish. Firstly, it would provide Elvis with information about Trish to pass onto the rest of the boys and, secondly, regardless of how Trish behaved, she
would be labelled, discussed and her life as a serious painter in
the workshop would be precarious.

By four o'clock Elvis and Trish had gotten as far as throwing
screwed-up pieces of paper at each other. I knew the inevitable
would happen as they clocked out and walked together to the bus.
The next scene is best left as an excerpt from my fieldnotes.

'I usually walk to the top of the road with Trish,
but I was so pissed off at her and Elvis mucking
around in the cloakroom, I was so anxious and
nervous for Trish, that I left first and walked up
the road by myself. I knew they were behind me.
I knew she was going to ask him out. I could
almost hear her asking him through her giggles.
I felt sick to the pit of my stomach. When I
sneaked a look, my last image was of Elvis picking
her up in his arms like a baby and subjecting her
to a long passionate kiss. Elvis, with his slicked
back hair, his black leather jacket, had maintained
his Presley image to the last. The last group of
boys walking behind were cheering. It was as much
as I could do to disappear round the corner as
quickly as possible'.

The story did not end here. On Monday morning I arrived early at
the workshop, anxious to find out how Trisha's weekend had gone.
Trish was in a state again.

Trish: Ah'm supposed tae be gaun' oot wi'
him noo. He thinks ah am. But ah'm
no' wantin' tae. Oot, ah dunno' whit's
wrong wi' me. He's a barry guy an' that.
We jist went back tae ma hoose oan Friday
an' ma ma gave us fish fingers an' chips.
Bit, ah'm really stupit - ah jist dinnae
feel like gaun' oot wi' him noo. Ah
dinnae ken whit's wrong wi' me, ah jist go
oot wi' a guy once an' then ah'm no'
wantin' tae any mair.

Trish offered many layers of explanation herself. From afar, Elvis
seemed more attractive than Gerry. Close up there was not much to
choose between them. And Trish had not been impressed by Elvis.'
behaviour after work on Friday.

Trish: Did ye' see him? Did ye' see whit he did? He picked me up, right in front o' a' tha' guys! Ah could've killed him.

Trish completely avoided Elvis after this, giving him no opportunity to pursue her. The romantic flush was over, the reality of having a boyfriend in the workshop dawned on her. She knew boys would talk about and discuss her. Less besotted with Elvis, it was all of a sudden clear to her that to survive in the workshop, to maintain her strength and credibility, she had to be sexually neutral.

Much later, when the incident had blown over, Trish offered a more considered analysis of events.

Trish: Ah went oot wi' Elvis fur wan night, an' ah finished wi' him the next. A' the lassies thought ah couldnae get him tae go oot wi' me. Ah ken't he wid. Ah jist hud tae prove ah could dae it. An' when ah knew ah could, ah didnae want him ony mair. Ah'm dead funny, ah'm jist like that.

Two weeks later, Trish was engaged to Gerry. Gerry was unemployed.

Space to Discuss and Find Out About Boys

I want to move now to a consideration of girls' sexual politics in general. Being a girl and middle-class undoubtedly brings its own anxieties and problems. But for working-class girls, especially when the material circumstances of their lives are deteriorating, the problems are extreme. All of these girls displayed at different times insights into their lives that were both insightful and, for me, humbling. Few of them were under any illusions about the state of
of the world and their role in it.

Netta: Could you ever be a stripper Anne?

Me: Naw, ah don't think ah could ever dae that.

Netta: Ah could, sometimes ah could really imagine it. Ah could never be a prostitute but,

Me: Och, sometimes ah'm no' that sure that it wld be any different tae whit a lot o' women pit up wi' fae their men onwy. Ah bet a lot o' men force their wives tae huv' sex wi' them a' the time.

Netta: Aye, ah ken. Must be horrible that.

(To Pete who is listening)
Think you'd ever force yer' wife tae huv' sex wi' ye' if she didnae want tae? Bet ye' wid! Maist men wid!

They had very few illusions about sex. At sixteen many of them had been through numerous sexual relationships and encounters with boys and men, and few of these experiences had been positive. Jen had already had an abortion and had very strong views on the subject.

Jen: When we were at school, right, we used tae go along an' barney wi' the folk that believed in God. One day we wiz talkin' aboot abortion an' this posh lassie wiz comin' oot wi' so much pish - aboot God bein' in a' life an' so we coulndae kill it. Ah could've killed her. Whit diz she ken aboot haein' bairns ye' dimnae want. Ah telt her ah'd raither hae a million abortions afore ah'd hae wan wean ah coulndae look after.

They knew about and felt angry about the 'double standards'.

Ally: (passing on advice to me)
They kin sleep wi' a thousand burds.
You sleep wi' wan an' yer' a slag.
Louise: Guys ur' dead selfish. Whit ah hate is that ye' kin never be sure whit they're askin' ye' oor fur. Ah hate it. Even if they seem really interested in ye' an' ye' go oot wi' them fur ages, it kin still turn oot that they've only been efter wan thing - an' then they're off. It makes me really mad.

Girls do not passively accept the double standard. They continually devise ways round it. And the strength and ingenuity with which they manage to carve maximum space for themselves from minimum and diminishing resources was indeed impressive. Trish found her own way round the dilemma. She told me one day she was on the pill.

Me: Dae ye' no' feel under a lot of pressure tae huv' sex wi' guys if they ken yer' oan the pill?

Trish: (smirking) Naw, no' really. Ah dinnae tell them!

In this way Trish could be seen to be both pure and experienced at the same time. An old double standard, a newish way round it. She can give boys enough (in their terms) to keep them interested but appears innocent at the same time.

Frankie: Ah 'hink every burd in Great Britain should be oan the pill. That'd be magic.

Trish: Aye, magic fur yoos. It'd be much worse fur us. Everybody expects ye' tae sleep wi' them as it is. It'd be horrible.

Later Trish and I continued on the conversation on our own.

Trish: Ah've goat a funny attitude tae sex. Ah need tae be gaun' oot wi' a guy fur ages afore ah huv' sex wi' him.

