



UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

**Oxford Economic and Social
History Working Papers**

Number 175, December 2019

**History from Underneath: Girls Experience in an Era of
Economic Change**

Jane Humphries

History from Underneath: Girls Experience in an Era of Economic Change

Jane Humphries

Professor of Economic History (Emeritus) Oxford and Fellow (Emeritus) All

Souls College

Centennial Professor, London School of Economics

jane.humphries@all-souls.ox.ac.uk

word count 14097

Abstract

The paper uses autobiographical accounts by 227 working women alongside a larger sample of men's life stories to compare girl and boys' experiences of first jobs, schooling and family life in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It asks whether girls were disadvantaged in seizing the opportunities and fending off the threats to wellbeing occasioned by economic change. Girls were more likely than boys to experience sexual harassment and this constrained the ways in which they could earn a living and live their lives. Fathers as breadwinners merited respect and often affection, but it was mothers with whom girls identified.

Introduction

On leaving school, aged 13 in the 1890s, Elizabeth Andrews contemplated the local job opportunities for girls, the brickworks or colliery screens, and reported herself 'terrified' that she was destined for either. A century earlier and the same age, Mary Ann Ashford, rejected 'the half-starved kind of life' associated with an indoor apprenticeship to a dressmaker or milliner in favour of domestic service.¹ The intervening 100 years saw massive economic change but what effect did it have on women's economic opportunities and wellbeing?²

This paper asks whether girls in particular faced increasing difficulties in accessing training, finding work, securing appropriate remuneration, and even getting a fair deal within the family.³ Most studies of youth focus on boys or young men.⁴ This reflects the sources available, particularly in the era of industrialization.⁵ Apprenticeship registers, census returns and wage data suggest that boys were more likely to be apprenticed (and so as men dominated skilled trades), had a wider range of possible jobs, and saw much steadier progression of earnings with age.⁶ Literacy differentials in adulthood imply that they also had more schooling, although there are no official numbers until the late nineteenth century. All too often, however, girls are lumped together with boys as 'children', despite suspicion that they were disadvantaged in working-class households, yet still had active parts in 'the story of Europe's path to industrial development'.⁷ It is time to look more closely at girls' experience of industrialisation.⁸

Working-class autobiographies are one of the few sources to allow ordinary people's childhood experiences to be explored and linked to subsequent outcomes. Jane Humphries' study of childhood in the industrial revolution used autobiographical material to study how children's life chances were influenced by family circumstances as well as conditioned by economic change.⁹ While firmly rooted in a proletarian perspective, the study is gender blind. All 600 plus memoirs cited were written by men. Girls appeared in the life-stories and so in the synthesis but it was as daughters, sisters, childhood companions, or sweethearts, in all cases seen through men's eyes.

This paper hopes to redress the one-sidedness by matching the material on boys with accounts of girls' early work, first jobs, and experience of schooling. These are important topics, but Humphries' gender-selected sample was challenged as much on the findings about family life as the economic impact of industrialisation. Ginger Frost, for example, questioned the claim that the mother-child bond was of central importance in working-class children's lives, suggesting instead that this was an artefact of the male sample: 'If [Humphries] had included girls' experiences, she would have had a more nuanced view of family dynamics. Girls worked more closely with mothers and had more conflicts with them, so they were less idealistic about the mother-child bond...'.¹⁰ Moreover, Julie-Marie Strange's recent study of working-class fatherhood, also based on autobiographical reminiscences though for a later time period, challenged the enduring stereotype of at best distant and at worst domineering men to which Humphries at least partially subscribed.¹¹

The nature of family relationships is a question that transcends family history for while the men's memoirs implicated mechanization and the division of labour in the boom in early industrial child labour, they also suggested that fatherlessness and large numbers of children, common in these high-mortality and high-fertility times, cast boys as supports for struggling mothers, pushed them into early and arduous work and laid a heavy hand on their later life chances. The paper investigates the position of girls in working-class families. It asks how the expectations and stresses of family life impacted on girls, and whether this left them disadvantaged relative to their brothers in seizing the opportunities and fending off the threats to wellbeing occasioned by economic change.¹²

Autobiographical accounts by 227 working women are analysed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Although less common or complete than working men's life accounts, women's autobiographies, especially if supplemented by their memories of mothers and sisters, can provide a workable sample. There were similarities in boy and girls' experiences, many predictable, but there were also some surprises.

Working women's life writing

Working-class life writing is an unusually rich resource in Britain compared with other European countries.¹³ Strangely, it was rarely used by the pioneers of 'history from below', except to provide occasional colourful illustration and then only the most accessible accounts were cited. This changed with the pioneering work of John Burnett and David Vincent, who publicised the resource and with David Mayall completed a major work of cataloguing: *The autobiography of the*

working class: an annotated, critical biography (3 vols., 1984–9). Many of these early-identified autobiographies, along with other subsequently discovered materials are now available in digital form thanks to the ongoing project at Brunel University which housed Burnett original archive.¹⁴

John Burnett introduced teachers and students to proletarian life-writing through excerpts clustered thematically and contextualised using standard sources.¹⁵ David Vincent edited some important writings by nineteenth-century radicals, rescued and saw published one key working-class autobiography, and used the sources to explore how working men conceptualised their circumstances.¹⁶ Ellen Ross also produced path-breaking work, using working-class accounts to describe motherhood in deprived families at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Jane Humphries, as noted, combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies in her analysis of the effects of economic change on working-class boyhood.¹⁸ Emma Griffin used a similar set of autobiographies, including some by women, to argue for a more optimistic account. *Liberty's dawn* painted the industrial revolution as an era of opportunity and release from social constraints.¹⁹ Jonathan Rose's *The intellectual life of the British working classes*, used autobiography (and other sources) to find out what and how working people read.²⁰ Most recently, Julie-Marie Strange's *Fatherhood and the British working-class, 1865-1914*, used memoir to challenge dominant assumptions about absent or 'feckless' fathers and sympathetically reintegrate the paternal figure within the emotional life of families.²¹ Yet, despite this attention, nobody has tried to fill the gap identified above and use women's autobiographies to compare their life chances with those of their brothers.

Although several authors have uncovered hitherto unknown accounts by working women, these remain much rarer than those by working men, especially for the era of industrialisation. That women were less inclined to write about themselves is only partially explained by the gender gap in literacy, which was smaller than might be expected.²² A less obvious but powerful barrier was women's lower self-confidence. They doubted their lives would be of much interest to potential readers, timidity often revealed within their texts. Elizabeth Oakley's account of poverty in Norfolk in the nineteenth century ends abruptly because her eldest son derided her literary efforts: "who will ever want to read about your poor boring life".²³

If women did write it was usually to provide a record for their children and such family documents were less likely to be published or even deposited in local record offices. So, women's accounts are fewer, less likely to have survived and more difficult to locate. Moreover, female writers were even less attentive than their male peers to the interests of future historians. The private and personal motivation and characteristically episodic style, perhaps a product of domestic interruptions, makes contextualizing events and establishing timelines difficult. W.J. Jones introduction to 'Memories of New Quay' by Myra Evans (translation from the original Welsh by Mary Jane Stephenson) denies that the text constitutes an autobiography given its style and coverage: 'When this volume came into my hands I thought for a moment that it was an autobiography. But I soon saw that I was wrong. This is a woman looking at the area when she was a child, and as a child dances lightly from memory to memory, from anecdote to

anecdote, from character to character.... I sensed that it was a huge step for her to try putting in order the time, period and relationship.....'.²⁴

On the other hand, these drawbacks have a silver lining: women writers are less prone to selection by achievement in later life and so to represent a striving and successful echelon within the working class. The women's stories are more likely to be representative. Nor is it simply a question of overcoming 'the teleological fallacy'.²⁵ The very different ways in which the stories are told, the absence of what Jones calls 'the conventional boundaries of autobiography', themselves provide insight into women's lives. The gendering of autobiography is dramatically illustrated by Elizabeth Parker's story which is not written but stitched in evocative blood-red cross stitch, on a sampler held in the Victoria and Albert Museum.²⁶ Parker journeys from oppositional adolescence, through spiritual desolation and the contemplation of suicide, to something approaching emotional equilibrium. Few men's stories would have such content and no man's story would take this form.

However, the rarity of working women's autobiography does put a spanner in the statistical works and tests a methodology which weaves the weft of individual accounts through a warp of quantitative findings that summarize the evidence as a whole. To boost the sample size, material on mothers and sisters has been included and the time frame has been extended although the original cut off (born before 1879) is retained for the statistical comparisons with the male sample. A few interviews found in the Parliamentary Papers, or in social commentary are also included. To date, evidence for 227 women and girls has

been entered into a data base to capture the quantitative dimensions of their work experience and family lives. The sample can be subdivided into cohorts by date of birth to facilitate comparison with the men's writings and trace changes over time. The first cohort encompasses women born 1667- 1790; the second those born 1791-1820; the third 1821-1850; and the fourth 1850-1878.²⁷ A fifth cohort covering later writers, while unmatched in the male sample and so not used in the statistical comparisons, provides additional qualitative material. In comparison with the male prosopography, the evidence is less systematic and there are many more missing values meaning that specific analyses rely on smaller samples than the total implies, though large enough to draw conclusions. What do these memoirs say about the family economy in these decades and do they tell a different story from those of men?

Family structure and functioning

The male autobiographers described a world dominated by families comprising mother, father and children, occasionally extended to take in grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins, and integrated into networks of kin and community. Women's accounts concur; they by and large lived in nuclear families, in turn anchored in wider kin and community. Families were occasionally extended, while children themselves were often consigned, temporarily or permanently, to live with grandparents or aunts and uncles. However, relationships with relatives challenge the standard interpretations of English kinship. Periods of co-residence were sometimes motivated by mutual benefit as in Michael Anderson's classic account of the frequency of extended families in accommodation-scarce,

female labour-intensive, early industrial Preston.²⁸ But the exchanges were nuanced. The mother of the Norfolk Labourer's wife came and nursed her 'when her babies came' and then looked after the children while her daughter went out to work: an instrumental accommodation, but facilitated by love between the women and set in a rural not urban environment.²⁹ Similarly, the children in Louise Jermy's family were often sent to stay with relatives when convalescing after illness or as a response to overcrowding at home, but companionship was the only return.³⁰ Mary Saxby was left with her aunt and uncle when her soldier father went off to war and while he probably subsidised her keep, she repaid their kindness with childish rebellion.³¹ Not only do the autobiographies provide many examples of inter-kin assistance without hope of return, they also illustrate that shared accommodation was not the only form of help. Elizabeth Oakley's mother's brother, 'the kindest of uncles', provided material and emotional support to his sister whose husband was mean and unloving.³² Mrs Oakley 'always knew where to get a shilling when she wanted one when she had him to go to', support sustained over several years but which stopped short at shared housing and had no prospect of reciprocation.

