National Child Development Study
User Support Group

Working Paper
No 10

LEAVING THE PARENTAL HOME

An analysis of Early Housing Careers

by

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This work has been supported by the ESRC under programme grant no H04250001

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July, 1986

NCDSUSGWP10:GJ;200686

National Child Development Study User Support Group Working Paper Series

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Acknowledgements
The research is funded under a linked studentship by the ESRC. I would like to thank the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for the use of the General Household Survey, and my colleagues in the Stratification and Employment Group, University of Surrey for the use of the data in rectangular form. I am grateful to the National Children's Bureau and City University for the use of the National Child Development Study, and the ESRC Data Archive for making it available. I would particularly like to thank Nigel Gilbert and Sara Arber, for the patience, humour and commitment with which they have supervised my work, as well as for their comments on this paper.

ABSTRACT

Patterns of leaving home vary between classes in terms of the reason for the move, its timing, the reversibility of the process, and the type of accommodation entered on leaving the family of origin. The association between leaving home and marriage is seen to be weakening, as more young people move into single independent housing prior to marriage. The notion of transitional housing is raised, and it is argued that there will be an increasing demand for such housing, characterised by suitable accommodation for the single, geographically mobile young. The study draws upon evidence in the General Household Survey and the National Child Development Study.

Introduction

The transition from youth to adulthood in British society is complex. Research on this part of the life cycle has been fragmentary, some aspects of the transition process receiving more attention than others. While the transition from school to work has received a great deal of attention over several decades, marriage and movement towards family formation has only more recently begun to receive attention from sociologists. A third major area of the process of transition into adulthood, that of leaving the parental home and embarking on a "housing career", has not yet begun to receive serious attention. It is, furthermore, the case, that sociology has tended to neglect what might be described as the "normal" aspects of youth, in favour of a fascination for its problematic aspects - adolescent gangs and delinquency, for example. Most of the work on representative samples of young people has been done by social policy researchers or demographers. Sociological studies of transitions in youth have been broadly functionalist in approach (Allen, 1973) and have tended to neglect class and gender differences. In consequence, there has been a tendency to treat youth as a unitary concept, part of a simple linear progression to adulthood.

This paper, part of a broad study of the transitions to adulthood (Jones,1986a), shows that these transitions, far from representing a simple progression, vary in their timing and ordering (or whether they are ordered at all) according to class and gender.

The Data Sets

The research involves secondary analysis of the General Household Survey (GHS) and the National Child Development Study (NCDS). The GHS is a national survey of households from which a subset was extracted of 12,036 people aged 16 to 29 years, by combining data from the 1979 and 1980 surveys. It is a cross-sectional data set, providing a picture of people's situations at a particular time (OPCS, 1979, 1980). Since it is a survey of households in the electoral register, the GHS is likely not to include those who are frequently changing their addresses and omits all those in hostels, so some groups, notably of "drifters" and students will be under-represented. The second data set, the NCDS, is a cohort study of

all the people born during one week in March 1958. The 1981 Sweep of the NCDS asked questions of the sample at the age of 23 years, and covers information for the period since they were 16 years of age. There has been some attrition due to death or emigration since 1958, and the sample has been supplemented by adding immigrants who were born in the same week. The current sample contains 12,537 respondents, representing 71% of the original birth cohort and 76% of the target sample for the fourth sweep, allowing for known death and migration (Shepherd, 1985).

By using the GHS and the NCDS as complementary data sets, it is possible to look at an overall picture for a wide age range (16-29 years), using the GHS, and then examine people at the age of 23, to see how they reached their present positions, using longitudinal data on their job and housing histories.

A Typology of Youth Class

During the present research a typology of "youth class" has been developed. The current occupational class of a young worker is generally insufficient indication of their social class: it is often different from their class of origin and may represent only a "frozen frame" in an overall picture of inter-generational and intra-generational mobility over time. Many children (particularly sons) of middle class fathers may be in manual work, but in the majority of cases these apparently downwardly mobile middle class will, through a process of "counter mobility", regain their middle class status (Goldthorpe, 1981). It would therefore be misleading to label this group according to their occupational status as working class. The full typology developed takes into account both the respondents' occupational class and their fathers' occupational class, as well as including the respondents' age at leaving full-time education, which has been found to be a useful indicator of the likelihood of achieving upward mobility in the class structure. This full Youth Class typology, and its theoretical basis, has been described elsewhere (Jones, 1986b).

The simplified typology used here is based on the respondent's occupational class in relation to that of his or her father. Inter-generationally mobile groups are thus defined. Occupational

class has broadly been dichotomised into manual and non-manual work (based on current or last job) for male respondents and their fathers. Since this is not a meaningful division of female occupational class, a different approach has been taken for female respondents: women in junior non-manual work have been divided according to their educational level, those with full-time education continuing beyond their eighteenth birthday are grouped with higher non-manual classes, while those who left full-time education below the age of eighteen are grouped with manual workers, into lower occupational classes.

It should also be noted that the two data sets provide different measures for father's occupational class: in the GHS, the father's current or last occupation is asked, for the survey date; in the NCDS, data on father's occupational class is only available from the 1974 Sweep (and where this data is missing, has been obtained from earlier sweeps).