Me: Dae ye' ever feel ye' should be huvin' sex jist cause yer' oan the pill?
Trish: Aye, it makes ye' feel like that - ah dinnae though. Some o' ma pals dae. They'd sleep wi' absolutely anybody jist 'cause they're oan the pill. This lassie ah ken, she sleeps wi' everybody - men an' a'. She's a real slag. There's this guy in oor street, he's aboot fifty. He kind o' helps young folk. A' ma pals hing aboot his hoose. Abbe goat chucked oot the hoose by hur da' cause she wisnae comin' hame an' she moved in wi' him. Noo, she's sleepin' wi' him an' everything.

When I was off sick one day, my pals in Margaret's room filled me in on the conversation I had missed.

Jen: Aye, ye' missed yersel' yesterday. We wiz talkin' aboot sex - or she wiz (pointing to Louise) - ah dinnae talk durty.

Louise: Don' gies it. You're the worst o' the lot.

Jen: (laughing)

Yer' a fuckin' liar!

Me: Right, come oan, whit'd ah miss?

Louise: Nuthin' we wiz talkin' aboot muthin'.

Me: Ye's wur', whit wiz it?

Pat: We wiz talkin' aboot sex.

Jen: Aye, an' she wiz sayin' plenty.

Pat: Louise says she hates it 'cause it's sair. Ah hate it tae. It hurts ye' sae much.

Louise: Ah hate it when guys go up ye'. Ah think it's horrible.

Jen: (laughing)

Ah widnae ken, ah dinnae let him near me.

Louise: Yer' a fuckin' wee liar.

Jen: Ah am nut.

Louise: Guys are fuckin' thick anyway, they dinnae huv' a fuckin' clue.
The Politics of the Dancefloor

I want to look at the girls' sexuality in wider terms still and how boys and girls in the workshop came together in the formal setting of the works dance. The disco took place when I was in the girls' workshop. In most of what I say here, girls are central. I would like to have had a fuller understanding of how boys experienced the party, but it is impossible to be in two places at once.

The build-up

I have already talked about girls' anxiety in relation to clothes in the build-up to the party. Scorn was poured on the idea. The publicly acknowledged reason was alcohol. There was to be none. People felt insulted, upset that their works dance was to be nothing more than a party for kids.

Louise: Ur' you gaun'?  
Jen:  Nut! Ur' you?  
Louise: Ah dunno'. S'fuckin' wild. They're only sellin' us fruit juice.

Real reasons for not going were of course more complex. Public scorn and coolness for the event belied the strong feelings that were actually around. Once again it took me a long time to understand that underneath girls were anxious. Anxieties existed on all sorts of levels and not simply around what to wear. Publicly, Jen was as scathing as anyone.

Jen: Fuckin' sure ah'm no' gaun' tae a crap 'hing like that. That's weans 'hings.
Privately, to Louise and me, she revealed that her anger had a different root.

Jen: Ah walked oot o' his hoose last night. Ah'm seek.

Me: Whit happened?

Jen: Oct, it's him. Ah asked him tae go tae the pairty wi' me an' he widnae. An' he says he'll finish wi' me if ah go masel'. Ah'm seek.

As the date crept closer and more and more people were deciding to go, Jen became more and more miserable.

A lot of anxiety was simply because girls were scared. They were afraid that the cool facade they projected in the workshop would be difficult to maintain in a setting where they were expected to relate to boys directly. They were nervous about appearing young and naive in front of their pals, afraid of boys themselves (they might not get a dance or be able to talk to boys without making a fool of themselves). All these things meant that the idea of the disco loomed large for weeks and real fears became displaced onto superficial discussions about the presence or absence of alcohol.

The event itself

I use the event of the disco to explore the importance at this time in their lives of girls' relationships with each other and to illustrate the importance of the workshop in affording them the opportunity to create this. (21)

The life of working-class girls without 'best pals' is limited. Without a close pal, there is no one to spend time with, to shop or to play records at home with. There is no one to discuss boys, hair
and clothes. Above all, without a best pal, girls have limited access to public space. They rely on each other for a social life. Without each other, going to a disco, or simply for a drink, would be impossible.

Me:  

Whit dae ye' dae at night?

Trish:  

Mind Fiona? She left here jist efter you started. She's ma best pal, ma only pal. She lives roon' the corner. We wiz born in G... then when we moved tae P... Fiona moved tae. I go doon' there every night fur an hour between six and seven. That's the only time ah see her noo 'cause Steve (Fiona's boyfriend) goes tae see her every night at seven. Ah used tae spend every night roon' there. Fiona's great. See me an' Fiona, we can say anythin' tae each other, absolutely anythin'.

Dancefloor culture and the importance of best pals

I arrived at the party with my friends from Margaret's room, Louise, Ruby and Fran. Fran had conveniently picked up Phil the day before. She had the dubious honour of being one of the few girls to be there with a boyfriend. Netta had come with Carine (her best friend from outside the workshop) and Louise and I made a natural twosome. Had I not been there, Louise would have been miserable. We stuck together like glue. The group sat round one table.

The boys hung about in groups on the other side of the hall. We all came together on the dancefloor. The contrast between 'on the floor' mixed sex culture and 'off the floor' culture when girls were by themselves was remarkable. 'Off the floor', girls were relaxed and funny. Banter and insults flew. 'On the floor' everything tensed up. Girls assumed different personae, walked stiffly, danced without communicating. They were cool, detached and laid back.
To Ruby's irritation, one guy homed in on her friend Carine from the beginning. The incident built up without words. Every other dance, he would saunter over and dance opposite Carine. Ruby would immediately sit down and sit out the dance. Carine would dance one dance, silent and aloof, then she would sit down. Back in her seat, unobserved, Carine’s veneer would crack. She would slump, giggle and blush. Sitting on Ruby’s knee, she would avidly discuss him and her chances of ‘bagging off’ with him.