The autobiographers' nuclear families were linked to the economy principally through the employment of the male head. A father's occupation was almost universally identified early in a memoir consistent with its consequence for the ensuing narrative. In 531 cases out of the 617 memoirs by men, (86 per cent), there was enough evidence to assign a detailed occupational title to fathers and in 29 further cases the evidence was sufficient to locate fathers in broad occupational groups. For women who lived through the same decades, 115/169,

68 per cent, provided a detailed occupational title, while 130/169, 77 per cent, placed their father in an occupational group, the slight shortfall compared with male writers perhaps reflecting interest in and identification with fathers' employment status. These proportions rise to 92 per cent and 83 per cent if cases that deal only with adult life are discarded.³³ Thus, Ann Candler begins with her father William More of Yoxford, 'a working glover', Christian Watt introduces her father as 'a hardworking fisherman who braved the terrible weather on the treacherous sea to give us a crust of bread', Deborah Smith says simply 'father worked in the quarries'.³⁴ Women were no different from men in seeing their fathers' jobs as key points of reference in their early lives, and this was true even in cases where men reneged on family responsibilities. Lucy Luck begins her moving narrative with an account of the desertion of her father and the resulting consignment of herself, her siblings and her loving but frail mother to the workhouse. Thereafter, Lucy's father disappears from her life, but in this same opening paragraph, where he slinks away, she provides us with his occupational title, 'experienced bricklayer', a man doubly condemned for his skills suggest he could have provided support.³⁵

Pay was mentioned occasionally. Three women, reminiscing in the pages of a local newspaper remembered fathers and husbands earning from 6s to 8s a week as agricultural labourers in 1830s Bedfordshire, a sum that had increased to 9-12 shillings by the 1840s.³⁶ Mrs John Sharp's father earned 7s or 8s a week working on the roads in the 1830s, and 'that not regular employment'.³⁷ Bessie Harvey gives a horseman's wages in East Anglia as 14s and 1s extra on Sundays, while Catherine Maclaughlin's furnace man father was able to give his wife a gold

sovereign and 5s after deducting his beer money, both in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.³⁸ In more straited circumstances, the Norfolk labourer's wife's father, who was 'broke up' earned a shilling a day from the parish for breaking stones in around 1835, a rate that apparently continued to be paid to unemployed Bedfordshire labourers in the 1850s.³⁹ These numbers are consistent with the rates recorded in the men's memoirs and with wage data from independent sources.⁴⁰

The priority accorded to fathers and their occupations demonstrates that the primary economic responsibility for the household rested on the male head; husbands and fathers were the breadwinners and this appears already true by the early 1800s. Fatherhood was identified with economic support. To father for both girls and boys meant to provide materially: a finding that is consistent with Julie-Marie Strange's historical reconstruction of fatherhood from similar sources but a later period. She too found that a father's labour was understood as the way in which he performed his parental duties.⁴¹ The dependence of families on men's earnings was openly acknowledged. 'Fatheralone brought home the only means of subsistence' wrote Maud Clarke, (though as in many other cases this was not entirely true).⁴² Women, who as children were denied a father's support, like similarly deprived men, felt aggrieved. A Norfolk labourer's wife whose mother aged 18 had married a 45 year old man who was enfeebled before his children were grown, reported: 'I never seemed to have a father who could work for me and help me, like other children have, for he had allus been ailing'.⁴³

Some fathers did earn enough to support their families without want, but for a significant minority and in some times and places even a majority, this was not the case. Often, even when fathers worked in representative jobs and earned standard pay, their families appeared needy. Men were breadwinners but they were *frail* breadwinners, in the women's accounts as in those of men.⁴⁴

The extent of distress is not surprising. The pioneering social surveys of the late nineteenth century identified persistent poverty and categorised its causes: low wages; irregularity of work or unemployment; large families; and the death, incapacity or desertion of the chief earner.⁴⁵ All are implicated in the falling short of male breadwinner standards. Many fathers, try as they might, could not earn enough to support their families. Mrs John Sharp's father earned the going wage working on the roads but with several children he was 'often glad to steal a turnip from a farmer's field'.⁴⁶ Rose Gibbs's soldier father was wounded in the Boer War and when he came out of hospital could not find a job for 8 long years.⁴⁷ Men's real wage rates in several employment groups were stagnant through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴⁸ In this context, improvements in living standards depended on an increase in labour supply per capita, in 'industriousness'. The autobiographies showcase many hard-working fathers who increased their hours and days, searched for better paid work, and augmented their day jobs with secondary tasks. Mrs Deacon's forester father was described positively as 'an all round workman' who augmented his weekly wages by making coffins and digging graves and ate while at work when out felling trees.⁴⁹ Mrs Layton's father, who had 'a government situation' albeit on stationary wages, responded to the pressures of a growing family by teaching

himself tailoring and using this acquired skill to augment his salary while also growing the family's vegetables in his garden.⁵⁰ Mary Coe's father recognised that unless he obtained 'little jobs on the side' he would have to do without his tobacco.⁵¹ The need for fathers' diligent application has two important interacting implications.

First, contemporary notions of masculinity meant that many men were disinterested in homelife, and on top of this predisposition, industriousness, by demanding that men work longer hours, move in search of employment, and work away from home, drove new wedges of time and space between them and those for whom they laboured. Dora Tack, described her father as 'not very interested in homemaking. For him it was just a place to eat and sleep....'. When the strains of his shifts as a London policeman were added to this indifference he became a harsh and unsympathetic figure, furious when his daughter, suffering from whooping cough, kept him awake at night.⁵² Mrs Sargeant, praised her father for his diligence noting that 'he walked many miles to his work near Kettering' but reflected too on the corollary: 'often we children did not see him except on Saturdays and Sundays, as we were usually asleep when he had trudged home from work'.⁵³ Similarly, Hilda Fowler says 'I have only vague memories of my father, for in those days men normally worked from 6.00a.m. to 6.00 p.m. and masters with small businesses worked the same hours...'.⁵⁴ Thus, industriousness removed men from their families and strained the ties of affection and familiarity that underpinned breadwinning and the grinding effort it required. So, second, as a result, in some cases, especially if wages stagnated and families grew, the burden became too much and the bonds broke. Men

deserted – if not their families the role of breadwinner. The Journeyman Baker's father, like an industrious breadwinner went off in search of higher wages but detached from his family, he took to 'dram-drinking' and ceased remitting money.⁵⁵ In a similar tale told by Ellen Johnson, the factory poetess, her father's ambition prompted him to emigrate, but thereafter he lost contact with his family and it was cut adrift.⁵⁶ This contradiction within the early male breadwinner family receives further attention below.

Writers occasionally recognised the strain of breadwinning. Mrs Triggler, for example, reported that all the children in her large family knew how her miner father struggled 'just to keep going to work'.⁵⁷ But perhaps swayed by Victorian proselytising about self-reliance, some autobiographers felt that fathers could have done more. Reproach was more likely to creep into the memories of women writers than those of men, and here the perspective is undoubtedly a female one. Women autobiographers seem less inclined to give struggling breadwinners the benefit of the doubt and more inclined to despise them. Daisy Cowper depicted her sea captain father as an increasingly inadequate breadwinner: 'As years passed, the intervals of his homestaying before seeking another command grew larger, and the successive commands smaller; the cash saved during one long voyage would all be drawn from the bank before he went off again....'.⁵⁸

Strange suggests that the toll which breadwinning took on fathers and the way in which their toil was indeed their kind of love often went unrecognised in childhood or adolescence. Instead writers stumbled upon understanding as

adults, themselves struggling to provide materially while preserving family life.

⁵⁹ Writing itself could make things clearer. Dora Tack, for example, claimed to understand her father better as a result of the reflection involved in life writing, but the separation of spheres of existence, so evident in Tack's account of her family, undoubtedly contributed to the 'lack of communication' that blighted their earlier relationship.⁶⁰ Similarly, Margaret Bondfield regretted that she had not known her father 'when he was in his prime' as subsequently he became 'very remote'.⁶¹ Subsequent recognition of fathers' sacrifices is less evident in the women's than the men's memoirs probably because women never shouldered the responsibilities of breadwinning. Even if in reality responsible for family support, they were never considered failures if such support required topping up by poor relief or charity. The greater intolerance of faltering fathers evident in the women's memoirs returns to an important theme: the gendered alignment in working-class households and specifically the identification of girls with their mothers. Mary Gawthorpe growing up in a warring household headed by an increasingly violent man whose earnings were becoming less and less regular reported simply that she came to see her father through her mother's eyes.⁶²

Feckless or alcoholic fathers were however preferable to those who flatly reneged on their responsibilities either before or after marriage. The many desperate women in both sets of autobiographies seeking to retain links to unstable or unwilling men underline the urgent need for a male breadwinner. Edith Evans could not understand why her mother remained with her drunken and eventually suicidal father. Jonathan was however a regular worker despite his problems and Kate had eight closely-spaced children.⁶³ Similarly, Gawthorpe

despised her increasingly workshy and violent father but only managed to extricate her mother from the marriage when she herself earned enough for their support. ⁶⁴ These cases illustrate the bald reality: as Richard Wall argued many years ago, it was less risky to cling to an inadequate man than to go it alone.

An unaided struggle was however the lot of many mothers. Death was one important factor but not alone in denuding families of their breadwinners. Male autobiographers reported a death rate for their fathers considerably above that suggested by demographic sources, an excess interpreted as disguising a significant substratum of desertion, swelled further by openly acknowledged abscondment. Other fathers were away working or in the army or navy, and earnings often never reached their erstwhile dependants. Moreover, even some co-resident fathers were incapable of providing because of ill-health, incapacity, or alcoholism. Humphries estimated that somewhere between 8-18 per cent of working-class boys were rendered *de facto* fatherless in childhood. If a reasonable estimate of paternal mortality is added to this toll, probably about a third of boys grew up in families without fathers or without breadwinners, even frail breadwinners. ⁶⁵

The life accounts by women fall in line. In cases which include information on family of origin, 15.5 per cent of fathers were reported as dead, a figure consistent with the population mortality. Women appear less likely to hide desertion behind reported bereavement. But 4.5 per cent of fathers were acknowledged as having deserted the mothers of their children before or after

marriage, or as alcoholics, while a further 2.8 per cent were chronically ill or disabled, 4.4 per cent in the army or navy and 2.2 per cent working away from home. Moreover, it is highly likely that many of the 20 per cent of fathers about whom we know little or nothing included many who were dead or had absconded. So again, around a third of women writers grew up in families without effective male breadwinners. Most families needed a supplementary source of economic support. Did mothers rise to this challenge?

In the memoirs by working men, while fathers were almost always given a job title and assigned to an occupational group, mothers were rarely so defined. Was this simply men identifying the world of work with other men especially their fathers and missing the productive activities of their mothers? Do the memoirs by women uncover an overlooked hive of women's activity?

One problem concerns the nature of mothers' work. While fathers frequently practiced dual occupations and could be versatile, mothers' work was in a different key; they patched together seasonally and cyclically available jobs to augment family incomes. Isabella Smith recounted that her grandmother made pegged rugs and did sewing and 'would go out to work in the fields or do some decorating or anything for a few shillings'.⁶⁶ Women like this hustle and bustle through the autobiographical accounts, clearly working and contributing to family survival, but without specific occupations and often working part time and episodically. Measuring employment or economic activity by the possession of an occupational title is likely to underestimate women's work. A broader perspective, counts mothers as active if memoirs include any reference to

productive activity, though excluding childcare and domestic work. But even then, men's reporting of mothers' participation rates was surprisingly low, at around one quarter to a third of those with husbands present.⁶⁷ Was this an artefact of the condescending male gaze?

Daughters were more inclined than sons to allocate occupational titles to mothers though these were not accorded the central importance of fathers' jobs. Nonetheless, limiting attention to women born before 1879 to compare with the findings from the male accounts, and focussing first on families with husbands living, 26-32 per cent of mothers were associated with specific occupations, for example, schoolmistress or agricultural labourer.⁶⁸ Moreover, women were also more inclined to recognise mothers more piecemeal efforts to contribute to family incomes. Thus, 51-52 per cent of mothers were recorded as occasionally charring, taking in washing, potato, pea, and hop picking, spinning, knitting and nursing and even less specifically as '... done what she could'.⁶⁹ This figure is well above the 29 -36 per cent of mothers with husbands present that male autobiographers reported as economically active using a similarly broad definition.⁷⁰

Women's apparent greater awareness of mothers' piecemeal economic activities recurs in the reporting of self-provisioning activities such as gleaning, gathering, spinning for own use, and so on. Ten female autobiographers remembered mothers gleaning, and the value it generated, the same number as in the much larger sample of men's memoirs.⁷¹ Nor did the exploitation of an open countryside stop after the harvest or exclude children. '[S]he's take us picking.