The resulting typology is as follows:

a) **Stable Middle Class**
   Fathers in non-manual work, respondents in higher occupational classes (includes the Counter-Mobile from the original typology);
b) **Upwardly Mobile Working Class**
   Fathers in manual work, respondents in higher occupational classes (combines the Education-Mobile and the Work-Route from the original typology);
c) **Downwardly-mobile Middle Class**
   Fathers in non-manual work, respondents in lower occupational classes;
d) **Stable Working Class**
   Fathers in manual work, respondents in lower occupational classes.

Table 1 shows distributions of Youth Class by sex in the two data sets. The analysis below will make use of Youth Classes as a measure of stratification, on occasion showing only the data for the two groups which were found to show the extremes in terms of

patterns of leaving home, namely, the Stable Middle Class and the Stable Working Class.

The study relates to a period of relatively low unemployment. Many of the NCDS respondents were entering the labour force in the mid-seventies, and unemployment was relatively low among the younger GHS respondents in 1980 as well. Current unemployment among the GHS sample was 6% in 1980 and among the NCDS cohort was 10% in 1981. The study is therefore chiefly concerned with young people who have been employed, rather than with the long-term unemployed. Very few of the young people under study (other than students) had never had a job and their class positions could therefore be based on their occupational class in their current or last job. Students are omitted from the analysis, since they are under-represented in the GHS. The study therefore provides a framework, concentrating as it does on "normal" patterns of leaving home, which will allow further analysis elsewhere of the effects of unemployment and the recession upon the transitions to adulthood.

Existing Research

To date, research on the timing or nature of leaving the parental home has been sparse. While there has been some historical research in Britain (Laslett, 1971; Wall, 1978; Anderson, 1983), and some current demographic research based on survey data in Melbourne, Australia (Young, 1974, 1975, 1983), there has been little else published, as Kiernan has pointed out in a recent survey (1985) of the scant literature. There is, however, considerable concern in the present-day about the effects of wide-spread youth unemployment on the transitions to adulthood and in particular household and family formation, and recent research has reflected this concern (Wallace, 1986).

The historical research shows a relationship between entering work, leaving home and getting married which has changed considerably over time and which is still changing. The general trend has been for these three aspects of the transition to adulthood to be more and more closely related. In pre-industrial times, according to Laslett (1971:15) children left the parental home at an early age (often, he estimated, around the age of ten) to live as servants in

another household; they may then have spent fifteen years or more with that family before marrying and forming their own households. Anderson's (1971,1983) and Wall's (1978) research on patterns in the mid-nineteenth century show that a large proportion of adolescents left home to live in as servants or apprentices, or to move into the towns and take up board and lodging with a family. Again, marriage was likely to occur later in their twenties.

Research in the United States shows that the nineteenth century pattern there was similar to that in Britain. Modell and Haraven (1973) have examined the role of boarding in 19th Century America ("the lodger evil" it was called by nineteenth century moralists who blamed the practice for the overcrowding of homes and for moral decline) and the decrease in its incidence by the end of the century. They infer, from the age differences between boarders and their landlords, that boarding was often chosen as a "family surrogate" by men and women in their early twenties who moved into the towns.

The historical research suggests, then, that young people, though leaving home at an early age, were not living in independent housing. Leaving home was not necessarily therefore related to adult status, but more probably was associated with adolescent status. Adult status then, as largely now, was gained through marriage and family formation.

The study by Richard Wall (1978) of patterns of leaving home has suggested that although children of both the gentry and pre-industrial workers left home at an early age before the eighteenth century, class differences developed over time as the children of the gentry became increasingly likely to stay longer in the parental home. Early historical patterns are however difficult to assess, partly because of the unreliability of many of the statistical sources. Comparing data for years between 1697 and 1841, Wall found it difficult to detect any general trend towards children leaving home at a later age, but concluded (concurring with Anderson, 1971) that

> ...the conditions of life in large towns did give rise to situations in which children would remain longer in the

parental household than they had either in pre-industrial England or in rural areas in the mid-nineteenth century. (Wall, 1978:193)

Wall, commenting on the close link between leaving home and marriage in the present day, concludes that it is the gradual nature of the process of leaving home in the past which distinguishes it (Wall,1978:200). Anderson (1983), too, has suggested that whereas in the nineteenth century and earlier, the passage between childhood status and household headship was statistically and probably culturally a protracted one, the situation by the late 1970s was greatly different. He surmises from 1979 GHS data that the average age gap between leaving home and entering headship was one year. The data presented here, though, will show that his assumption does little to help us understand the patterns of leaving home in the present day.

