

Roderick Martin and Judith Wallace

# Working Women in Recession

Employment,  
Redundancy, and  
Unemployment

# WORKING WOMEN IN RECESSION

Employment, Redundancy,  
and Unemployment

by  
RODERICK MARTIN  
and  
JUDITH WALLACE

*Trinity College, Oxford*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
1984

*Oxford University Press, Walton Street Oxford OX2 6DP*

*London New York Toronto  
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi  
Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo  
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town  
Melbourne Auckland*

*and associated companies in  
Beirut Berlin Ibadan Mexico City Nicosia*

*Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press*

*Published in the United States  
by Oxford University Press, New York*

*© Roderick Martin and Judith Wallace 1984*

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without  
the prior permission of Oxford University Press*

*This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way  
of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated  
without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover  
other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition  
including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser*

***British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data***

***Martin, Roderick***

*Working women in recession.*

*1. Women—Employment—Great Britain*

*2. Unemployment—Great Britain*

*I. Title II. Wallace, Judith*

*331.4'137941 HD6135*

*ISBN 0-19-878006-0*

*ISBN 0-19-878005-2 Pbk*

*Typeset at the Alden Press  
Printed in Great Britain by  
Biddles Ltd, Guildford*

## **WORKING WOMEN IN RECESSION**

## PREFACE

Our first debt is to the women in the five areas who twice gave up their time voluntarily to be interviewed at length during a trying period of their lives: without their active and full participation the study would have been impossible: we hope that our study helps to bring attention to their views. We are also very grateful to the managements of the five companies who co-operated in the project: the project inevitably involved the use of employees' time, without direct benefit to the managements concerned — although we hope that they will regard increased awareness of the effects of the recession on manufacturing industry as beneficial. To preserve confidentiality we can only express our appreciation to them in general terms. Thirdly, we would like to thank the officials of the Manpower Services Commission, especially the Regional Manpower Intelligence Units in the South East, Midlands, and North West, and the managers of the Job Centres in the areas in which the case studies were carried out: they gave valuable help in locating suitable research sites, and in providing important background information on local labour-market conditions.

In addition to the authors a number of other people played a significant role in carrying out the research reported. We are especially grateful to Dr Jennie Dey, who was a Research Officer on the project between September 1980 and July 1981: Dr Dey played a major role in the field-work and the preparation of the second questionnaire. We are also grateful for the work of Mrs Pauline Wilkins, who was a research Officer on the project between February and August 1980. For computing assistance we are grateful to Mr Martin Range, Dr Clive Payne, and Professor Christopher Wallace. The secretarial work has been carried out by Mrs Wendy Eadle, Mrs Stella Wood, and Mrs Pat Rogers: we are very grateful to them for their commitment to carrying the project through. The typescript of the report which formed the basis for the book was prepared on the word-processor by Mrs Stella Wood; we are especially grateful to Mrs Wood for her rapid mastery of word-processing, which greatly eased production of the report and subsequent book, and to Mrs Rogers for completing the revisions speedily.

The Department of Employment, Research Division, Social Science Branch, was responsible for the initial conception and funding of the research project, *Female Unemployment: Redundancy Studies*, which forms the basis for the present volume. Throughout the Department played a valuable and helpful

active role. At the Department we are especially grateful to Ms Ceridwen Roberts, the Liaison Officer for the project, for her support, encouragement, and constructive criticism, to Mr Francis Butler, and to Mr Peter Brannen, Chief Research Officer, Social Science Branch, for his careful shepherding through of the project.

Finally, the project would have been impossible without the active help of the President and Fellows of Trinity College, Oxford, especially the Estates Bursar, Mr J. F. Wright, and the Domestic Bursar, Dr R. J. L. Popplewell. We are very grateful for the College's willingness to undertake the administration of the initial research contract, and for providing accommodation and other facilities without which carrying through the project would have been immeasurably more difficult.