They used to buy dandelion roots and different weeds' and these along with berries were used to make medicines and drinks.⁷² Although memories of gleaning and gathering might be elevated by the greater frequency of agricultural families in the dataset (see appendix), self-provisioning was not exclusively rural. Mary Howitt's mother, in a pit village, had 50 hens and 2 pigs 'so we always had plenty of bacon and eggs', while Mrs Layton reported from a London suburb that everyone kept either pigs or chickens or ducks.⁷³ Men, whether in the Registrar General's Office or their own homes were obliviousness to these activities and condescending about their value. Women's reminiscences provide a more nuanced perspective.

Turning to families lacking effective male heads, men reported surprisingly low participation rates: for widows around 30 per cent although higher for other lone mothers around 53-57 per cent.⁷⁴ Again, although the numbers are too small to draw anything but tentative conclusions, women writers recorded higher rates. Of the 25 widowed mothers featuring in the women's life accounts from cohorts 1-4, 12 or 48-63 per cent were given an occupational title while an additional widow was observed augmenting family income so raising participation rates to 52-68 per cent.⁷⁵ For other lone mothers the rate was even higher with 64 per cent allocated an occupational title and 77 per cent contributing to family income. Although the samples are small, and the definitions both of economic activity and marital status fuzzy, it appears that female writers were more aware of or more willing to report the contributions of lone mothers. Indeed, the life-changing moments when mothers were forced to substitute for their husbands provide watersheds in many women's memoirs

absent in the men's writings. For Elizabeth Allen, this crisis came when her father had taken to drink, leaving her mother 'for days together, seeming quite indifferent as to the manner in which his wife and infant were to subsist'. Fortunately, her mother had savings and contacts at the 'Great House' which helped her secure employment.⁷⁶ Other women were pushed into the labour force when soldier husbands died or were wounded (for example Kitty Wilkinson and Rose Gibbs' mothers).⁷⁷ May Wasson's mother was left to run the family business, when her husband went off to the Boer War.⁷⁸ During the early years of her marriage Rebecca Siviter was supported by her husband Samuel and may not have needed to work but when he died, her granddaughter's account of the family history treats the Poor Law's response to the widow's plea for help as a crossroads. The Board said Rebecca was healthy, and though her six-month old baby was not yet weaned, could work; tragedy ensued as we will see.⁷⁹

Perhaps men were embarrassed to recall their widowed, deserted or just struggling mothers as working, thinking that this reflected ill on their substitute breadwinning, or perhaps widows with sons could indeed rely on their assistance, whereas those with daughters could not. The greater regularity of work by lone mothers would have increased the burden on their daughters for substitute childcare and domestic labour, making it less readily overlooked than the occasional assistance needed when mothers took up sporadic employment. The connection between the activities of mothers and the burdens on daughters will be revisited. The point to emphasize here is that women in the past practised distinctive, episodic and opportunist economic participation, often beyond more formal interpretations of the labour market. Daughters, who were

themselves destined for similar makeshifts were more likely than sons to recognise them as work and their fruits as contributions to household income.

Why was it that women's work took such marginal forms? One problem was that married women were constrained in the kind of work that they could do by their responsibilities for domestic work and childcare, tasks that were described in some detail by the appreciative authors of the autobiographies. Sons were under no illusion about the enormity and importance of these tasks,⁸⁰ and, contrary to Frost's prediction, daughters were just as sure. Dora Tack's mother was never active economically,⁸¹ but her only child assigned great importance to her mothering work, describing her as 'a quiet loving and patient lady who nursed me through the dreadful hooping cough and subsequent bronchitis attacks, as well as looking after Dad during the many different changes of time in police duties'.⁸² Where there were more children the work multiplied, and became difficult if not impossible to combine with employment outside the home. Nellie Raisbeck's mother was unusual in holding down a paid job as a linen picker in the local mill. Her daughter devotes several pages to explaining how her mother organised her domestic work and various self provisioning tasks around the mill hours but was forced to conclude: 'I don't know how my mother managed to get everything into one day...'.⁸³ Nor was employment clearly economics after taking account of childcare costs and the need for working women to eat more!⁸⁴

The autobiographers were well aware that work outside the home for less super-human mothers endangered children.⁸⁵ J.B. Brookes reported how when his mother left her infant son with a child-minder so as to return to her relatively

well-paid job in the weaving sheds, the baby failed to thrive and eventually succumbed.⁸⁶ Rebecca Siviter, as noted above, was pressurised when widowed, to return to work as a chain-maker despite having three young children. The baby, John, died from burns after falling into a fire. This might have been a domestic fire but Rebecca's granddaughter situated the accident at the open forge when the child had been taken to work with his mother.⁸⁷ Mothers and grandmothers deployed age old strategies to fit earning around childcare and domestic labour. 'School and office cleaning or 'charring' for the better class...would keep women away from their own domestic duties three or four hours. A lot of 'finishing' was done in the homes. There was a shirt factory near home and at one time mum sewed on buttons to the garments which were brought home and collected a few days later....occasionally [mother] would have piles of book folding all over the kitchen table. This had been her occupation when she was single....[and she] took in washing'.⁸⁸ The accounts of work materials invading the already limited domestic space suggest that working at home could infringe comfort while distracted mothers threatened the safety of children. The Journeyman Baker's mother was so hard at work at her spinning wheel that she did not hear her little son's screams when he fell into the fire and was badly burned.⁸⁹

When death, desertion, or disinclination left families without a male breadwinner, the need for higher earnings left women struggling to find time to mother. Combining work and childcare had its dramatic tragedies, as noted above, but it could also leave less obvious scars. The Norfolk Labourer's Wife was forced by her large family and husband's low wages to work as hard as a man

'not such heavy work, but as much'.⁹⁰ She managed this because her own mother, who had also worked in the fields, 'stayed at home' and looked after her grandchildren. Exhausted from her labour, the Norfolk Labourer's wife confessed her impatience with her brood, 'not bad 'uns, but mortal tricky', and at times 'when angry like' she resorted to slapping them. Fortunately, her mother stepped in to protect the children, smoothing over the rough edges of a stressful life so that the children bore no grudges but became 'rare and kind to their old mother'.⁹¹

Most mothers could not fully substitute for a breadwinner who fell short with repercussions for other family members. Benjamin Shaw's wife responded to her husband's ill health and family's financial needs by making and selling gingerbread even though they lived in a textile district and she had factory experience. Perhaps she chose this (in Benjamin's view) petty employment to leave time for her domestic labour (though Benjamin condemned her as a hopeless housewife). But the end result was that as with the boys who Humphries documents going to work in advance of their mothers, so 3 of Betty Shaw's girls were despatched to local factories aged between 9 and 11, though one a 'small and puny child always' went to the winding frames when perhaps 14.⁹² Did families like the Shaw's with frail breadwinner fathers and mothers who were unable to compensate feed the demand for child labour that characterised the early industrial economy with daughters as well as sons? Did girls join their brothers as child workers of the industrial revolution?

Girls and the labour market

While it is not possible to tease out child participation rates from the autobiographical evidence, age at starting work was a commonly recorded milestone, which Humphries used to trace the boom in children's work. She found that boys born in the second and third cohorts of the industrial revolution started work younger than those born earlier or later. Table 1 shows the age at which the women writers reported that they began work by cohort alongside the ages recorded by men for the same periods.

Table 1: Age at starting work, girls compared with boys from working-class autobiographies

Cohort	Girls: mean age (sample size)	Boys: mean age (sample size)
1627- 1790	11.42 (19)	11.50 (91)
1791- 1820	10.30 (40)	10.28 (123)
1821- 1850	9.60 (38)	9.98 (144)
1851- 1878	11.41 (35)	11.39 (160)
1879- 1892	13.07 (41)	n.a.

Source: See text and Humphries, 2010, p. 176

Note: gender differences are not statistically significant

The number of women's autobiographies that specify age at starting work is much smaller than the men's sample but the means by cohort are close and there is the same distinctive 'U' shape. Both boys and girls started work younger in the crucible of industrialisation, 1791- 1850. After mid-century, and consistent with the secondary literature on child labour, age at starting work began to rise. The inclusion of a fifth cohort in the female sample shows a clear structural break in working age with another jump of nearly two years by the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

As well as documenting the decline in age at starting work during the industrial revolution, Humphries explored its determinants using regression analysis.⁹³

The restricted sample of women's autobiographies and the collinearity of several of the potential determinants (involvement of poor law, absent or dead fathers, mothers' economic activity) make it impossible to replicate the analysis.

However, table 2 below presents the results of an attenuated regression where several variables have been combined and recoded. The most important is the combination of the record on dead or absent fathers with a father's occupational status as given by the CAMSIS scale. These variables have been collapsed into a new variable that reflects the robustness of a father's ability to support his family. The variable takes a value of zero if a father is absent, dead or his breadwinning otherwise compromised, and the CAMSIS score of his occupation otherwise. The model includes a time trend, mother's economic status and the number of children in the family. Table 2. restricts attention to women writers

born before 1879 to make the sample comparable with the sample of male autobiographers. It also provides the results when combining both men's and women's evidence and including gender as an explanatory variable.

The U-shaped trend seen in the simple cohort means is again apparent in the size and significance levels of the coefficients on date of birth and date of birth squared in both samples. The new variable measuring the competence of the male breadwinner is positive and significant in both samples: for boys and girls a robust breadwinner delayed entry into work, and conversely a frail or reluctant breadwinner brought it forward.

Table 2: Proximate determinants of age at starting work

	Girls	Boys	All Children
Constant	1124.302*	686.879**	691.145**
(SE)	(646.912)	(151.307)	(146.612)
Date of birth	-1.222*	-0.751**	-0.754**
(SE)	(0.712)	(0.168)	(0.162)
Date of birth ²	0.000*	0.000**	0.000**
(SE)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Bread winner	0.032**	0.029**	0.029**
(SE)	(0.015)	(0.006)	(0.000)
Mother's economic	-1.144*	-0.449*	-0.552*
	(0.621)	(0.256)	(0.236)

status

(SE)

Total children	-0.089	-0.115**	-0.117**
(SE)	(.090)	(0.039)	(0.035)
Gender	n/a	n/a	-0.530*
(SE)			(0.319)
Sample size	76	380	456
R ² adjusted	.095	.101	.106
SSE	2.734	2.473	2.504
F stat (sig.)	2.583 (.033)	9.534 (.000)	9.996 (.000)

Notes: * sig. \leq .10 **sig. \leq .05

This effect is clearly recorded in women's life accounts. We have already heard the Norfolk labourer's wife lamenting her lack of a father who could provide support (p. 8). The daughters of other infirm men suffered similarly, as did those whose father balked at their breadwinner role. Mrs Burrows was just 8 when she became part of an agricultural 'gang' as her father, 'a great sufferer with tumour in the head' had not earned one day's wages in 16 years.⁹⁴ Ellen Johnston entered the factory aged barely eleven when her abusive stepfather 'could not bear to see me longer basking in the sunshine of freedom'.⁹⁵

Similarly, for both girls and boys, a mother's economic activity was associated with younger working, not surprising given that both women and children were more likely to work in poorer households. The inconsistency in reporting

mothers' work along with the different sample sizes makes it difficult to interpret the differences in the size of the coefficient on mothers' economic activity. But it is interesting that the number of children in the family, which pushed boys precociously into work does not appear to have had the same effect on girls. The sign is negative but the coefficient small and not significant even at the 10 per cent level. Perhaps girls were retained within big families to help with childcare or allowed to go to school taking their younger siblings with them. Women's autobiographies, not surprisingly often described their first 'job' as looking after younger siblings. Boys were not spared from domestic tasks and childcare but they rarely regarded this as work, displacing schooling or earnings. This is the first suggestion that the interface of family and economy had different implications for girls, ideas followed up below.