Cool and composed once more, she and Ruby sauntered onto the dancefloor. The guy came over once more and Ruby sat down. Two dances this time. On the second dance he moved across. Carine and he kissed passionately for ten minutes. Everyone returned to their seats. Carine was obviously flattered. She was pleased with herself and playing the game well. However, this time her luck was out. The guy did not follow events through to their logical conclusion. He decided instead to pick up someone completely different on the last dance. Disappointed (but putting a brave face on it) Carine (and Ruby) left for the last bus.

At a couple of points during the evening, when Carine was tied up and Ruby and Louise were dancing, I left my small circle of friends to play good Samaritan elsewhere. Everyone it seemed (including staff) had managed to get round the ‘no drinks’ ban and were high on glue or drink. The consequences of treating adolescents as sub-adult (for their own protection) and not allow drink, pushes them into finding their own cultural solutions to the limitations imposed. It often results in the opposite of the desired effect.
Teenage drinkers

Netta and Isobel were also best friends. They related to me with glee the story of how they had arrived at the disco. They had bought a bottle of vodka on the way. They also bought a bottle of *Irn Bru*. They replaced half of the *Irn Bru* with the vodka.

Netta: God, ye' should huv' seen us oan the bus Annes. Isobel kep' turnin' tae me an' sayin' "Netty, would-you-like-a-small-sip-of-this-lovely-Irn-Bru"?

Both were incredibly drunk. Netta no less than Isobel. Isobel spent the first half of the evening slumped in a chair with her head in her hands and the second half curled up under the sink in the toilet. Isobel was out of action for the evening. Had I not been there, this would have been a social disaster for Netta. Once again I made myself indispensable.

Netta: Come oan Anne dance.

Anne, ye' gaurnae chum me tae the bog tae see Isobel.

Ye' gaurnae chum me tae ask the boy at the disco tae play the Eurythmics.

If you do not come in two's, you do not dance and if you do not dance, you do not get boyfriends.

The other side of best friends

These are the supportive and positive aspects of female relationships, the sensitivity and awareness teenage girls show towards each other. Angela McRobbie noted this too. That girls' own private culture
... is characterised by a tremendous sense of solidarity between the girls and in particular between "best friends"! (McRobbie, 1978:106)

The close emotional attachments, the informality of relationships between girls of this age are real and in many ways more satisfying than anything that could be achieved with boys. Boys and girls are brought up to want different things from relationships with each other. Boys want to score, girls want stable relationships. Liaisons inevitably seem unsatisfactory.

And what girls can have with boys is loaded with cultural expectations, ideas about their futures are bound to fall short of the casual easy friendships girls can have with one another.

But like Angela McRobbie, I also noticed that friendships between girls were double-edged. That they are marred somewhat by alternative motives. That the female twosome anticipates future boyfriends.

Wider ideas, reflected in their own attitudes and expectations, distort and limit the way girls appreciate their relationships with each other. Their relationships and friendships are interpreted in the light of taken-for-granted ideas about their own future. Friendships with each other are temporary, something to be appreciated on one level as a stop-gap as a means of achieving the boyfriends and husbands they are so powerfully made to want and to need.

Angela McRobbie notes that the driving force behind female friends is the desire to work together to get boyfriends (1978:106). No matter how important a friendship, the unspoken assumption behind it is always that it takes second place to the possibility of getting boyfriends. Fiona and Trish in this study were incredibly close, but
it was always understood in their relationship that it took second
place to Fiona and Steve.

Trish: Ah used tae see a lot mair o' Fiona.  But noo she goes back tae her ain hoose
at seven o'clock tae see Steve.

Trish regretted this state of affairs but understood it.

And when I danced with Netta at the disco, when a guy came over
to her I automatically left the floor to sit down. Netta gave me a
meaningful look over her shoulder. It was sympathetic but the shrug
said quite clearly 'too bad, the world's like this'. I still felt
rejected and undermined as I walked away.

And close as Carine and Ruby were, when Carine danced with her
boy, Ruby did everything in her power to facilitate Carine getting
off with him. She discussed tactics with Carine and provided
entertainment on the way home. Both went home to Ruby's house and
drank tea. They talked and laughed until the early hours and both
ended up in Ruby's bed.

To Conclude

In their own autonomous setting, girls are strong and articulate.
In how they relate to boys, girls are utterly different. This
incident provides an illustration of this.

Carpet beaters

The task of the day was cleaning the carpet in the workshop.
A chance to get out of knitting, this was a sought after job.
Without boys, it was a noisy, colourful affair. Ridiculously dressed
in nylon overalls, woolly hats pulled down over their eyes, socks and
gloves to keep out the dirt, and armed with huge sticks for beating carpets, they lugged the cumbersome carpet over to the garden to be beaten. Spirits were high. We jumped around hugging each other, laughing, sweating and giggling. Grunts of exhaustion were interspersed with curses and screams. Wit, abuse and insults flew.

Heather: Fuckin' help, right. Ah'm no' stanin' aboot here while you gawk at Colin.

Joyce: Wait, ma hat, ma hat, it's fell owr ma eyes. Wait, wait, ma stick's broke.

Heather: Yer' spots are much better the day Nette.

Netta: Aye, ah ken. Ah jist discovered that crisps huv' goat oil in them. They're bad fur yer' spots. Ah'm gaunnae eat fruit at break fae noo oan.

After beating the carpet.

Heather: S'awffy bad fur yer' spots, dust. Ah'm gaunnae go an' scrub ma face.

The arrival of two boys utterly transformed the scene. Two painters attracted by the noise, appeared at the top of the garden. Their presence then their approach created havoc.

Heather: Christ, the laddies are comin'.

Netta: (snatching off her woolly hat)
Whit am ah like, whit am ah like!
Whit like's ma hair?

Joyce: Fuck, ah'VE goat spots an' ah look hellish wi' ma hair back.

Embarrassment increased as the boys approached. They took the sticks from the hands of the girls as their right and took over beating.
The girls were crushingly embarrassed about the way they were dressed. Reduced to an awkward silence, they sat away from the action, backs turned, unable to speak. To the boys, they appeared cowed, weak and silly. When the boys left, the transformation was equally dramatic.