Although the research reported upon was funded by the Department of Employment the Department bears no responsibility for the views and opinions expressed. Responsibility for any errors of fact or interpretation rests with the authors.

*Trinity College, Oxford*  
*February 1984*

Roderick Martin  
Judith Wallace

# CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction: Female Employment, Redundancy, and Unemployment</b>	<b>1</b>
	1.1 Background Literature 1.1.1 Women and Employment 1.1.2. Women and Redundancy 1.1.3. Women and Unemployment 1.2. Research Strategy and Tactics 1.3. The Women Interviewed 1.3.1. Age and Family Circumstances 1.3.2. Social Background 1.3.3. Length of Working Life 1.3.4. Occupation 1.3.5. Economic Situation 1.4. Conclusion	
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Female Employment Experience and Attitudes to Work</b>	<b>52</b>
	2.1. Women and Employment 2.2. Job Choice and Occupational Career 2.3. Current Attitudes to Work 2.4. Family Influences Upon Women's Attitudes to Work 2.5. Conclusion	
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Women and Redundancy</b>	<b>103</b>
	3.1. Reasons for the Redundancies 3.2. Long-Term Labour-Force Changes 3.3. Management Decision-Making on Redundancy 3.4. Management-Union Relations 3.4.1. Industrial Relations before the Redundancy 3.4.2. Management-Union Relations during Redundancy 3.5. Redundancy Agreements 3.6. Women Workers' Responses to Redundancy 3.7. Redundancy Pay 3.8. Conclusion	
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Women in the Labour Market</b>	<b>151</b>
	4.1. Post-Redundancy Experience in the Labour Market 4.2. Job Search 4.2.1. The Timing of Job Search 4.2.2. Methods Used in Job Search 4.2.3. Female Handicaps 4.3. Post-Redundancy Employment Experience 4.4. Retraining, Homeworking, and Own Business 4.5. Conclusion: Women in the Labour Market	

<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Women and Unemployment</b>	<b>223</b>
	5.1. Length of Time of Unemployment	
	5.2. The Economic Impact of Redundancy and Unemployment	
	5.2.1. Women's Post-Redundancy Financial Status	
	5.2.2. Uses Made of Redundancy Money	
	5.2.3. Predicted Long-Term Financial Situation	
	5.2.4. Economies	
	5.3. Activities	
	5.4. The Effects of Unemployment on Family Life	
	5.5. The Effect of Unemployment on Social Life and Social Contact	
	5.6. The Effects of Unemployment upon Health	
	5.6.1. The Effect of Unemployment on Physical Health	
	5.6.2. The Effect of Unemployment on Mental Health	
	5.7. Women's General Attitudes to Unemployment	
	5.8. Attitudes Towards Government	
	5.9. Conclusion	
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Conclusion: Working Women in Recession</b>	<b>279</b>
	<b>Appendix</b>	<b>290</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>291</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>294</b>



## **INTRODUCTION: FEMALE EMPLOYMENT, REDUNDANCY, AND UNEMPLOYMENT**

As late as 1976 it was still possible to conclude that women were sociologically invisible participants in industrial life, as Richard Brown did in his survey of the treatment of women in industrial sociology.<sup>1</sup> Since the mid 1970s sociological interest in women's employment issues has expanded rapidly.<sup>2</sup> The increase in the number and visibility of women in employment in the 1970s, and the growing influence of the feminist movement, led to widespread political and academic interest in issues involving women and work. The Equal Pay Act (1970), the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), and the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission indicated political concern with improving women's position in employment – although there remains widespread controversy over the practical effects of such legislation.<sup>3</sup> The feminist movement has been especially strong in British sociology, the British Sociological Association establishing its own Standing Committee on the Equality of the Sexes. Political and academic interest were combined in the Department of Employment's programme of research on Women and Employment, of which the present book is a product.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the increased research effort being put into research on female employment issues, the amount of published empirical evidence in women in employment is limited.<sup>5</sup> Published evidence on the effects of the present recession on women is almost non-existent. The present study is presented as an exploration in depth of the experience of groups of working women who were declared redundant in 1981–2, based upon extensive interviews. In this introductory chapter we place our study in its intellectual context by indicating some of the issues raised by previous writers, outline the research strategy followed, and discuss the main features of the sample of women interviewed.