The results from the combined sample should be treated with caution given the much larger number of men's writings, but they could be read as suggesting that gender was of second-order importance in determining a child's experience of industrialisation: boys and girls fared the same in families headed by frail breadwinners, where poverty prompted mothers to work and in the crucible of industrialisation when demand for child labour was at its peak. The gender variable itself suggests that overall boys might have started work six months earlier than their sisters but the coefficient is barely significant even at the 10 per cent level and the effect may well be explained by the concentration of the female autobiographers in the later cohorts.

What this data does not show, is the difference in the range of jobs offered to girls and boys by the industrializing economy, a difference evident in official statistics.⁹⁶ Boys were employed in agriculture, mining, factories, workshops, commerce, services, and at sea, and many jobs offered opportunities to move up albeit attenuated career ladders. More important still, apprenticeships gave lucky boys access to jobs as artisans, while the army and navy, while dangerous, offered avenues of upward mobility.⁹⁷ Girls' first and subsequent jobs were much more constricted. The fortunate few, whose parents had the wherewithal, might be apprenticed though in limited trades. In the early cohorts and in rural areas, farm service was practically the only job on offer once hand-spinning had disappeared. In the factory districts, millwork offered new opportunities but these displaced those in domestic manufacturing. In regions where heavy industry dominated, things were even worse, as Elizabeth Andrews emphasized.⁹⁸ Elizabeth was saved from the heavy work on offer, by her parents paying 10 shillings a quarter for her to learn dressmaking. The vast majority of girls, over the whole period under study, entered domestic service, a job which trained them for a future as a wife and mother while providing some income or at least board and lodging in the meantime. The dominance of this single job is unparalleled in the boy labour market. In the narrowness of the range of jobs available and girls' concentration in domestic service, workshops and textile factories, the evidence from the autobiographies is consistent with the occupations reported for children aged 10-14 in the 1851 census.⁹⁹

The qualitative evidence casts light on the forces underpinning this narrow range of occupations by identifying a neglected but apparently significant factor

limiting girls' capabilities: the threat of sexual predation. Historians are well aware of the prevalence of sexual harassment in the past, but its implications for women's choice of jobs and feelings of security at work as well as for their wellbeing more general have rarely been investigated. While the men's writings were replete with account of violence on the streets, in schools, workplaces and even homes, there were only a handful of cases where sexual molestation was reported or suggested. In the women's writings, instances were common and fear ubiquitous.

Mary Saxby's peripatetic life was punctuated by a series of encounters ranging from harassment to rape.¹⁰⁰ As a self-acknowledged 'vagrant', Saxby was particularly vulnerable but women were at risk even when going about their legitimate business. Christian Watt reported that '[F]ishwives were often attacked both for money and carnal knowledge' and armed herself with a gutting knife for self-defence.¹⁰¹ Travel to work was fraught with danger. When their father obtained a job as a head gardener which came with a house, the girls in the Hodgson family faced a long walk to the mill where they worked. 'It was dark when we went and dark going home.... we three girls didn't like it, and Mother didn't like us having to do it either'.¹⁰² Men known to girls were often just as much a threat as those who may have been lurking in the dark. MaryAnn Ashford, hardly a shrinking violet, became 'dreadfully alarmed' when out walking with a respectable young man who began sinister conversation about a recent rape case. She was so disturbed that she ended what her friends considered a promising relationship.

Domestic service entailed particular vulnerability, as described by Christian Watt, who was again combative in return: 'One morning while giving a hand to make the beds... a Captain Leslie Melville put his arms around me and embraced me. I dug my claws into his face and with all the force I could I tore for all I was worth; his journey into flirtation land cost him the skin of his nose'.¹⁰³ For less forceful characters it was better not to encounter such dangerous situations, so when teenager Louise Jermy went into domestic service, her stepmother's advice was that if alone in the house never to let a man enter. But Lucy Luck had no choice when a strange man forced entry. She was saved by the intervention of the large farm dog! ¹⁰⁴ Others were not so lucky.

As today, girls without parental protection were particularly vulnerable. Ellen Johnston, the 'factory poetess', hints at abuse by her stepfather.¹⁰⁵ Sally Marcroft was impregnated by the son of a weaver with whom she was boarded as an orphaned pauper.¹⁰⁶ Lucy Luck, on graduating from the workhouse, was found a job where she was constantly preyed upon: '... the place of service [the poor law officer] had found for me was a public house. The mistress was very good to me but the master was one of the worst who walked God's earth. Always fighting with his wife; the pots and pans would go flying through the glass doors and windows, and he would beat that woman shamefully... But that was not the worst of him. That man who had a wife and was a father to three little children, did all he could, time after time, to try and ruin me, a poor orphan only fifteen years old. He would boast to me, and even tell me the names of other girls he had carried on with. God alone kept me from falling a victim to that wretched man, for I could not have been my own keeper....'.¹⁰⁷ Even more appalling, Emma

Smith, the Cornish waif, who grew up partly in the workhouse and partly in her maternal grandparents' home, was abandoned by her mother to a hurdy-gurdy man, for whom she gathered the coins tossed by sympathetic onlookers. She provides a chilling account of his abuse: '....This beast –old enough to be my grandfather – grabbed hold of me, a child of about six years of age, if I was that. He undid some of my clothing and behaved in a disgusting way. Presently he said, "Don't tell Ma or Charlie what I've done, or something awful will happen". As he said this his face was so evil and threatening that I was overwhelmed with fear'.¹⁰⁸

Few suffered such horrendous, and in Emma's case life-impacting, abuse, but fear of assault was common and had significant effects on what girls were able to do and to be. Girls had to avoid situations that placed them in danger, and to guard against behaviour that threatened their reputations. Workplaces where the sexes mixed were widely regarded as promoting immorality and prudent girls shunned such exposure.¹⁰⁹ The abhorrence of women and girls' underground work in coalmines, and the bad reputation of factory work was associated with their employment alongside men to whom they were not related. Elizabeth Andrews' revulsion from the brickyards or screens was not only prompted by the hard and dirty work involved but also by the rough clientele. Similarly, agricultural fieldwork was judged damaging once girls reached puberty. Thus Jane Bowden was boarded and then bound out apprentice aged 9 and '...[A]t the beginning part of my time I was employed in out-door work.....when I was about 16 I was kept entirely to the house, except at harvest time'.¹¹⁰ Service in public houses could also bring girls into bad company and threaten reputations.

Hannah Cullwick obtained a place at the Lion Hotel but her father 'thought it was not good for me at a public house and I was to give warning' and when Hannah sought employment back with her old mistress she was informed that it was 'not respectable to have a girl out of a public house' and 'felt frightened rather at that'.¹¹¹ Lucy Luck, a workhouse child, was destined for such disreputable work: 'What did it matter? I was only a drunkard's child. But if they had found me a good place for a start, things might have been better for me'.¹¹²

As these cases make clear, the need for circumspection in the face of potential predation and threats to reputation, made negotiating the world of work especially difficult. Isabella Smith went to her first hiring fair aged 16 and was frightened when 'a horrible scruffy-looking man' accosted her asking if she was for hire. Families could protect daughters in their search for employment and supervise arrangements once made. But not all fathers were as scrupulous as Mr Cullwick. While Mrs Hodgson was as anxious as her daughters about their long walk back and forth to work in the dark, Anita wondered why her father sacrificed their safety for the rent-free house.¹¹³ Similarly, while Captain Cowper, seemingly regarded his oldest daughter Agnes as 'a nursemaid to help her mother in looking after his progeny' and vetoed her apprenticeship in an upmarket retail establishment, he did not demur at employing her in what her younger sister considered unsavory circumstances dockside. Agnes, 'instinctively ladylike', was humiliated even endangered by being sent to serve paraffin in a dockside Chandler's store and to sell straw beds to sailors on Cowper's ship. Perhaps women writers were sensitive to the dangers of such exposure because they too had been pestered and threatened: it was a gendered experience. Not

surprisingly under these circumstances, girls retreated into the ghetto of jobs where respectability was easier to retain and virtue to defend. Coerced by propriety into such segregation, girls crowded certain jobs with adverse effects on their economic prospects. Crowding made it easier for employers to discriminate, and harder for girls to earn a living wage; all too frequently they remained partially dependent on fathers or the state. Girls graduated from this situation to a second kind of dependence, when as married women they were responsible for unpaid work in the home. Without an independent source of support women and girls' lost self-esteem and lacked voice even within the household. A vicious circle eroding female capabilities was set in motion.

Girls and Schooling

The boom in child labour was associated with a dip in educational standards. The ability to sign on marriage certificates declined in the early nineteenth century, particularly in the factory districts where there was extensive employment for younger children.¹¹⁴ But data on school attendance before the spread of National and British Schools in the late nineteenth century is fragmentary. The autobiographies provide fresh evidence to generate estimates of school attendance in years by cohort and gender.

Table 3: Years of schooling girls compared with boys from working-class autobiographies

	Girls: mean duration of schooling (sample size)	Boys: mean duration of schooling (sample size)
1627- 1790	1.97 (19)	3.74 (102)
1791- 1820	1.11 (33)	3.09 (130)
1821- 1850	1.77 (38)	2.80 (159)
1851- 1878	4.39 (36)	4.41 (157)
1879- 1892	7.39 (41)	n.a.

Source: See
Humphries,
314.

text and
2010, p.

Table 3 reports girls' years of schooling by cohort in comparison with the means for the much larger male sample. Boys' and girls' years of schooling, both declined in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries only to recover after 1850, which chimes with the results on age at starting work, and the independent findings on literacy. Moreover, consistent with the gender gap in literacy, girls had less education until mid-century by which time subsidised schooling was increasingly available, and, even for girls, if not compulsory, was widely regarded as apposite. There was a dawning consensus about girls' right

to education. The evidence from a subsequent cohort, not available from the men's autobiographies, shows a second jump in years of schooling, suggesting a clear change in ideas about childhood and education, consistent with the distinct break with early working.

As with age at starting work, Humphries used regression analysis to explore the correlates with schooling duration. The results were consistent with historians' expectations, with other fragmentary evidence, and with the findings about starting work. The time variables traced out a U-shaped curve which mirrored age at starting work. Schooling declined for the cohorts at the centre of industrialization but then recovered as the nineteenth century wore on. Fathers' willingness and ability to play the role of breadwinner was also significant with the sons of fathers with a higher status and probably better paid jobs attending school for longer. Indicators of poverty such as a working mother cut schooling short just as they prompted early entry into the labour market. The availability of free or subsidised schooling not surprisingly extended duration. The smaller sample of women's writings and the more limited information they contain mean that this extended analysis cannot be replicated, but an attenuated analysis is reported in table 4 below. This relates years of schooling for both girls and boys born before 1879 separately and then in a combined sample to some of the most obvious correlates.

Table 4: Proximate determinants of years of schooling

Girls	Boys	All Children
--------------	-------------	---------------------

Constant	1964.670**	512.286**	630.113**
(SE)	(480.611)	(118.532)	(114.579)
Date of birth	-2.191**	-0.573**	-0.704**
(SE)	(0.531)	(0.132)	(0.127)
Date of birth ²	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**
(SE)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Bread winner	0.032**	0.028**	0.030**
(SE)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Mother's economic status	-0.378	-0.341	-0.380
(SE)	(0.526)	(0.221)	(0.204)
Total Children	-0.161**	-0.098**	-0.099**
(SE)	(0.073)	(0.033)	(0.030)
Free School	2.513**	0.852	1.300**
(SE)	(0.871)	(0.545)	(0.460)
Gender	n/a	n/a	0.675**
(SE)			(0.278)
Sample size	78	397	475
R ² adjusted	.381	.120	.175
SSE	2.200	2.190	2.210
F stat (sig.)	9.013 (.000)	10.001 (.000)	15.391 (.000)

Notes: * sig. \leq .10 **sig. \leq .05

Most of the explanatory variables have similar effects for both girls and boys, though there are subtle differences. The time trend is again quadratic reflecting the U-shaped trend in mean years of schooling in the cohort analysis. The breadwinner variable is positive and significant; daughters as well as sons benefitted educationally from a father who was willing and able to support his family. A working mother appears associated with reduced schooling but the effect is not significant. The local availability of a free school, although positive for both girls and boys, has a larger coefficient and is only significant for girls. The gender dummy in the combined sample is positive and significant reflecting the more extensive schooling acquisition by boys shown in the simple averages by cohort. These results are all intuitively understandable: in the context of the time, girls' education was considered much less important than was boys' education since boys were the breadwinners of the future. Hence, boys received more schooling and it was less conditioned by cost. Free education, and *a fortiori* the Board schools of the late nineteenth century, enabled girls to match the schooling chalked up by their brothers.