Netta: Whit dae ye' 'hink o' Colin?
(Colin had just finished showing his prowess as the best carpet beater)

Ally: Total arse hole.

Netta: Ah quite like him.

Ally: He's goat a new wee moustache comin' in an' he 'hinks he's it. He's only been here fur three weeks an' a'ready he's fancied everybody.

With boys around, girls' behaviour altered drastically. What they said, how they said things, changed. Mannerisms were tight, nervous and coy.

When boys discuss personal relationships, they talk about 'scoring' and about sex.

Pete: That burd wi' the skinheid an' the nae teeth would go out wi' anybody.

Frankie: Ah'm no' kiddin' ye' man ah could' ve gaun' oot wi' any wan o' thae' burds at Snowies pairty.

When girls do, it is to create the impression that they are in long-term relationships (often when they are not).

Fran: He disnae like ma hair like this.

Pat: He says he's gaunnae buy me a jaiket fur ma birthday. Ah dinnae even need yin.
Boyfriends of a few days take on the aura of forty year old marriages. Fran had picked up Phil the day before the disco. In relation to the rest of the girls, her standing rose enormously. As ever, the personal cost to herself was considerable.

From the moment she asked him out, she discussed him in the most familiar of terms. It was as though he had always been her boyfriend. Again somewhat surprisingly, it was not the romantic element in her relationship that she played up. She played that down and gave the impression of matter of factness. She familiarised him by never referring to him by his name, rather 'he' or 'him'.

Far from being romantic when she was with him at the disco, far from being in a mood of showing off her new boyfriend, Fran was matter of fact. More than anything, she wanted to convey an image of long-termness and possessiveness. She flicked dust from his collar, held his jacket, searched the pockets of his jacket for cigarettes as her right. They spent most of the evening bickering, about him leaving her too long by herself, about the girls he was eyeing in her presence. It created the illusion not of a new relationship, but of a marriage of long-standing.

Fran: He's meetin' me after work, we're gaun' fur a walk.

In their separate workshops, then, where boys were integrated and contained in trying to appear like real workers, girls were irrepressible. They rejected the discipline of S/F and were strong and clever in their resistance to authority.

But for girls, freedom was paid for at a price. And the franticness that girls felt about their lives was transferred (not onto a desperation about jobs) but, all too predictably, onto feelings
of desperation about boys, boyfriends and relationships. And so many of the positive things that girls created for themselves in S/P, the way they effectively made space for themselves, and alleviated boredom, how they generated their own informal activities, the autonomous culture they so carefully and successfully build up, was ultimately organised around boys, boyfriends, engagements and husbands.

Where the girls in Norma Sherratt's study started out wanting jobs as air hostesses and physiotherapists, girls in S/P only in their dreams imagined themselves as office workers, hairdressers. Girls in S/P looked for glamour in much more modest places. In the absence of real jobs and anything reasonable which could substitute, girls, undaunted in their search for glamour, increasingly define themselves out of the job market altogether and look for it from relationships with boys and marriage. In S/P, a preoccupation with jobs took a backseat. The desperation they felt about their futures, their search for glamorous lives was displaced, deflected and mediated onto obsessions about their ability and inability to get and to keep boys.

And the whole of their autonomous culture was organised around creating effective space and time to find out about and to be with boys. Thus space and time they won for themselves was used ultimately to manoeuvre into situations where they can be and where they can find things out about boys (sewing socks on the balcony, for example, exchanging information in the toilet). When girls got together off the machines, it was generally to talk about boys. All of their energy went into gathering and piecing together information about boys. (This was certainly one of girls' best, if most misplaced skills.) And facts were amassed and gathered in the
most adverse of circumstances - from odd chance meetings on stairs, from boys themselves as they engaged in the more boring aspects of their jobs, sweeping the balcony outside the knitwear workshop. Girls would shout direct questions at boys over the balcony either for their own interest or for one of their friends. They would observe boys from a distance, or rely on family and friendship networks outside the workshop to fill in gaps about boys' personal biographies. In this way girls knew a lot about boys. They knew their names, where they lived, who their friends were, who they went out with. This activity was not reciprocated by boys. Often it took boys a year to find out the names of the other boys, far less know the names or anything else about girls.

It is easy to make light of this - talking about boys is what teenage girls always do, but this obsession with boys had very serious implications. It did not happen simply because teenage girls are 'like that'. It is the result of very real material circumstances in their lives that leave them no choice and witnessing some of the strongest and most assertive young women I know behave in degrading, submissive and frantic ways in the hope of improving their lives through men, is not to be taken lightly.

Far from being irresponsible and irrational, by the age of sixteen these girls already carry huge burdens of responsibility and many have already faced poverty and homelessness, joblessness and difficult relationships. Many of them already play a vital and pivotal role within their families, holding parents together, mediating (often physically) between them, caring for younger members of the family, cooking and cleaning.

The reality of sex for most working-class teenagers is far from
idyllic and romantic (making nonsense of such sentiments as 'puppy love'). The material reality of their lives, their dependence on parents, lack of freedom and lack of money, that parents expect them to be asexual, means that it is hidden and often less than desirable. And where feminists are currently discussing the pill, the sexual 'freedom' of the 'sixties, in critical terms, for women who are young and working-class the way change filters to them is different and the effects, perhaps, even more of a mixed blessing.

Boys aim to get a relationship in as short a time as possible. Girls actively aim to prevent it. When sex does occur, it is often the result of a physical struggle. Summer or winter, physical and sexual encounters happen outside. Sex occurs in shop doorways, at bus stops, derelict buildings, garage lockups. It is in a car if you are lucky, outside in the countryside or at parties. There is always an element of haste, it is often cold and someone could interrupt.

Girls are picked up, beaten up and expected to have sex. And what passes for sex happens in the least conducive of circumstances. It is often brutal, with someone you do not want and it usually ends in a physical struggle. The early sexual experiences of most working-class teenage girls tend to be not only humiliating and painful, but dangerous as well. Often it amounts to little more than rape. Many of the girls in the workshop were sexually experienced and most of them had been pushed every inch of the way.
CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

I want to recap on the main points to emerge out of my thesis.