### **1.1 Background literature**

Our study is concerned with women's experience and attitudes in three areas –

## 2 *Working Women in Recession*

employment, redundancy, and unemployment. We therefore briefly review major issues raised in relevant previous writing in the three areas in turn.

### *1.1.1 Women and employment*

In the last decade neo-classical models of the labour market have been undermined by empirical research showing the limitations of the 'rational maximizing' assumptions of labour-market behaviour which underlie neo-classical models, and the resilience of institutional rigidities. Neo-classical models have been substantially replaced by alternative theories of segmented labour markets.<sup>6</sup> Alternative explanations for the segmentation process (employer strategy, work-group closure) and for the location of different groups within particular segments have been put forward. Women are generally located within segments where employment is insecure, earnings are low, promotion opportunities few, and collective organization weak. Their access to more valued labour markets is restricted by the strategies of groups already controlling those markets, by their own limited qualifications, training, and experience, and by domestic responsibilities.

The variant of segmented labour-market theory most widely used to explain women's position in the labour market is dual-labour-market theory.<sup>7</sup> This model postulates two separate labour markets – a primary labour market, in which jobs are secure, relatively well rewarded, and tied to promotional or career ladders, and in which labour is highly organized and solidaristic, and a secondary labour market, in which jobs are insecure, poorly paid, and lacking in opportunities for promotion, and where union activity is weak. There are few points of access into the primary labour market, mainly at the beginning of an individual's work career, subsequent access being restricted by employer and trade-union policies based upon both overt and covert methods of social closure. Moreover, women do not share equally in access to the initial points of entry.<sup>8</sup> Women workers are characteristically recruited into the secondary labour market, especially on their re-entry into the labour market following a period of concentration upon child-rearing.

Several general criticisms have been made of dual-labour-market theory, including its difficulty in analysing the role of public-sector employment. Most importantly, the model is very loosely defined, many jobs possessing attributes characteristic of both labour markets, for example employment security, but limited opportunities for promotion. The employment experience of the women we interviewed exemplifies the limitations of dual-labour-market theories as explanations for female employment experience. The women were employed in large-scale manufacturing industry and highly unionized, with terms and conditions of employment governed by collective bargaining, and, until the current recession, enjoying employment security. The majority of the women were also low paid and had few opportunities for promotion. However, although dual-labour-market theory has little relevance to the pre-redundancy employment experience of the women interviewed, it is more relevant to the post-redundancy

employment experience: the minority of women who obtained jobs following the redundancies found them primarily in the secondary labour market, and re-entry into the primary sector is likely to be difficult, especially for older women.

The Marxist concept of the reserve army of labour has an explicitly political function, linked to the 'marginalization' of the groups constituting the reserve army. The availability of ethnic minorities, immigrants, and women as a potential reserve army of workers whose relative powerlessness or access to alternative sources of income makes them relatively dispensable renders worker control of labour supply impossible, and therefore undermines union bargaining power — especially if accompanied by a de-skilling of the labour process.<sup>9</sup> However, the concept has also been used in a less contentiously Marxist sense, to refer to the restriction of recruitment of women into market employment to periods of economic expansion, or to occupations in which, for whatever reason, less-marginal workers are reluctant to seek employment. Hence the expansion of female employment in the UK in the 1970s was due both to an overall expansion in labour demand and, more particularly, to the expansion of the service sector, where the abilities required were regarded as particularly suited to women and the organization of work made part-time work acceptable and inexpensive to employers. During recession unemployment might be likely to affect women disproportionately because of their concentration in sectors with a high elasticity of demand for labour (and a low level of unionization). In addition, competitive pressures during recession might lead employers to introduce technological change more rapidly.