The most telling difference by gender relates to the effect of the size of the sibling group. Total children in the family impacts negatively on schooling for both genders but has a bigger bite on girls' education whereas its effect on age at starting work was small and insignificant. A new baby pulled girls out of school not necessarily to work but to help mothers in the household with the additional burden.

The qualitative evidence expands on these findings. Like most men, women enjoyed school: ‘...we were all happy there’ reported Bessie Harvey, ‘I loved school from an early age’ said Elizabeth Andrews, and Anita Hughes was not alone in weeping upon graduation.¹¹⁵ Women’s memories, unlike men’s were not clouded by the violence encountered in schools, brutality wreaked on boys by both other pupils and teachers. True, Minnie Frisby remembered her shame because her underdrawers showed below her dress and all the boys said they were falling down, and Bessie Harvey had a ‘cane on [her] hand’ for talking, but this was mild treatment in comparison with the baiting and punishments meted out to boys.¹¹⁶ Gender stereotypes dictated the nature of chastisement: again in Bessie’s school naughty girls had to go to the headmistress’s house to polish her stair rods, wash up and dust!

Women, like men, were proud of their intellectual attainments. James Mullin’s mother, a poor widow in famine-devastated Ireland, ‘plumed herself vastly’ on being able to read and write a distinction that placed her above the majority of her neighbours and which she was determined her son would inherit.¹¹⁷

Despite only two years of formal schooling, Barbara Farquahar reported with pride that she could not remember being unable to read, while fluent Marianne Farningham was thought to be ‘rather a prodigy’!¹¹⁸

The strategies families used to secure a modicum of education for their sons were also deployed in the interests of daughters. Starting school very young, helped pack education in before starting work, while local dame schools provided relatively cheap childcare, freeing mothers for domestic work or

enabling them to help their husbands in their farming or business activities. Maria Hull (born Payne) reported that her elder sister and brother joined a Dame School in Pool Village in 1879 run by a local woman in her own house. She had six pupils whose average age was 3 and who paid 2d each per week. They were taught the alphabet and figures but spent most of the morning playing games and there was no afternoon school, a schedule surprisingly like a modern kindergarten. Maria wanted to go to this school but the old Dame died so despite being only 2 years and nine months old, she went with her sister and brother to the National School. ¹¹⁹ Starting young and leaving young was the standard practice. ¹²⁰

Marianne Farningham's family pursued another standard strategy. She too attended a local Dame School and longed to continue to a day school but 'the charges were too high for my father's means' while the local National School was off-limits to non-conformist children. ¹²¹ Thus, Marianne's early lessons 'came from our parents, chiefly of course, our mother'. ¹²² Other relatives, in Marianne's case her co-resident paternal grandmother, provided instruction. ¹²³ For some girls, home-schooling, most often delivered by their mother and integrated into the day's domestic schedule, was their only source of learning. '....if it be considered that the whole labour of the house devolved upon our mother, it will be believed that this could be no light task; nothing however was allowed to interrupt our lessons: and it was no uncommon thing to see her busy at the washing tub while we by turns took our place beside her; one child would be found attending to the baby, another gathering sticks and keeping the fire alive, a third engaged in reading, and a fourth bringing water from a pure soft

spring, at some distance from the house; while our eldest brother assisted father in the gardens'.¹²⁴ Others benefitted from Sunday schools which were free and could be combined with working as could part-time or winter attendance: all enabled education to be prolonged.¹²⁵ Christian Watt, for example, born into a family of fisherfolk in Broadsea had to work aged eight but continued at school in winter 'when fishing was slack'.¹²⁶

The evidence hints at differential access to education. Old Sally' the female half of an elderly couple, described by Flora Thompson, never went to school. There was no dame school sufficiently close but her brother was able to access a night school run by the vicar of an adjoining parish and he shared his smidgeon of learning, teaching Sally to spell. Thereafter 'she had been left to tread the path of learning alone'.¹²⁷ Her husband was 'a little more advanced' as he too had enjoyed the benefit of the night school first hand. Similarly, Janet Bathgate's schooling was fragmented by episodes in service while her earnings, partially at least, were used to enable her brother to access an apprenticeship with a saddler in Edinburgh.¹²⁸

The content and quality of schooling sometimes differed. Agnes Cowper, one of few writers to look back on her schooldays with disaffection, attended a church school while her brothers were sent to a 'Higher Grade School'. Lacking any foundation, she was at sea with arithmetic, and her capabilities in other subjects did not compensate because adding and subtracting was viewed as essential given that most lower middle-class girls were destined to 'become either dressmakers or milliners, as the day of the girl clerks and the stenographer had

not yet dawned'.¹²⁹ Agnes identified the nub of differential treatment: the limited job opportunities available to girls (see above pp. 17-8).

Apprenticeships, which remained the gateway to skilled jobs even in the second half of the nineteenth century, were rare and costly for girls and limited to a narrow range of trades. Agnes hoped to go into a retail business which meant serving a two-year apprenticeship, but on broaching this with her parents was told that her place was in the home, in contrast to the opportunities afforded the boys of the family. Captain Cowper's refused to allow Agnes to follow her modest dreams, and insisted instead that she help her mother in the endless domestic round of his large and underfunded household. Her resignation in the face of this ruling provides an apposite bridge into a discussion of girls' negotiation of family relationships in their attempts to live life as they wanted.

There was much to overcome. First and foremost, it is clear that girls' schooling was often interrupted by childcare responsibilities as families grew in size and new babies arrived. Despite her desire to become a teacher, Elizabeth Andrews reported that she 'had to leave school at twelve owing to our large family and the coming ninth baby'. Andrews saw this little sister's death as a reprieve: '...I had a chance to return to school for another year'.¹³⁰ Isabella Smith similarly reported that after the arrival of a baby brother, the ninth child in the family, 'I didn't go to school any more I had to stay at home and help'.¹³¹ Responsibilities were deepened and darkened if girls were called upon because mothers died.

Catherine Maclaughlin's mother died in childbirth when she was ten, a life changing event for her as she reported. After this her schooling was patchy, with odd days off to do the baking, and soon it tapered away as she went part and

then full time at a local mill. These times she remembered as 'very hard.... looking after the boys and trying to look after the house'.¹³² Shouldering such premature duties left their scars, as discussed below.

Fathers, Mothers, and Daughters

As we have seen, a father's role as the economic provider while giving him status and authority was not easily combined with family time and attention to children and became less so during the course of the eighteenth century with the separation of home and work and the lengthening of working time. Affective relations, the bonds holding men in place as breadwinners, were eroded by their work-related detachment from their families. Similarly, the growing distance between fathers and children meant that the latter were less able to overlook authoritarian or harsh behaviour. Work-related absence with its distancing effect could happen in the case of mothers too when they became breadwinners.¹³³

But the economic structure of households meant that it was almost always men who became alienated, a tendency reinforced by the gendering and adulting of men's leisure activities. The autobiographers' fathers even if they put in long hours, or perhaps because they had worked so hard, after work decamped to the pub or working man's club or sought amusement in sports or local politics. The former pursuits were most common and resented not only for robbing families of their fathers' company but also for their apparent waste of scarce resources particularly if intoxication left men sullen rather than jovial. On Saturdays Catherine Maclaughlin's father, who worked long shifts, finished work early but rather than spend time with his family, he would linger two or three hours in

'Jack Riley's' where a good part of his wages went to pay off his weekly slate.¹³⁴

Mary Gawthorpe's father was secretary of the local branch of the Conservative Party, a respectable role but as it involved much drinking and spreading of bonhomie, it came to threaten the family's stability.¹³⁵ To the extent that fathers were able to involve sons in activities defined as 'masculine', including work, they were able to bridge this chasm and build relationships.¹³⁶ This was more difficult with daughters.

There were exceptions. Minnie Frisby was very close to her father who 'used to idolise and spoil me'.¹³⁷ Significantly, Mr Frisby worked at home combining occasional nailmaking with harvesting and selling watercress, his familiarity with his children reinforced by their involvement in the business. Idolised as she was, Minnie had to leave school aged 12 as 'school was'nt (sic) work', and she was needed on the small-holding.¹³⁸ Some men managed to retain loving relationships with children even when spending significant time away. Ruth Mynachlog's father went to reap in Herefordshire for most of the summers of her childhood. But his return was a joyous event celebrated with the apples, herbal tea, and welcome cash that he brought home¹³⁹ More typical were Margaret Bondfield or Edith Evan's fathers or Captain Cowper. The first was a decent provider but so distracted by his responsibilities at work, that he became 'a stranger who punished with quotations and a slipper'.¹⁴⁰ The second was a hard-living coalminer completely disinterested in domesticity. 'My father at that time worked in the pit, and we didn't see much of him. He came home very dirty and always had a bath in a zinc bath in front of a big coal fire. I used to wash his back and then dry him down with a large rough towel. Mother would be making

his meal, after which he would go to the working men's club. When he came home we would be in bed, so we didn't see him much'.¹⁴¹ Captain Cowper's job of necessity took him away for long periods, and Daisy the younger sister who was only five when he died could only remember him in isolated incidents, but the memories were grim. 'He was stern- harsh, I should judge – to both his crews and his children, a characteristic that was not lessened as he grew older'.¹⁴² The authoritarian harshness that laced Bondfield's and Cowper's fathering, in other cases and especially if fuelled by alcohol, could explode into abuse. Annie Auty's dedication to Temperance was founded on her father's drunken violence. 'My father worked hard, but yet he drank harder ... and when in drink, he was like a fiend let loose'.¹⁴³

In contrast to distant and disinterested fathers, mothers were ever present and always involved. They dominated memories of infancy. Bondfield says simply that for five years her 'world consisted of Mother, [and brothers] Ernest and Frank'.¹⁴⁴ Men and women remembered their mothers' concern for their health and welfare. Care provided in illness constituted a *motif*. Mrs Whyman remembered how in her bouts of rheumatic and then typhoid fever her mother was the only one to enter her sick room. ¹⁴⁵ Similarly, when Bessie Harvey and her siblings all had scarlet fever together in one bed; 'no one would come near except the Doctor and poor old mother'. Five-year old Alice died. ¹⁴⁶

Mothers toiled against dirt, fighting off lice, bedbugs and other threats to wellbeing. They struggled to see their children warmly and well dressed and often against all odds they provided food. It was usually of a plain kind and

barely enough, but occasionally meals to remember, like the ‘...best of all’ suet balls that triumphed over ‘pig’s liver with potatoes and onions and sage and butter poured on top’ or ‘stews with lots of onions and carrots and turnips’ in Daisy Cowper’s memories.¹⁴⁷ Probably because they came later to wage similar battles, the women writers were more sensitive to these everyday contributions, and although both men and women recognised the hard work and sacrifices that went into mothering, women weighed the contributions differently. Mary King, reflected on the relative contributions of her parents coming down firmly in her mother’s favour. The bad housing and primitive sanitation, ‘...wis lot o’ work for ma mother. She wis a hard workin’ woman’. She provided a telling example: cleaning out the dry toilet. ‘[O]h, it would be ma mother likely that cleaned oot the toilet.... ma mother was the worker ma father widnae dae it’.¹⁴⁸