From my introduction the important thing to remember is that in any attempt to understand youth, class and gender have to be centre stage. And I have tried to look not at the more spectacular sub-cultural responses of working-class youth to the conditions of their lives, but rather at the extent to which ordinary teenagers are either contained or rebel against the new institutional arrangements designed to deal with the problems of their unemployment. In doing this I have tried to understand the different arrangements for and responses of both girls and boys.

In the paintshop I outlined the way in which an adherence to the world of (manual) work created an environment which reinforced gender stereotypes. It excluded girls rather than moved any way towards offering them alternatives. I outlined the struggle of one particular girl to be accepted. To do so, she had to be seen to be sexually neutral and non-threatening.

For boys in the paintshop, I argued that working-class ex-tradesmen there were able to create an environment and flavour of work which allowed boys to build up and reinforce images of themselves which they had of being real workers with real jobs. This was what they desperately wanted and they were largely well behaved. Resistance, when it did occur, was not confrontational or threatening to the running of the workshop. In the absence of real jobs, it seems, at least for boys, it is schemes which most replicate work which they want and which most give them confidence.
In joinery, because supervisors were reluctant to impose on boys a harsh regime and were more lenient, they were less able to create an atmosphere through which boys could create the illusion of real work. This workshop was less relevant to boys who were less accepting and more disruptive.

I tentatively argue that in a situation where the material circumstances of their lives are deteriorating, aspects of masculinity, for example, the need to feel like real men with real jobs are heightened. There was also little evidence to suggest that ideas generally held about women as objects of sex to be used and abused were altered for the better. On the contrary, here boys never discussed girls in anything other than the most disparaging of terms.

Unlike painters, girls in knitwear were held in low regard. Also unlike painters, inside their workshop girls were confrontational. They struggled with supervisors over every aspect of work - over what to knit, what colours of wool to use, over how to put patterns together. Supervisors tried to make girls knit complex garments, girls tried to knit the simplest. They struggled to spend as little time as possible on their machines. Girls rejected the formal aspects of work.

This was partly explained in that unlike boys' supervisors, in knitwear, supervisors were unable to create work which was relevant. Rather, possessing skills which were essentially middle-class, craft, skills, more in line with management aims and the MSC than was the case for boys meant the atmosphere felt more like school than work. Girls' cultural identities were less about work than about the pursuit of romance and glamorous lives. Knitting in no way fitted this image of themselves. They rejected it.
Insofar as S/F was acceptable to girls, it was for reasons other than the nature of work. They were able to build up an autonomous culture of their own which was important for several reasons.

In the absence of money or opportunity to indulge in leisure outside the workshop, the workshop did provide girls with the social opportunity to appear in the world as glamorous. They spent evenings preparing for work, spent days creating the space to fantasise about, to find out about and relate to boys. In relation to authority in the workshop, in their resistance, girls were as enterprising and assertive as any of the 'lads' in Paul Willis' study. What was different was that they used the space they so cleverly created to build their autonomous culture around boys. And ultimately it locked them not into a lifetime of manual work (like Willis' 'lads') not even into a position among the unemployed, but into a lifetime of domesticity and dependence on men.

A Note on the Future of S/F

I would also like to mention the future of the workshop. As my study was coming to an end, the precise institutional arrangements I was studying - the Youth Opportunities Programme - were also coming to an end, to be replaced by the Youth Training Scheme (YTS). This raises questions about the extent to which these changed arrangements limit the generalisability of my study. For YTS was in part a response to criticism of YOP, and perhaps some of what I found were 'abuses' which will have been removed. Again, only a further study could conclusively answer this question, but a few remarks are in order. I witnessed in S/F preparations for the transition from YOP
to YTS. As S/F moved to fulfil the MSC's demands, the paradoxical result was to endanger the basis of such 'integrative' success as it enjoyed. For example, under YOP, Jim was the manager in the workshop when I started. His policy was basically one of non-interference. The cultural gap that existed between office and workshop, fundamental to the smooth operation of S/F, was left untouched by Jim. Jim allowed individual managers control over what happened in their own workshop.

The general move from YOP to YTS forced changes. There was a real worry that the scheme would close, jobs would be lost. And from the first awareness of YTS there was a push to streamline the workshop and make it acceptable to the MSC in the new order. A trainee contract was introduced. One of the new conditions of YTS, it was introduced in S/F before it was widely introduced. Tighter assessment and productivity sheets were brought in, again before YTS required them. Thus, before YTS was formally introduced S/F was able to present to the MSC a scheme which already embodied its general aims. Its future was safe. Jim moved to set up and manage a community industry scheme on the same premises and Frank, the new manager, reflected the change to YTS. Frank had a clear idea about how the workshop should be run, and his ideas were more in line with the new vocational ideals of the MSC than were Jim's. Unlike Jim, Frank, without understanding the basis of boys' acceptance of the paintshop, tried to change it.

Where Tam had created the feel and atmosphere of a real workplace with real workers, Frank wanted supervisors to be more like teachers, boys to be students. He wanted to create an atmosphere which felt more like school than work. Frank tried to introduce formal lessons
in literacy and numeracy, and was indeed more interested in altering attitudes than in providing them with trade skills. He wanted supervisors to take on the personal problems of trainees.

Whether trainees would have accepted Frank's changes is open to speculation. In the first instance they met the resistance of supervisors. Tam resented Frank for reasons of his own.

Tam: Ah've been a tradesman a' ma life. Ah've been dealin' wi' apprentices fur God knows how many years, an' he thinks he kin come an' tell me whit tae dae wi' ma laddies. Ah've been here longer than anybody here. It'll be owr ma dead body.

Frank's strategy met with similar results in the joinery shop. Here too, the enthusiasm for broadening boys' minds and providing them with a more creative alternative to the harshness of real work was directly in opposition to Joe. Frank saw the important work that Joe did was 'benchwork'; he wanted to expand that. Joe had other ideas.