Empirical evidence for the role of women as a reserve army of labour is limited, and based largely on experience in the two world wars, when women were recruited to perform work previously done by men, only to be expelled from their jobs when the war was over to give place to returned soldiers. Although the government, media, and men encourage women to withdraw from the labour market during recessions, the encouragement has been largely ineffective, apart from the special circumstances of the two world wars. As Milkman has shown, despite media propaganda and direct employer and union action to expel married women from the labour force during the 1930s, the number of women in the labour force in the United States increased slightly between 1930 and 1940.<sup>10</sup> Female employment opportunities were protected by the sex-typing of occupations, clerical jobs and jobs in service industries increasing whilst traditionally male jobs in extractive and manufacturing industries declined. Similarly in Britain in the late 1970s: women's employment share rose between 1977 and 1981, when unemployment increased. In 1977 the female employment share was 38.8 per cent, and unemployment 7.4 per cent, in 1979 39.0 per cent when unemployment was 5.1 per cent, and in 1981 40.1 per cent when unemployment was 9.7 per cent. The decline of manufacturing industry, primarily a male employment sector, between 1979 and 1981 resulted in an increase in the female employment share.<sup>11</sup> Sex-patterned

#### 4 *Working Women in Recession*

segmentation of jobs thus inhibits male encroachment upon female jobs. The effects of social convention are reinforced by economic considerations: as long as unemployment rises and falls in cycles of reasonably short duration, the inconvenience and expense of training workers who have acquired even minor skills – and associated induction costs – will inhibit any major encroachment by one occupational group upon the territory of another's during recession. A further factor inhibiting encroachment is the tendency of industries to have a geographical pattern, and likewise the problems of geographical mobility for unemployed workers.<sup>12</sup>

Although sex-patterned segmentation of the whole labour force has probably operated to protect, or even to enhance, the female share of employment overall, experience in manufacturing industry has been different. Female workers are segregated vertically, at the lower end of the qualifications and skill hierarchy, and horizontally, in the more labour-intensive sectors.<sup>13</sup> In the labour-intensive sectors the effects of the recession have been exacerbated by technological change and competition from Third World countries, for example in clothing, textiles, and electronic assembly. The sex patterning of jobs in manufacturing industry has therefore operated to the disadvantage of women workers, especially women manual workers, resulting in a more rapid loss of female, compared with male, jobs. Hence in the three OPCS occupational categories covering manufacturing industry (groups xi, xii, xiii) female employment fell by 4 per cent between 1977 and 1979, and a further 14 per cent between 1979 and 1981, compared with figures of 1.4 and 11.5 per cent for men for similar periods.<sup>14</sup> If changes in the number of part-time shifts had been taken into account the decline in female employment would probably have been relatively greater.<sup>15</sup>

Theories based upon labour-market segmentation or the role of women as a reserve army of labour do not, in themselves, explain female employment experience. However, economic changes, especially changes in the structure of employment, sex-role stereotypes, the policies of employers and trade unions, and the attitudes of the women themselves combine to explain women's employment behaviour.

In previous paragraphs we have been concerned with structural explanations for women's place in the labour market. In addition, there has been a limited amount of research on how women evaluate their employment, and some comparison between their evaluations and those of men doing similar types of work. Such research suggests that women place a higher value upon some categories of the experience of employment than men who perform similar work tasks, and less value than men upon others. For example, it has been suggested that women workers in low-status occupations are more likely to mention the rewards of sociability and companionship, and less likely to mention a sense of accomplishment.<sup>16</sup> Blauner argues that women in the textile industry, working in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, are less dissatisfied than men, because 'work does not have the central importance and meaning in their lives

that it does for men, since their most important roles are those of wives and mothers.'<sup>17</sup>