Nor was the relationship entirely material. Autobiographers remembered mothers for the pleasure they brought into their lives through play, reading, conversation and shared ideas and aspirations. Cowper’s eulogy to her mother emphasized that she was always interesting: ‘I should like to stress this quality particularly, for it added so much colour to the lives of us children, and life might have been dull, all things considered’.¹⁴⁹ Marianne Farningham’s vivid memory of when her mother brought her children skipping ropes illustrates mothers’ attempts to bring joy into children’s lives and introduces children’s fear of losing them: ‘We did not know how to use them, so she showed us on a never-to-be - forgotten evening. We stood around, merrily laughing at the sight of our mother skipping like a girl, while we counted the times she kept it up. Suddenly she dropped the rope and leaned against the wall, holding her handkerchief to her

lips, and I noticed that it was stained with blood....'.¹⁵⁰ She records her sudden fear spontaneously comparing the value of mother and father in her childish life: 'That was the beginning of the end... she was so much more to us than our father....'. Consumed with foreboding, Marianne prayed 'Lord, if you must have one, please take our father to heaven, and leave us our dear mother'.¹⁵¹

Marianne's mother died on Christmas day and thereafter she could not bear the sound of Christmas bells and carol singers. As in other cases, her mother's passing represented a sea change in her life as she 'grew at once from a child to a woman' pressed by the responsibilities that then devolved upon her.¹⁵²

Of course, some women, like some men could not abide their mothers. The early chapters of Hannah Mitchell's autobiography detail her battles with her domineering and short-tempered mother, an antagonism that was perhaps also fed by Mitchell's own rebelliousness and obstinacy.¹⁵³ However, Daisy Cowper's testimonial is more representative: 'I cannot express how I loved her, deeply and unwaveringly, from my earliest recollection – (and still do, bless her dear memory)'.¹⁵⁴ Love was manifest too in the desolation expressed when mothers died: 'Whilst my mother was alive I had someone to go to for a kind word and to tell my troubles, but now I had no one, for she was gone' wrote Lucy Luck. Hannah Cullwick was additionally bereft at not having been able to say goodbye: '... nobody told me of Mother's being so ill else nothing'd o'kept me away. I sh'd o'run across them fields & all the 3 mile in ½ an hour. I *know*. But when Philip Blud come on the Saturday evening & said she was dead I thought it was no use, tho' I ax'd to go, & all my strength seem'd gone'.¹⁵⁵

Love for mothers was founded in the care and attention they showed towards their children, and the dexterity they exhibited in managing the household finances and ensuring order, but the female writers wrote from the perspective of anticipating the responsibility for these same duties. Both men and women recognised that the burdens of motherhood increased the larger the family, sometimes citing the numbers of children that mothers managed to raise as testimony to their love and toil. But only the women writers provided intimate detail on the physical efforts that went into raising healthy children. Margaret Whyman reported with pride that her mother bore 17 children, all lived, and were large bonny babies able to walk when only a year old! She went on to ascribe this health to their mother's breast feeding 'with no recourse to dummies or teats'.¹⁵⁶

The deaths of mothers, as noted above, were traumatic events for both men and women. Death in childbirth was a tragedy in a different key. While it robbed men of mothers, scarring their childhoods, or of wives, leaving them burdened with motherless children, for women it had an additional frightening implication: it threatened a fate that they might share. Men, rarely present during childbirth focussed on the outcomes of maternal mortality, while the women's stories provide the mundane contexts, the painful labours, the stillbirths, and the crude medical interventions. Few men were as callous as Granny Keens' husband. When she was having 'a very difficult time' at the birth of her third child, he had, at the insistence of the doctor, walked his pony and trap up and down outside in the cold, so later told his wife that 'he had the worse job'.¹⁵⁷ Most men were simply absent, distance ensured by work, gendered boundaries and medical

norms. They came on the scene only at the end, bit parts in the happiness or sadness that ensued, as is made clear in Catherine Maclaughlin's moving account of her mother's death. 'I remember the day very clearly carrying my baby brother who was not 2 years old to the priest's house a mile away, at the request of a neighbour who had come to see her, but it was too late when we got back home her face was covered up. Then I had to run to the foundry to give my father the bad news. As in other times the bed had been brought downstairs so she remained there until her funeral two days afterwards, and we lived in the scullery'.¹⁵⁸

The account which shows most clearly how childbirth bound women and girls together in shared trepidation is provided by Alice Maud Chase in her history of the rambling Moody family. Alice's mother had married a much older man who had many children by his first wife. These included a stepdaughter Lily, who Mrs Moody loved 'more than her own daughter' and another, Amy, who had grown up as a sister to Alice and her siblings. Lily had married and was having her third child at the same time as her stepmother was pregnant with her ninth child while Amy was about to give birth to her first baby. So, three women in the family faced the strain of pregnancy, the travail of labour and the dangers of childbirth together. Lily was unwell during the pregnancy, gave birth to a stillborn child and then died in less than 24 hours. Shocked and distressed, Mrs Moody's 'moans and wails ... nearly broke our hearts' reported her daughter, and 'life seemed to stand still suddenly' for the Moody women and girls who sooner or later had to face the same test that had torn Lily away.¹⁵⁹

Nor was it only birth that drew women and girls together. Pregnancy was also a gendered issue. Ignored by the male writers, pregnancy was probably invisible to them as boys for in the prudish late nineteenth century mothers were secretive. The women writers were more aware. Edith Evans recognised the toll which so many pregnancies took on her mother's health: 'Mother was getting less able to cope with a baby coming every second year'.¹⁶⁰ Compassion deepened with adult reflection. While describing the lavatory facilities in their house, Edith saw afresh the difficulties that pregnant women faced negotiating poor housing, bad sanitation and inadequate nutrition. The toilet was at the back of the Evans' house, at the end of a wall topping. The fastest and more private access was through a small window in their cellar, the only other route being out of the front door, down the street and down a ginnel and then only to less private shared accommodation. 'How my mother got out of the window, especially during her pregnancies, I don't know'¹⁶¹

Empathy with pregnancy and childbirth was compounded by recognition of the strain caused by additional children to already stretched family resources of time and money. Women writers acknowledged their outright hostility as girls to additional babies, a hostility that was deepened if the birth involved withdrawal from school. When a seventh baby was born into the Hughes family it was three days before Ermynrude, the eldest daughter would look at him: 'Being the eldest she had lots to do and said there were enough to look after without another one'.¹⁶² Girls contemplated the burdens on mothers and dreamed of a different fate. Christian Watt rejected one suitor: 'it is stupid to marry young and have bairns strung around your neck like tinkies' pails and be bogged down for the

rest of your life'. She resolved to be 'an old maid' for '[T]here were several in Broadsea, sitting in blissful solitude and the polished brightness of their hoosies' which seemed infinitely more attractive than her own crowded home with seven noisy brothers. ¹⁶³

Not only did additional children draw mothers and daughters together, it drove fathers and daughters apart. The strains imposed on mothers' bodies from constant additions in overcrowded underfunded homes were laid at their door. Anita Hughes father and sister exchanged words over the arrival of a new baby who Ermy declared was surplus to requirements.¹⁶⁴ As a rather knowing teenager, Edith Evans became 'thoroughly ashamed of my big family and really disgusted with my father'. She could hardly bring herself to 'talk right to him'.¹⁶⁵ Daisy Cowper was even harsher. When told that her father's ship had sunk and he would not be coming home she felt 'sympathy for mother's tears, not grief for a lost parent'. She despised her father for his inadequate breadwinning and resort to alcohol and disliked him for his authoritarian behaviour. But most of all she resented his impositions on her mother who he left pregnant whenever he returned to sea. Reflecting on her mother's bereavement, she concluded: 'Mother must surely have been relieved to know that child-bearing was over...'.¹⁶⁶

Although rarely discussed directly in either men's or women's life writings, the tensions around sexual activity and its consequences, in terms of additional children, are suggested in these excerpts, which also recognise the associated gender gap in pain and pleasure. ¹⁶⁷ Both men and women recognised that

another child, 'the prospect of another little mouth to feed', was as Granny Keens suggested 'quite a tragedy'. But most men detached it from their marital intimacy and looked stoically forward. Women, who paid the higher price, were less tolerant. Granny Keens remembered how a married brother would periodically come home with a swollen face and their mother would greet him with 'toothache again; John you won't get any sympathy from me, what do you want this time, a boy or a girl'.¹⁶⁸ It was a rare man who like Elizabeth Rignall's father shouldered responsibility for family size. The father's co-workers were having fun at the expense of a mate whose wife had just delivered her tenth child. One man remarked that she always seemed ailing or carrying. In what Elizabeth calls the 'uninhibited way of a group of young men' they then ribbed her father about his solitary child. 'This proved too much for Father's volatile temper, and he retorted, 'sooner than subject my wife to such misery, I'd -----' and a really drastic solution followed; one that was actually handed out to Peter Abelard all those centuries ago... Yes I mean castration, although Father as uninhibited by this time as his companions, expressed it in terms more crude and forceful'.¹⁶⁹ Fathers identifying with their daughters' wellbeing could break the male mould. Elizabeth Bryson, came to see the defects in her charming but feckless father, her grandfather's verdict a factor in removing the scales from her eyes. Her mother he would say was good and clever but she had made one mistake and that was when she married. What had she had since her grandfather asked but trouble 'sair trauchled with too many bairns. Seven bairns, and now no money to feed them'.¹⁷⁰ Of her mother's love and courage, Bryson reported she could 'hardly speak'.¹⁷¹

Conclusions

This comparative review of children's experience during the era of industrialization as seen through working-class life writing has revealed many similarities between boys and girls but some important differences. Girls shared in the dip in age at starting work that was characteristic of boys in the early nineteenth century, but throughout the period studied, they had less education and narrower job opportunities. One startling finding concerns the unsettling evidence of girls' greater vulnerability to sexual predation, which in turn provided a constraint on female independence limiting how women lived their lives. Moreover, the gendering of life chances spilled over from the economic to the demographic, for maternity looms over the women's accounts, a destiny shared with mothers who had faced the same horrors of childbirth without effective medical assistance or analgesics. Girls anticipated the gendered trials and tribulations which their mothers endured and this united them. Not only did these prospects bring mothers and daughters together it drove fathers and daughters apart. Girls associated fathers with the pain and suffering that they perceived emanated from pregnancy after pregnancy alongside the economic stress of adding new babies to already overcrowded households. Men withdrew from the risk and suffering of childbirth, just as they did from the day-to-day management of the household budget, apparently oblivious to the burden of additional children, so reneging, as their daughters often saw it, on their responsibilities. Fathers as breadwinners merited respect and often affection, but it was mothers who as carers, toilers and occasional playmates dominated

the increasingly separate sphere of Victorian family life, and so the emotional worlds of their daughters.

Appendix

Table A1. *Comparison of fathers' broad occupational groups, and primary, secondary and tertiary breakdown (percentages)*

Occupational group	1710 PST	Cohort 1 1700- 1790	181 7 PST	Cohort 2 1791- 1820	Cohort 3 1821- 1850	185 1 PST	Cohort 4 1851-78	187 1 PST
Primary	51	45 (42)	39	55 (32)	36 (37)	32	46 (29)	26
Secondary	37	32 (34)	42	42 (44)	46 (51)	45	36 (45)	46
Tertiary	12	23 (24)	18	3 (24)	18 (13)	23	18 (27)	28

Notes: The data from the autobiographies are recoded into the PST groups as follows: agriculture and mining are combined into 'primary'; factory, domestic manufacturing, trades and casual are combined into 'secondary'; clerical, soldiering, sea and services are combined into 'tertiary'.