Joe: Rockin' horses an' jigsaw puzzles? Can ye' see these laddies. These laddies should be raisin' frames an' hingin' doors and batterin' in nails, no' makin' bloody rockin' horses.

Frank did in the end understand the difficulties of involving himself too much in the day-to-day running of workshops and (this time) he withdrew, leaving individual supervisors to run things as before.

What made the paintshop work, what integrated boys here, was not the public face of S/F, nor will it be the techniques a future management will use. Had boys been supervised by middle-class people with ideas about the new vocationalism, had boys been involved in painting murals on community centres, decorating civic
centres (as is common on many such schemes) they would, undoubtedly, have been a lot less accepting. The paintshop was of relevance to boys partly because of who supervisors were and what they were trying to do.

It is not to difficult to predict the likely effect in S/F of a move more towards YTS and the new vocationalism, the demise of supervisors with trade backgrounds to those with professional and counselling backgrounds. The effects may well not be the ones intended. And indeed the workshop may well witness a lessening of control and containment, at least among boys, rather than the other way around.

And I want to raise a note of caution here about this claim that working-class supervisors are more effective, that it is not schemes run in ways which most adhere to the new vocationalism which trainees most respect. Working-class supervisors, used to training apprentices to the highest standards, tried to replicate the discipline of the apprenticeship system with new arrangements and with different outcomes - that was Tam's way. The new vocationalism involves less emphasis on practical skills than on personal, general ones. This is perhaps the way the workshop will inevitably move and may well have less than the desired effect. Ally illustrates this well.

**Ally:** Hav' ye' ever been up for the festival society? Ah wiz there for a year. It wiz barry fun. W'd a RIGHT CARRY ON. This place is that strict. Everybody ah ken, ma uncle, ma ma, everybody gets mad when ah tell them whit ye're tae dae for £23. They pay yer' money intae the bank hen, tae teach ye' aboot money, it's a right hassle. C... wiz different, they didnae treat ye' like ye' wit in a real job - no' fae £23 - they wiznae on yer' back the whole time. Ye' didnae learn...
much but. It wiz nae use fur gettin' ye' a job. It's best for yersel' when it's like this. At least they get the paper every day here tae try and find ye' a job.

But this information has to be carefully used. The reasons for the acceptance of one regime and the rejection of the other are too complicated to be able to say easily that one model, one workshop, is more or less progressive than the other.

As Cohen says:

'But it would be misleading to think that schemes where the stress is laid on personal development are necessarily more progressive than those which emphasise work discipline ... These are simply two different but complementary disciplinary forms ...'
(Cohen, 1984:107)

That schemes that are more authoritarian are more successful with young people reflects the extent to which working-class young people want relevant jobs. This information should not be used as a better way of policing young people and constructing more effective ways of containing them.

Don't Forget Gender

I think the lessons to be learned from this study are both theoretical and practical (though the latter are inevitably more ambiguous and this study has been conducted in the spirit of the ethnographer, not the policy researcher). To summarise briefly, unless the sociological study of young people remembers there can be many different outcomes generated from basically the same class location, unless it looks at what incorporates young people as well as
at what makes them rebel, unless it looks at girls as well as boys, at ordinary teenagers as well as their more flamboyant contemporaries, it can wholly misunderstand the phenomenon it is examining.

To hark back to the introduction and to Paul Willis' discussion of how most of the literature about working-class youth is about boys. Willis' ideas about femininity were limited (as were mine about masculinity). There are serious consequences of this for his work. Assumptions he makes about girls implicitly underpin much of what he says about boys. He can describe the behaviour of boys and call it masculine. He assumes that masculinity is assertive, active and strong; femininity is passive and weak.

'... the characteristic style is masculine, the ability to take the initiative, to make others laugh, to do unexpected and amusing things'.
(Willis, 1977:30)

Yet, this description of the 'lads' could as easily be about girls in my study. (Indeed, in S/F, it is a much more apt description of girls than boys.)

'... the lads pour over the countryside in a search for incidents to amuse, subvert and incite'.
(Willis, 1977:30)

'Outside school visits are a nightmare for staff ... In the museum the lads are a plague of locusts ... handling, pushing, pulling, trying, testing and mauling everything in sight'.
(Willis, 1977:31)

This behaviour equally appropriately describes the cultural responses (in some circumstances) of teenage girls. In most instances, responses like these are hidden from men and from middle-class researchers.

A lot of what Willis assumed to be masculine is (or can be under
the right circumstances) common to working-class teenagers as a whole. The responses he describes as male, are class responses. Attitudes and responses by girls, to YOP, though certainly modified by gender were, in flavour at least, similar to boys. What Paul Willis did not and could not know was that girls in their (hidden) culture of opposition can be just as 'masculine' as boys. In their resistance to authority and in their search for the 'pisstake' and the alleviation of boredom, their responses were every bit as effective.

This is not to say that gender makes no difference or that boys and girls respond (in class terms) in exactly the same way. They do not. I think that gender comes into play on a different level from the level envisaged by Willis. If the form and flavour of boys' and girls' resistance to the state and to capital is similar, outcomes are not. And it is here that gender modifies and differentiates outcomes. It is partly in their daily interaction with each other that boys and girls are brought to accept different things about themselves and ultimately come to embrace very different futures.

How girls see themselves, what they expect and accept from their lives, is worked out in a daily way from a position of subordination. Boys work out their futures from a position of relative power vis-a-vis girls, despite their overall powerlessness. And the meeting of the two creates different outcomes. From the start, boys are defined and define themselves as better than girls. They assert their masculinity and reject everything feminine. This interacts with class in a way which leads them to behave appallingly towards individual girls.
For girls, the future that most of them are eventually locked into is also the result of the interaction of class and gender. Here too, class insights are modified and are distorted by gender. Unlike boys, however, girls' lives are created out of an early definition and acceptance of themselves as less than boys. They live out every day (in relation to boys) the creation and recreation of themselves as worthless and as failures. They are at the bottom of every power hierarchy. All the forces of capital, the state, patriarchy (in the form of parents, teachers, supervisors, the media and anonymous authority, plus their own male peers), bear down on these (as yet) strong and independent girls, creating and recreating daily feelings of failure, stupidity and worthlessness, which eventually lock them into both a lifetime of meaningless work (and unemployment) and into a lifetime of dependence on men.