These results do not necessarily show that, given identical work experiences, women would evaluate them differently to men since gender-based segmentation of the work-force means that women's jobs are rarely directly comparable to men's. However, it is impossible to predict women's reactions to job loss simply by adjusting known data for men to allow for the different profiles of men's and women's jobs, since gender and job-status effects on job satisfaction interact. As Crosby showed, gender differences are less in high-status than in low-status categories. It is therefore necessary to assume that reactions to employment and unemployment will differ according to both gender and occupation. The evaluation of both employment and unemployment will depend upon the existence of alternative 'compensatory' categories of experience, which are likely to differ according to gender. It is not necessary to assume, and we are not assuming, that the basic goals or values of men and women differ – nor is it necessary to assume that they are the same.

### *1.1.2 Women and redundancy*

Our project is the first major British research project concerned with redundancy and unemployment amongst women: there is therefore no directly relevant research to provide comparative data. Redundancy studies have traditionally either concentrated exclusively on men or studied people who have turned out to be men. The two significant exceptions are Daniel (1972), and Wood (1982).<sup>18</sup> Daniel's research was based on the more extensive field-work, and led him to conclude that

women fared better than men following their redundancy. They had experienced less difficulty in finding a satisfactory new job. Their new jobs compared more favourably with the old. . . where they had changed their type of work this had tended to be from choice and the majority expressed a preference for the new job in comparison to the old. . . nevertheless while women suffered less than men, in general they still felt they had lost more than they had gained.<sup>19</sup>

However, Daniel's research was carried out in south-east London in 1968–70, where the level of unemployment was 1.5 per cent (0.5 per cent for females) in November 1970; female employment opportunities were expanding with the growth of the service sector, especially in London. Daniel's sanguine conclusions are hardly likely to be valid over a decade later, especially for women outside the London region.

Wood's paper is based upon field-work carried out in 1972–3, involving a smaller number of respondents than Daniel's research did: his conclusions echo those of Daniel – 'despite their attachment to their jobs. . . they did not appear to value specific employments as particularly important. They had a flexible orientation and confidence that they could always find work which was roughly equivalent to what they were currently doing.'<sup>20</sup> Wood goes on to suggest that

women would probably react to redundancy in a relatively accepting way even in the present very different economic conditions.

The relevance of previous studies of women's experiences in and attitudes towards redundancies is therefore limited. The studies were undertaken when unemployment was low, the women interviewed correctly believing that alternative employment opportunities were available. Nevertheless, previous research raised the issue of the existence of gender-specific experiences of, and attitudes towards, redundancy. It has been suggested that women are likely to adopt a more fatalistic attitude towards redundancy than men do, because their attitudes towards employment differ, and their investment in specific jobs is less. However women have been active in opposition to redundancies, as is shown in Judy Wadjman's study.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, women are not unwilling in principle to oppose redundancies, especially when they believe that opposition can be effective. Like those of men, women's attitudes towards redundancies are conditioned by their previous socialization, especially at work, the attitudes and behaviour of the managements involved, and their labour-market position. In general, redundancies exemplify labour weakness, whether male or female, unionized or non-unionized.<sup>22</sup>

### *1.1.3 Women and unemployment*

Research upon unemployment has also traditionally neglected the position of women: women have usually been ignored or treated as the spouses of unemployed men. In their recent survey of the literature on unemployment, Hayes and Nutman (1981) comment:

The place work occupies in the life of women has dramatically changed over the years. These changes are not reflected in the many studies of unemployment reported in this book. In the majority of cases these studies examined only the effects of unemployment of men. Wherever possible we have included studies which have embraced [*sic*] women, and we believe that the models and explanations that we have developed are equally applicable to both men and women who have experienced unemployment.<sup>23</sup>

The neglect of women in previous research has not been total. The classic Pilgrim Trust study, *Men Without Work*, includes a discussion of female unemployment especially in areas with traditionally high levels of female employment, as in Leicester and Blackburn.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Daniel (1974) covers women as well as men, although there is little analysis of the specific issues involved in female unemployment, women being only a small minority of the unemployed at the time of his research.<sup>25</sup> However, such exceptions do not undermine the conclusion that research into female unemployment has been seriously neglected: the only major empirical work devoted to female unemployment has been the programme of work recently commissioned by the Department of Employment, of which the present project is a part.