Sources: PST benchmarks from L. Shaw-Taylor and E.A. Wrigley, 'Occupational structure and population change', in R. Floud, J. Humphries and P. Johnson, *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Volume I, 1700-1870* (Cambridge, CUP, 2014) p. 59.

¹ E. Andrews, *A woman's work is never done* (South Glamorgan, Cymric Democrat Publishing Society, 1957), 15; M-A Ashford, *Life of a licensed victualler's daughter*, written by herself (Saunders and Otley, 1844), 20.

² The formative contribution remains I. Pinchbeck, *Women workers and the industrial revolution 1750-1850* (London, Virago, 1981). See also: K. Honeyman, *Women, gender and industrialisation in England, 1700-1870* (New York, St Martin's, 2000); J. Burnette, *Gender work and wages in industrial revolution Britain* (Cambridge, CUP, 2008); P. Sharpe, *Adapting to capitalism: Working women in the English economy, 1700-1850* (London, Macmillan, 1996); S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Women's labour force participation and the transition to the male-breadwinner family', *Economic History Review* 48 (1995), 89-117.

³ R. Wall, 'Some implications of the earnings, income and expenditure patterns of married women in populations in the past', in J. Henderson and R. Wall eds., *Poor women and children in the European past* (London, Routledge, 1994); A.M. Froide, 'Marital status as a category of difference: single women and widows in early modern England', in J.M. Bennett and A.M. Froide eds., *Singlewomen in the European past 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); B. Moring and R. Wall, *Widows in European economy and society 1600-1920* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, Boydell, 2017; and, N. Goose, ed., *Women's work in industrial England: Regional and local perspectives* (Hatfield, Local Population Studies, 2007).

⁴ For a discussion of the gender bias in general studies of youth see the introduction to M.J. Maynes, B. Soland, and C. Benninghaus, eds., *Secret gardens, satanic mills. Placing girls in European history* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2005). Honourable exceptions to this bias include Maynes, et.al. as above, M. Gomersall, *Working-class girls in nineteenth-century England: Life, work and schooling* (New York, St Martin's Press, 1997). Recent studies of child labour in the British industrial revolution include: J. Humphries, *Childhood and child labour in the British industrial revolution* (Cambridge, CUP, 2010); S. Horrell and J. Humphries, 'Child work and wages', *Explorations in Economic History*, 73 (2019) 101272

⁵ '...boys and young men have typically constituted a much greater presence in institutions that have produced central evidence for the study of youth history', Maynes, Soland and Benninghaus, *Secret gardens*: 12.

⁶ D. Simonton, 'Bringing up girls: Work in preindustrial Europe' in Maynes, Soland and Benninghaus, *Secret gardens*: 23-38.

⁷ S. Horrell and D. Oxley, 'Bargaining for basics? Inferring decision making in nineteenth-century British households from expenditure, diet, stature and death', *European Economic History Review* 17 (2013), 147-170; Maynes, et. al., *Secret gardens*: 5.

⁸ D. Simonton, 'Bringing up girls: Work in preindustrial Europe' in Maynes, Soland and Benninghaus, *Secret gardens*: 23-38.

-
- ⁹ J. Humphries, *Childhood and child labour in the British industrial revolution* (Cambridge, CUP, 2010).
- ¹⁰ G. Frost, Review of J. Humphries, *Childhood*, *Journal of British Studies*, XX (2011), 517. More generally, Simonton argues that ‘the economic nexus of labouring life meant that the image of the child-oriented mother remained alien among the lower classes’ in ‘Bringing up girls’: 26.
- ¹¹ J-M. Strange, *Fatherhood and the British working class, 1865-1914* (Cambridge, CUP, 2015).
- ¹² Such constraints are best understood within Amartya Sen’s ‘capabilities approach’ which focuses on what people are able to do and to be so enabling an understanding of the barriers societies have erected to gender equality, see A. Sen, *Inequality re-examined* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1992).
- ¹³ M.J. Maynes, *Taking the hard road: Life course in French and German workers autobiographies in the era of industrialization* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
- ¹⁴ <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk>
- ¹⁵ J. Burnett, ed., *Plenty and want: A social history of diet in England from 1815 to the present day* (London, Routledge, 1966; 3rd edition 1989); J. Burnett, ed., *Destiny obscure: Autobiographies of childhood, education, and family from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London, Allen Lane, 1982); J. Burnett, ed., *Useful toil: Autobiographies of working people from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London, Allen Lane, 1994).
- ¹⁶ D. Vincent, *Testaments of radicalism: Memoirs of working-class politicians 1790-1885* (London, Europa, 1977); D. Vincent, ed., *The autobiography of a beggar boy* (London, Europa, 1978). D. Vincent, *Bread, knowledge and freedom: A study of nineteenth-century working class autobiography* (London, Europa, 1981).
- ¹⁷ E. Ross, *Love and toil: Motherhood in outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford, OUP, 1993).
- ¹⁸ Humphries, *Childhood*.
- ¹⁹ E. Griffin, *Liberty’s dawn. A people’s history of the industrial revolution* (New Haven, Yale, 2013)
- ²⁰ J. Rose, *The intellectual life of the British working classes* (New Haven, Yale, 2001)
- ²¹ Strange, *Fatherhood*. Other research drawing on autobiography are discussed in Humphries, *Childhood*, 14-17.
- ²² In 1700, 25 per cent of women could read and write according to signatures on marriage certificates compared with 40 per cent of men and this gap narrowed over the next 150 years. By 1860, 63 per cent of women were literate and 70 per cent of men. D. Cressey, *Literacy and the social order: Reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, CUP, 1980); D. Vincent, *Literacy and popular culture in England 1750-1914* (Cambridge, CUP, 1989)
- ²³ E. Oakley, ‘The autobiography of Elizabeth Oakley, 1831-1900’, *Norfolk Record Society* 56 (1993) 148.
- ²⁴ W.J. Jones, ‘Editor’s note’, preceding M. Evans, *Memories of New Quay*, translated from Welsh by Mary Jane Stephenson (Aberystwyth, Ceredigion Book Society, 1961).
- ²⁵ R. Pascal, *Design and truth in autobiography* (New York, Garland, 1985).
- ²⁶ <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70506/sampler-parker-elizabeth/>

²⁷ The earliest female writer was born in 1667 whereas the earliest male writer was born in 1627, hence the different starting points.

²⁸ M. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth-century Lancashire* (Cambridge, CUP, 1971).

²⁹ The Lady Cranworth, 'A Norfolk Labourer's Wife', *Eastern Counties Magazine and Suffolk Notebook*, II (1901), 125.

³⁰ L. Jermy, *The memories of a working woman* (Norwich, Goose and Sons, 1934).

³¹ M. Saxby, 'Memoirs of a female vagrant written by herself' (London, J. Burditt, 1806) 4.

³² Oakley, 'Autobiography', 126, 131. Interestingly, the uncle does appear to have adopted one of his sister's girls and raised her as his own, 126.

³³ The almost universal assignment of fathers to occupational groups enables a check on the representativeness of the data. Fathers are allocated by cohort to primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of employment, following the occupational divisions established by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. Comparisons can then be made with the CAMPOP estimation of the occupational structure of England and Wales and with the distribution of the fathers of the male writers, as shown in Table A1 in the appendix. Although fathers involved in primary production are overestimated in cohorts 2 and 4 while those in the tertiary sector underestimated in cohort 2, relative to the CAMPOP distribution and the fathers of the male writers, the distributions are roughly but reassuringly in line. See, L. Shaw-Taylor and E.A. Wrigley, 'Occupational structure and population change', in R. Floud, J. Humphries and P. Johnson, *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Volume I, 1700-1870* (Cambridge, CUP, 2014) p. 59.

³⁴ A. Candler, *Poetical attempts by Ann Candler, a Suffolk cottager with a short narrative of her life* (Ipswich, John Raw, 1803); C. Watt, *The Christian Watt papers*, D. Fraser editor (Edinburgh, Birlinn, 2004); D. Smith, *My revelation: An autobiography* (London, Houghton Publishing, 1933).

³⁵ L. Luck, 'A little of my life', *The London Mercury*, 76 (1926) 354-373.

³⁶ Mrs W. Shorely, Mrs Emma Thompson, and Mrs Daniels, *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 8 April, 1910 and 29 April 2010.

³⁷ Mrs John Sharp, *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 8 April, 2010.

³⁸ B. Harvey, 'Youthful memories of a horsekeeper's daughter', in E.A. Goodwyn and J.C. Baxter, eds., *East Anglian Reminiscences* (Ipswich, Boydell, 1976); C. Maclaughlin, untitled manuscript, Brunel.

³⁹ Mrs John Sharp, *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 8 April, 2010.

⁴⁰ Humphries, *Childhood*, 95. For standard sources see, R. Allen,

<https://www.nuffield.ox.ac.uk/people/sites/allen-research-pages/>

G. Clark, 'The long march of history: Farm wages, population and economic growth, England 1209-1869', *Economic History Review*, 60 (2007) 97-136; I. Gazeley, 'Income and living standards, 1870-2010', in R. Floud, J. Humphries and P. Johnson, *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Volume I, 1700-1870* (Cambridge, CUP, 2014);

⁴⁰ Strange, *Fatherhood*.

⁴¹ Strange, *Fatherhood*.

-
- ⁴² M. Clarke, untitled, Brunel.
- ⁴³ The Lady Cranworth, 'A Norfolk Labourer's Wife', *Eastern Counties Magazine and Suffolk Notebook*, II (1901), 124.
- ⁴⁴ On breadwinner frailty, see Humphries, *Childhood*, 120
- ⁴⁵ D.C. Jones, *Social Surveys* (London, Hutchinson, n.d.), 63.
- ⁴⁶ Sharp, *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent*.
- ⁴⁷ R. Gibbs, In service: Rose Gibbs remembers, Archives for Bassingbourn & Comberton Village Colleges, Cambridge, 1981.
- ⁴⁸ R. Allen, 'Engels' pause: Technical change, capital accumulation, and inequality in the British industrial revolution', *Explorations in Economic History* 46 (2009), 418-35.
- ⁴⁹ Mrs M.A. Deacon, 'Memories of Desborough 70 years ago', Village Memories Collection, Northamptonshire Record Office.
- ⁵⁰ Mrs Layton, 'Memories of seventy years', in M. L. Davies, ed., *Life as we have known it by Cooperative women* (London, Virago, 1977)
- ⁵¹ M. Coe, 'Mary Coe' in M. Chamberlain, *Fenwomen. A Portrait of Women in an English Village* (London, Virago, 1975) 28.
- ⁵² D. Tack, *My Brixton Childhood* (Brixton, Brixton Society, 1992), 3.
- ⁵³ Mrs Sargeant, 'Memories of a villager', Village Memories Collection, Northamptonshire Record Office, 2.
- ⁵⁴ H. Fowler, untitled, Brunel.
- ⁵⁵ Humphries, *Childhood*, 114.
- ⁵⁶ E. Johnson,
- ⁵⁷ M.L. Trigg, 'Autobiographical letters', Brunel.
- ⁵⁸ D. Cowper, 'De Nobis', Brunel University Library.
- ⁵⁹ Strange, *Fatherhood*.
- ⁶⁰ Tack, *Brixton Childhood*, 1.
- ⁶¹ M. Bondfield, *A life's work* (Hutchinson and co., London, 1950), 23.
- ⁶² M. Gawthorpe, *Up hill to Holloway* (Penobscot Maine, Traversity Press, 1962)
- ⁶³ E. Evans, 'Growing up'.
- ⁶⁴ Gawthorpe, *Up hill*.
- ⁶⁵ Humphries, *Childhood*, 63-8.
- ⁶⁶ I. Smith,
- ⁶⁷ Although this rose to over 40 per cent if the wives of men in occupations which the Registrar General's office counted as active by dint of husbands' work were included as participating.
- ⁶⁸ For example E. Parker, ; The range of estimates depends on whether cases are included where information on parents is missing.
- ⁶⁹ The Lady Cranworth, 'A Norfolk Labourer's Wife', 124
- ⁷⁰ Humphries, *Childhood*, 105. The range of estimates depends on whether cases are included where information on parents is missing.