Boys and girls in relation to each other create different futures. Differences which emerge and work themselves out when the sexes interact. What I have tried to do is to look at how boys and girls work out the new conditions of life which are now being imposed on them by the state. I have tried to show the overwhelming impact these changes are having on every aspect of their lives. And the nature of these changes can, I think, only be appreciated at this deep cultural level. YOP and YTS are not only about imposing superficial, material/financial changes. Change - obviously not just policy change but also the wider changes associated with crisis - filters down and spreads into every corner of the lives of teenagers, structuring and restructuring their personal lives, friendships, as well as how they relate to their families and to each other.

But nothing could be more mistaken than to see this as a process
in which an economic base deterministically modifies a cultural superstructure. The different responses of boys and girls are active, cultural responses, born out of the material circumstances of their lives and now out of a desperation far deeper than that experienced by any of Willis' subjects. Like boys, girls have little possibility of finding jobs. But because girls occupy a different structural and ideological position in the world from boys, it becomes increasingly tempting and possible for them to deflect the desperation they feel about their lives onto notions of romanticism. They find indirect solutions to their problems through boys, engagements and marriage. The implications of this are not minor. The practical outcome of this, the inevitable changes in behaviour this creates, are reflected by an increasing dependence on men and brings with it a willingness to act in new ways. Limits to what is deemed suitable behaviour change, with negative consequences for girls.

In this current situation, with regard to personal and sexual relationships, it seems likely that girls are prepared to accept a lot less, to be forced into behaviour which is increasingly humiliating and degrading and into relationships where they accept less, fight less, stay longer. They may well be more prepared to be picked up, beaten up and are increasingly in a position of being able to do little when sex is forced upon them.

Though my prime purpose is not to propose policy or give advice, it is impossible for the researcher on a topic like this to smugly forget the practitioners' 'problems of "Monday morning"' (Willis, 1977:186).
'If we have nothing to say about what to do on Monday morning everything is yielded to a purist structuralist immobilising reductionist tautology ...
(Willis, 1977:186)

'To contract out of the messy business of day to day problems is to deny the active, contested nature of social and cultural reproduction; to condemn real people to the status of passive zombies, and actually cancel the future by default'.
(Willis, 1977:186)

Of course, it is worth remembering just how much is attributable to the 'tyranny of structures', for otherwise individuals blame themselves. Perhaps here I should generalise what in my preface I said to the S/F supervisors.

Anyone occupying such a position is, to borrow a metaphor from geology, on a fault-line: the forces of world recession, capitalist crisis, state restructuring - and possibly turbulent, even violent, youth response - are at work beneath their feet. If they fall down, it may not be their individual lack of balance that is to blame, but it may be the way the ground shifts under their feet. They cannot create jobs where there are none; they cannot be expected to (nor should they try to) habituate young people to a life of permanent unemployment or casual work. Too much, in other words, should not be expected from schemes for the young unemployed nor from those who work in them.

That being said, I think there are lessons to be learnt from this thesis for policy and practice. One of the important things I hope to emerge from my study is the recognition that there is some room at the cultural level.

I do not intend to spell out in a detailed way changes that could be made in the workshop; that, I think, can best be left for the
people involved. It does though raise for them the question that Willis mentioned. How to act to make things better in an everyday way which does not merely feed wider cultural reproduction. There is a problem of using the suggestions I make simply to make the workshop more workable. For example, by appreciating the culture of girls and what forms it, it becomes easy to understand their attitude towards knitting. It would be a relatively easy step from here to allow girls to knit what they wanted. To do this would undoubtedly make the substance of girls' everyday existence in S/F more meaningful. But at the same time it raises questions about integrating girls around such a traditional woman's skill, a skill that affords them little place in the local job market.

It also raises a wider question about mixed workshops, where boys and girls would have access to all the skills. The advantages and disadvantages of this are not straightforward and have fundamental implications for the organisation of the workshop and its relevance to both staff and trainees.

Most importantly, in any notion of change for the better, there is a need to understand and respect the culture of trainees and to incorporate that understanding into what is created in the workshop. Several authors outline the working-class assumptions about young people on which schemes are based. That young people are:

'... ignorant of their rights and weakly motivated to defend them. They lack any kind of work experience. They have no access to useful information and advice other than that provided by official agencies and professional experts. They have difficulty in organising their lives in a rational way or satisfactory way'.

(Cohen, 1974:126)
A number of authors have pointed out that this does not hold empirically (Moore, 1984:34; Finn, 1984:32). From a study of young people in schools in Coventry and Rugby, Finn (1984) points out (and my own study also reinforces) that young people's expectations and attitudes, far from being based on nothing and on ignorance, were based on real experience of the job market and a wealth of cultural knowledge about their potential futures. And Finn (1984:39) claims that far from being ignorant about the labour market, young people had a sound sense of it and the possibilities which existed for them within it. In my study too, girls and boys brought this knowledge to the workshop and it influenced their attitude to and interpretation of work there. Finn (1984:39) also points out and my own work also backs up that the mostly realistic expectations young people have, the wealth of knowledge about what is available and possible to do locally and the channels of recruitment open to them are not formed or obtained through the formal channels of school or the careers service. And neither does it come from the barrage of counselling and careers services now being set up under the MSC, although that certainly has the effect of detracting from and modifying the knowledge that they have. Their knowledge is formed in a different way from this.

'... the dominant influence on the way young people make choices or decisions about their futures comes from their class and cultural backgrounds'.