Although there has been little previous research into female unemployment, there is a long tradition of relevant research and comment on male

unemployment. Unfortunately – or fortunately – the majority of post-war studies of unemployment were conceived and carried out in a very different economic environment from that of the early 1980s. From the end of the war to the late 1960s, Britain experienced almost full employment – unemployment levels of 2 per cent or below were, for the most part, accounted for by people moving between jobs and a small residue of people who were disabled or unable to adapt to steady employment. Unemployment was essentially a ‘welfare’ issue and not one of general social concern – the problems of unemployment were the subject of those interested in improvements in manpower planning to minimize frictional unemployment, the proper organization of relief measures to tide people over periods between jobs, and how to motivate the supposedly ‘work-shy’. It was not until the 1970s, when cyclical periods of depression began to deepen and lengthen and recoveries failed to provide sufficient jobs to fulfil demand that unemployment came to be viewed as a social and economic problem which was both diffuse and pervasive. Confidence that unemployment would diminish sharply with improved levels of economic activity has been undermined, improvements in output in the early 1980s being achieved through higher productivity, not through increased employment.

Hill’s 1973 study of unemployment, begun in 1971 when the unemployment rate was only 2.5 per cent, was originally conceived with the intention of shedding light on the phenomenon of ‘long-term unemployment in situations of full employment’ by providing a profile of the long-term unemployed in three English towns.<sup>26</sup> In the event, between the conception of the enterprise and the commencement of field-work the rate of unemployment rose to 4.7 per cent – a situation of full employment no longer existed. The section of Hill’s study dealing with attitudes to employment and unemployment had originally been designed to provide explanations for a lack of motivation to work; it soon became apparent that it was impossible to disentangle the social and psychological pre-conditions of unemployment from the demoralizing effects of long-term unemployment.

In response to the rising unemployment rate of 1971 and 1972, Daniel undertook a national survey of 1,500 unemployed workers drawn from the Department of Employment’s register of the unemployed with the intention of providing general demographic information on an increasing unemployed population – a small section of the survey explored personal feelings about being unemployed.<sup>27</sup> Daniel encountered the opposite problem to Hill’s – the unemployment rate dropped from 4.7 to only 2.5 per cent by the time the survey was started in 1973, and his findings, to a far greater extent than those of Hill, refer to people who were either between jobs or belonged to a small residue of chronically unemployed. His findings on the attitudes of the unemployed reflect those of people facing a temporary period of unemployment, or of people whose way of life was not basically work oriented. Their emphasis on the economic aspects of unemployment is hardly surprising in that context.

In the 1960s and early 1970s it was possible to view the unemployed as

suffering either from individual disabilities, which made it difficult to hold down employment, or from inefficiencies in the operation of labour-market institutions, resulting in gaps between jobs. Beveridge himself had seen an unemployment level of 3.0 per cent as a working definition of full employment. Since 1975 unemployment has remained above 4 per cent, and since 1980 above 10 per cent. Unemployment has become an expected – even perhaps accepted – feature of economic life. The scale and character of unemployment have therefore changed.<sup>28</sup> The larger number of unemployed are drawn from a wide range of social groups: the unemployed worker is as likely to be a young girl who has just left school as a middle-aged male manual worker, with wife and children to support. Both class and gender influence orientations to employment and unemployment. The growth in the number of workers unemployed, and their social diversity, has led to the need for more extensive, and more sophisticated, research than was carried out in the 1960s and early 1970s. In practice, unemployment research in the 1980s has profited more from the unemployment studies of the 1930s than of the early 1970s.