-
- ⁷¹ Oakley, Burrows, Spriggs, Smart, Coe, Mrs Palmer, Gittings, Jarvis, Walker, Groom,
- ⁷² Coe, 'Mary Coe' 28-29.
- ⁷³ M. Howitt, 'The Howitt Family in England and Australia', Brunel; Layton, 'Memories, 2.
- ⁷⁴ Humphries, *Childhood*, 105.
- ⁷⁵ Again, the range is the result of inclusion/exclusion of missing values.
- ⁷⁶ E. Allen, *The faithful servant or the history of Elizabeth Allen* (London, Francis Westley, 1824) p. 3
- ⁷⁷ K. Wilkinson, *Memoir of Kitty Wilkinson of Liverpool, 1789-1860* (Liverpool, Henry Young and Sons, 1927) 1; Gibbs, 'In service' 1.
- ⁷⁸ M. Wasson, 'Memories of Ninety Years',
- ⁷⁹ J. Debney, *Breaking the chains* (Coventry, Brewin, 2010).
- ⁸⁰ Humphries, *Childhood*, 109-10.
- ⁸¹ Her husband was a London policeman and his wife's employment would have impugned his ability to provide and status as a respectable breadwinner, see, A. August, 'How separate a sphere? Poor women and paid work in late Victorian London', *Journal of Family History* 19 (1994) 285-309; A. August, *Poor women's lives* (London, Associated University Presses, 1999);
- ⁸² Tack, *Brixton childhood*, 3.
- ⁸³ N. Raisbeck, 'A north riding childhood', *Bulletin of Cleveland and Teeside Local History Society*, 85 (2003) 15.
- ⁸⁴ Testimony of Mrs Sumbler, Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parliamentary Papers, XII (1943) 67-8.
- ⁸⁵ Testimony of Mrs Mary Hunt, Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, Parliamentary Papers, XII (1943) 88.
- ⁸⁶ Humphries, *Childhood*, 110.
- ⁸⁷ J. Debney, *Breaking*.
- ⁸⁸ Mrs Linnit
- ⁸⁹ Humphries, *Childhood*, 117.
- ⁹⁰ The Lady Cranworth, 'Norfolk labourer's wife' 125.
- ⁹¹ The Lady Cranworth, 'Norfolk labourer's wife' 125.
- ⁹² B. Shaw, 'The family records of Benjamin Shaw. Mechanic of Dent, Dolphinholme and Preston, 1772-1841', A. Crosby, ed., *Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 130 (1991), 90.
- ⁹³ Regression analysis tests the relationship between a group of explanatory variables and a dependent variable, identifying the size and sign on the coefficient linking independent and depended variables and suggesting whether or not relationships were too well defined to be the result of chance.
- ⁹⁴ Burrows, 112.
- ⁹⁵ Johnston, 7.
- ⁹⁶ P. Kirby, *Child labour in Britain, 1750-1870* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave, 2003) 51-92.
- ⁹⁷ Humphries, *Childhood*, 181; R. Davis *The rise of the English shipping industry in the 17th and 18th centuries* (London, Macmillan, 1962) 152.
- ⁹⁸ Andrews, *A woman's work*, 6.

-
- ⁹⁹ Kirby, Child labour, 52.
- ¹⁰⁰ M. Saxby, *Memoirs of a female vagrant written by herself* (London, J. Burditt, 1806).
- ¹⁰¹ C. Watt, *The Christian Watt papers* (Edinburgh, Birlinn, 1988), 36.
- ¹⁰² A. Hughes, nee Hodgson, 'Unpublished autobiography', Brunel, 5.
- ¹⁰³ Watt, *Christian Watt papers*, 57.
- ¹⁰⁴ Luck, 'A little', 361.
- ¹⁰⁵ E. Johnston, Autobiography of Ellen Johnston, 'The Factory Girl', in *Four nineteenth-century working-class autobiographies*, edited by James R. Simmons Jr., and introduced by Janice Carlisle (Toronto, Broadview Press, 2007).
- ¹⁰⁶ W. Marcroft, *The Marcroft family* (London, John Heywood, 1886) 21.
- ¹⁰⁷ Luck, 'A little', 365.
- ¹⁰⁸ [E. Smith], *A Cornish waif's story* (London, Odham's Press, 1954) 31.
- ¹⁰⁹ J. Humphries, 'Protective Legislation, the Capitalist State and Working-Class Men: The Case of the 1842 Mines Regulation Act', *Feminist Review*, No. 7, Spring 1981, 1–35; J. Humphries, "'The Most Free from Objection...'", *The Sexual Division of Labour and Women's Work in Nineteenth Century England*, *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XLVII, No. 4, December 1987, 929–950.
- ¹¹⁰ J. Bowden, *Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture*, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XII, 1843, 113.
- ¹¹¹ Cullwick, *Diaries*, 36.
- ¹¹² Luck, 'A little', 365.
- ¹¹³ Hughes, 'Unpublished', 5.
- ¹¹⁴ W.P. Baker, *Parish registers and illiteracy in east Yorkshire* (Micklethorpe, Yorks, East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1961); T.W. Laqueur, *Religion and respectability, Sunday schools and working-class culture 1780-1850* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1976); W.B. Stephens, *Education, literacy and society 1830-70* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987).
- ¹¹⁵ B. Harvey, 'Youthful memories of a horsekeeper's daughter' in *East Anglian Reminiscences*, edited by E.A. Goodwyn and J.C. Baxter, (Ipswich, Boydell, 1976) 52; Andrews, *A woman's work*, 2. A. Hughes, 'Unpublished autobiography
- ¹¹⁶ M. Frisby, 'Memories' TS, Brunel, 2; Harvey, 'Youthful memories', 53.
- ¹¹⁷ J. Mullin, *The story of a toiler's life*, edited by P. Maume (Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 1921), 9. See also, Saxby, 'Memoirs', 5.
- ¹¹⁸ B. Farquhar, *The peal of days or the advantages of the Sabbath to the working class* (London, Patridge and Oakey, 1851), 21; M. Farningham, *A working woman's life: An autobiography* (London, James Clarke and co., 1907), 13..
- ¹¹⁹ M. Hull, 'A Derbyshire schooling: 1884-1893', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 25, Spring 1988, pp. 167.

-
- ¹²⁰ See E. Spriggs, 'My earliest memories of a villager', Village Memories, Northampton Record Office, p. 1. M.A. Smith, 'Memories of a Villager', Village Memories, Northampton Record Office, p. 1.
- ¹²¹ M. Farningham, *A working woman's life: An autobiography* (London, James Clarke and co., 1907), 17.
- ¹²² Farningham, *Working woman*, p.18.
- ¹²³ Farningham, *Working woman*, p.13.
- ¹²⁴ Farquhar, *Pearl*, 26.
- ¹²⁵ See Farningham, *Working woman*, pp.45-8
- ¹²⁶ C. Watt, *The Christian Watt Papers*, edited by David Fraser (Edinburgh, Birlinn, 1988), 23;
- ¹²⁷ F. Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (London, Century Publishing, 1983), 58.
- ¹²⁸ J. Bathgate, *Aunt Janet's legacy to her nieces. Recollections of humble life in Yarrow at the beginning of the century* (Selkirk, George Lewis and Co., 1891).
- ¹²⁹ A. Cowper, *A backward glance on Merseyside* (Birkenhead, Willmer Brothers, 1948) 40.
- ¹³⁰ Andrews, *Woman's work*, 2.
- ¹³¹ I. Smith, 'A hired lass in Westmorland', Cumbria County Library, 3.
- ¹³² C. Maclaughlin, handwritten ms, Brunel, no pagination.
- ¹³³ As Jean Leid reported. Her mother was a bondager responsible for the upkeep of her illegitimate children, so it was Jean's granny who raised her: '...ah didnae really see much o'ma mother when ah wis a wee girl. It was granny that wis at home....'. I. MacDougall, *Bondagers* (), interview with Jean Leid, 123-42
- ¹³⁴ Maclaughlin, ms.
- ¹³⁵ Gawthorpe, *Up hill*, 115-6.
- ¹³⁶ Humphries, *Childhood*, 129.
- ¹³⁷ M. Frisby, 'Memories', Brunel, 1.
- ¹³⁸ Frisby, 'Memories' 16.
- ¹³⁹ R. Mynachlog, *Memories of Ruth Mynachlog* (Llandysul, Gomer, 1939) 9.
- ¹⁴⁰ M. Bondfield, *A life's work* (London, Hutchinson, 1950) 23.
- ¹⁴¹ E. Evans, *Growing up- 1903-1928*, 1
- ¹⁴² D. Cowper, 'De nobis', Brunel, no pagination.
- ¹⁴³ A. Auty, *Annie being a faithful account of the life and experience and labours of Annie Auty* (London, Simkin, Marshall and Co., 1888) 2.
- ¹⁴⁴ Bondfield, *Life's work*, 19
- ¹⁴⁵ Mrs M. Whyman, Village memories collection, Northampton Record Office.
- ¹⁴⁶ Harvey, *Youthful memories*, 52.
- ¹⁴⁷ Cowper, 'De nobis', Brunel, no pagination.
- ¹⁴⁸ MacDougall, Mary King interview, 6-7.
- ¹⁴⁹ Cowper, 'De nobis', Brunel, no pagination.
- ¹⁵⁰ Farningham, *A working woman's life*, 38.

-
- ¹⁵¹ Farningham, *A working woman's life*, 40
- ¹⁵² Farningham, *A working woman's life*, 43-4
- ¹⁵³ H. Mitchell, *The hard way up. The autobiography of Hannah Mitchell suffragette & rebel*, edited by Geoffrey Mitchell (London, Faber & Faber, 1968). For male writers who could not abide their mothers see Humphries, *Childhood*, 239.
- ¹⁵⁴ Cowper, 'De nobis', Brunel, no pagination.
- ¹⁵⁵ Luck, 'A Little', 364; H. Cullwick, *The diaries of Hannah Cullwick* (London, Virago, 1984) 37.
- ¹⁵⁶ Whyman, 'Village memories', no pagination.
- ¹⁵⁷ M. Keens, 'Granny Keens of St. Julians', *Bedfordshire Magazine*, Vol. 26, No. 201, summer 1997, 39-40.
- ¹⁵⁸ Maclaughlin, ms, no pagination.
- ¹⁵⁹ A.M. Chase,
- ¹⁶⁰ E. Evans, 'Growing up' 2.
- ¹⁶¹ E. Evans, 'Growing up' 1.
- ¹⁶² A. Hughes, 'Unpublished ms', Brunel, 1.
- ¹⁶³ C. Watt, *Christian Watt Papers*, 46.
- ¹⁶⁴ A. Hughes, 'Unpublished ms', Brunel, 1.
- ¹⁶⁵ E. Evans, 'Growing up', 5.
- ¹⁶⁶ D. Cowper, 'De nobis', no pagination.
- ¹⁶⁷ For a broader discussion see W. Seccombe, *Weathering the storm* (London, Verso, 1993).
- ¹⁶⁸ Keens, 'Granny Keens', 40.
- ¹⁶⁹ E. Rignall, 'All so long ago', Brunel, 57.
- ¹⁷⁰ E. Bryson, *Look back in wonder* (Dundee, David Winter, 1966) 22.
- ¹⁷¹ E. Bryson. *Look back*, 95.

Oxford Economic and Social History Working Papers

are edited by

Jakob Schneebacher (Nuffield College, Oxford, OX1 1NF)

Marco Molteni (Pembroke College, Oxford, OX1 1DW)

Papers may be downloaded from:

https://www.economics.ox.ac.uk/50?search=working_papers&task=search