(Finn, 1984:26)

In the workshop what most influenced boys' attitudes to and ideas of work was not the formal arrangements which existed, through the staff training officer and the careers service, but through the knowledge and contacts of working-class supervisors. Girls'
supervisors had no contacts with employers in the kind of work to which girls could be potentially recruited. Girls were much less likely to leave the workshop and enter employment. The only girl I ever knew to do so was Tina. To her great pleasure, she eventually found work in a local whisky bond. Her aunt had worked there for twenty years and had 'put a word in for her'.

Phil Cohen also makes a similar point:

'The way in which some of these families provided information and advice on employment opportunities, as well as following the time honoured practice of "having a word in the gaffer's ear", made the careers service seem almost an irrelevance'.
(Cohen, 1981:147)

I agree with Dan Finn's point about young people that

'... essentially they are not really in need of many of the social and life skills on offer from the MSC and its training programme - of "coping", "resisting provocation", "taking orders", "getting on with fellow workers" and so on - because they have already had many of these experiences and learned how to cope with them competently and realistically'.
(Finn, 1984:54)

They are already familiar with such things. And what the new formal arrangements often do negates their real competence and skills, their knowledge which informs decisions about which aspects of what they are offered are valid and relevant to them or not.

For anything to change means first and foremost taking into account and respecting the culture of working-class teenagers. And respecting the culture of working-class teenagers also means respecting that fundamental change will not come from the top down, but from them. In this study, if nothing else, I hope I have shown that in many respects young people are as aware of the conditions of
their lives as any sociologist. I leave the last word to Trish.

Trish: Whit is it ye' study again?

Me: Sociology.

Trish: Whit's that again? Whit dae ye' dae?

Me: It's aboot tryin' tae understand how come the world's like this.

Trish: God, whit did ye' want tae go an' dae a daft thing like that fur? Ah 'thinks university's stupid, college isnae sae bad - least ye' learn 'hings fur jobs - like hairdressin'.

Me: Bit ah dinnae see it as somethin' tae get ye' ah joab. Ah jist like daein' sociology. It's made me look at the world different.

Trish: (laughing, with a touch of sarcasm) Aw, aye, ah ken, ye' used tae be borin' an' depressed till ye' discovered sociology.

Me: Aye, aw right, aw right, it's like 'Smirnoff' ah ken.

Trish: Ah bit ye' dinnae need tae dae sociology tae ken the things you ken. Ah used tae be daed borin' an' depressed masel', ah hated masel', bit, ah worked 'hings oot fur masel'. Ah'm ah dead happy person noo.

Me: See you Trish, ah think you're amazin'. See when ah think o' whit ah wiz like when ah wiz sixteen an' the things ah ken't - an' then ah see you, ah camae believe it. You ken a' the things ah ken noo an' a lot mair.

Trish: Ah ken. Like - you say ye're tryin' tae find oot whit Mrs Thatcher is daein' an' that. Well, me an' Fiona (her best pal) sit doon an' talk about 'hings like that a' the time. We ken 'hings wi'oot dae' in' sociology. Ah dinnae mean any offence or onythin', bit, see me an' Fiona, well, we were brought up in this dead rough area an' ye' hud tae learn 'hings really fast. We'd tae grow up quick, stick up fur yersel' an' that. Like, ah ken guys ur' really stupit an' thick, bit, other folk, folk that's aulder n'us - like ma ma -
they dinnae know nothin', they cannae see nothin'. You ken see 'hings different fae folk your age 'cause you've done sociology. Bit, folk ma age see 'hings wi'oot sociology. We're no' like maist folk your age. See if anythin' happens, well, it'll be b' folk ma age. 'Cause it's different fur us noo. See ma ma, she's brilliant, but she disnae know nothin'.
Footnotes


3. For fuller discussion of 'style' see Clarke, 1975b:175-191.


5. The piece of empirical work that I know of that best attempts this is 'Brothers' (1983) by Cynthia Cockburn. Again, it is worth noting the sympathetic insight into the worlds of her male respondents that Cockburn, a female researcher, is able to achieve.


7. For detailed analysis of the history of manpower planning, see Perry, 1976.

8. David Raffe, 1985a:3 outlines the steady increase of youth unemployment throughout the 1970s and provides a statistical overview of youth unemployment in that period.


10. See also Frith, 1980:28; Markall and Gregory, 1982:57.

11. See Raffe, 1984a for a discussion of the MSC in Scotland.

12. See Markall, 1982 for discussion of Job Creation Project.


16. Moore, 1984:74 discusses the 1977 Green Paper which resulted from Callaghan's speech. A pre-monetaryist document. It was not about directly preparing young people for work. Its real theme was teaching pupils about work, about 'promoting a particular vision of our society'. It was (he claims) in keeping with the values of a progressive educational paradigm and provided teachers with an acceptable framework within which to teach about the world of work.

17. Trish was the girl mentioned in the quote at the beginning of this chapter.

18. I include mine (Figure 1). It throws up all the contradictions I felt about participant observation - making it with boys on the one hand, pleasing Tam on the other. In many ways I am indebted to Tam.

Tam: Read it yersel'. It's all true. Ye've been a real asset tae me. Use it as a reference.

19. Somewhat ironically perhaps, many of the techniques used by girls to avoid work more closely resembled the workplace resistance outlined in classic studies of male manual workers than boys - this despite boys' strong adherence to the world of work.

20. I discuss this in the section 'Trish and Me'.

21. The phenomenon of 'best pals' is also mentioned by Angela McRobbie, 1978.

22. See Mungham, 1976 for discussion of boys and dancehalls.

23. See Cohen, 1964
### FIGURE 1

#### S/F Workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME: Anne Stafford</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCTION</th>
<th>Month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
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<tbody>
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<td>Works hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Works well usually</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capable of more effort</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Works if pushed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lacks motivation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Easily bored</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually dependable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually no trouble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tends to be irresponsible</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Very good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late about once a week</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Late several times a week</td>
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<td>Warned for bad time-keeping</td>
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<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Disruptive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Has outbursts of temper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complains</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad-humoured</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixes well</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not integrate well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily led</td>
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