The sociological studies of unemployment in the 1930s – Jahoda and Lazarsfeld's *Marienthal*, Bakke's *The Unemployed Man*, and the Pilgrim Trust's *Men Without Work* – remain classics.<sup>29</sup> Their relevance has been underlined by Jahoda's recent review, *Employment and Unemployment: A Social-Psychological Analysis*, which consolidated the empirical research of the 1930s into a single theoretical framework.<sup>30</sup> Jahoda isolated five significant aspects of the experience of unemployment involving psychological deprivation: changes in the experience of time, the reduction of social contacts, the lack of participation in collective purposes, the absence of an acceptable status and its consequences for personal identity, and the absence of regular activity (p. 39). She omits the psychological deprivations of poverty, although these were stressed in the Marienthal study and were strongly present in other studies of the 1930s, and remain relevant in the 1980s. In varying degrees the impact of all five dimensions of the experience of unemployment (and the loss of earning status) will vary depending upon the availability of alternative resources, which in turn will depend upon the sex and marital status of the individual. Miles (1983), using Jahoda's five dimensions, showed that the impact of unemployment upon men depended upon their access to compensatory categories of experience.<sup>31</sup> However, Miles was concerned only with men; there was no attempt to draw a comparison between the alternative categories of experience available to men and those available to women. Jahoda herself comments:

Many women know from their own experiences or those of their mothers the depressive effect of being isolated without personal status and social identity, deprived of wider experiences than the highly emotionally charged family relations permit, and outside the communal purpose of the larger society. . . [nevertheless] unemployment hits [women] less hard than men psychologically speaking because an alternative is available to them in the return to the traditional role of housewife that provides some time structure, some sense of



purpose, status and activity even though it offers little scope for wider social experiences.<sup>32</sup>

Jahoda's conclusion neglects the effects the experience of employment has upon the women themselves: for individuals, the clock cannot be turned back, and it is misleading to refer to a 'return' to a previous role. The previous role is unlikely to exist if children have grown up, and expectations and attitudes are likely to differ as a result of the experience of employment. Hence, as German research has shown, long-term unemployed women had 'a less rational or explicit time structure, were more isolated in terms of having fewer friends and acquaintances, were more often resigned, and somewhat less emotionally stable' than women who stayed in work.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the alternative role of housewife is less attractive to women who have no children at home. As we indicate in Chapter 5, many of the unemployed women we interviewed felt that they had time on their hands and were more isolated than when in employment, although they did not feel that they lacked a role.

Everyone who has become unemployed after having a job will interpret his/her experience of unemployment partly by contrasting it with their pattern of life when employed. Their evaluation of the state of unemployment will take into account the absence from their daily routine of a 'job' – as well as other aspects such as loss of income and additional free time. The impact of job loss will depend to some extent on the value placed upon the job that was lost. We invited the women to place their own evaluation upon their jobs and to contrast their work routine and environment with the routine and environment in which they now spend the eight hours (or less for part-timers) that they would previously have spent at work.

Unemployment affects individual well-being; it also affects family life – the unemployed workers's position in the family and his/her relations with other members of the family. Previous writers have been mainly concerned with three issues in particular: the effect of increased poverty on family life, the effect of increased proximity when the unemployed worker was at home all day, and the effect on self-esteem of role change, which could involve either simply loss of the role of breadwinner or, if the husband became unemployed and the wife still worked, a switch in the gender-based division of family roles, with the husband becoming the housekeeper and the wife becoming the breadwinner.

In the 1930s studies there was, not surprisingly, an emphasis on the tensions that increased poverty caused in family relations. In Marienthal, both men and women had gone out to work, and the closure of the factory meant that both husband and wife ceased working at approximately the same time: problems caused by changing roles within the family, if they arose, were not investigated – it appeared to them that both men and women 'were all in the same predicament together.' The economic effect of the loss of both incomes in households normally reliant on two was extreme. In general, the tensions and unhappiness brought about by the problems involved in trying to exist on limited and dwindling resources caused a deterioration of relations within