There have been further changes in the last few decades. Marriage patterns in particular have changed in the last twenty years, with the age at marriage first getting lower, and then higher again, as it was increasingly preceded by cohabitation (Kiernan, 1983, 1985a). Research suggests however that in the present day the age at leaving home has been closely associated with the age at marriage. Young comments that:

> Marriage has maintained a long-standing dominance as the principal, traditional and acceptable reason for leaving home. (Young, 1984:53)

It has therefore been common practice until recently to associate leaving home with marriage, and on occasion the age at marriage has been used as a proxy variable for the age of leaving home, in survey analysis (as Kiernan points out, 1985b). It is estimated that during the 1960s there was indeed a close relationship between the age at marriage and the age at leaving home, partly because the age at marriage was lower and the rented housing stock was becoming more plentiful. In the last decade, however, the age at marriage has increased again, and unfurnished rented accommodation has become more difficult to obtain. More people, and in particular more women, go on to higher education now than ever before. For all these and no doubt other reasons, there is likely

to be less association now than before between the age at marriage and that of leaving home.

This means that the period in life when one was in an intermediate household situation between being the child of the household and the head (or spouse of head of household) has shrunk. By the middle of the twentieth century, people no longer entered living-in apprenticeships or servant positions, and were less likely (in comparison with the nineteenth century) to be boarding or in some other intermediate or long-term housing situation between the parental home and the marital one.

The current trend, it has been suggested (Harris 1983; Young, 1984) is that young people are increasingly leaving their parental homes and moving into **independent** living situations prior to marriage. This would mean that the numbers of young people in single or peer group housing have increased, and that there may have been a change in the nature of the parent-child relationship and

> ...in the significance of familial status as a component of adult status. The young adult would no longer depend for the attainment of adult status (fully independent of his parents) upon founding his/her own nuclear family. Rather, the foundation of a family is made possible by the prior emancipation of the young adult from parental control and the creation of a period early in adult life when the individual defines him/herself independently of their familial status. (Harris, 1983:221).

This underlying trend is likely to be modified again, because of the greater likelihood of unemployment among the young nowadays. Wallace's study of young people on the Isle of Sheppey showed that access to employment crucially affects patterns of transition; respondents who had suffered unemployment were more than twice as likely to be living as dependents in the parental home, as the regularly employed respondents (Wallace, 1986:18, derived from Table 3). This suggests that lack of access to employment may delay the transition to independent housing. The importance of the family as a source of job information has been described elsewhere (Allatt and Yeandle, 1983:21), and it seems likely that where other

family members are in employment, young people may be more likely to hear of jobs if they remain in contact with their parents (the converse may however be equally true, and where parents are unemployed, the young may gain no advantage through remaining at home) (Jones, 1986a).

The most thorough analysis of the contemporary pattern of leaving home has been done in Melbourne, Australia, by Christabel Young (1974, 1984). From survey data, she concluded that the age at leaving home was closely related to the reason for leaving, with people leaving home later for marriage, and early if they were doing so for a job or educational reasons. Only 45% of girls and 31% of boys first left home in order to marry. Young (1974) found considerable sex differences: in general, girls left home two years younger than boys, mainly because of the younger age of women at marriage, and the two-year age difference which is prevalent between spouses. Her more recent survey showed that the age gap had diminished: the median age at which daughters left home in Melbourne in 1974 was 19.5 years, while the median age for sons was 20.7 years (Young, 1984).

Young distinguishes between those who leave home for marriage and those who leave home for other reasons, suggesting that when people leave home for non-marriage reasons they do so at at a younger age, and are more likely to return again to the parental home. One of Young's main findings from a more recent survey (1984) was that around fifty per cent of men and around forty per cent of women who left home later returned to live with their parents. This mainly occurred among those who had left home for reasons other than marriage, and who later left home once more in order to marry.

Young's studies have shown the need to clarify the definition of "leaving home"; her earlier study was based on mothers' answers to questions about when their children left home, while the more recent survey, which shows the more complicated pattern of leaving home and returning, was based on questions asked of the young adults themselves. Parental and children's definitions are clearly likely to vary. In particular, Young asks:

> Which is the more significant event, the first or the final

departure from home?
(Young, 1984:74)

The research suggests that just as leaving home for non-marriage reasons in the nineteenth century did not constitute a true break from parental authority, so in some situations in the modern age, leaving home for reasons other than marriage should not be interpreted as a move towards adult independence. Diana Leonard, in her study (1980) of courtship and marriage in a South Wales town, questions whether independence is really sought by the adolescent or young adult or really "desired" by child or parents. Leonard draws a useful distinction between "leaving home" and "living away from home", the latter being reversible, while the former constitutes a one-way definite breach. So, for example, leaving home to study or get a job would constitute "living away" and "home" was still regarded as the parental home. She points out that "to make a home" alone or with peers is a contradiction in folk terms. Living away from home is to be associated with a forced migration, for education or employment, to another town (and might therefore be seen as a modern version of the boarding phenomenon of earlier times). Leonard's fieldwork was in 1972, and it is likely that circumstances have changed since then. At that time, most young people who lived away from home did so in hostels or with relatives, rather than in bedsits or flats shared with peers. However, like Young, she found that many absences from the parental home were short-term, and many of the respondents in her sample returned to their parental homes after a while.

To summarise then from the research, it would seem that the relationship between the age at leaving home and the age at marriage became closer, as the intermediate stage of living in as servant or boarder disappeared. However, with the increase in the numbers going on to higher education, in cohabitation preceding (in many cases) marriage, and for other reasons, it is likely that a new type of single independent living is emerging among young people. In many cases, however, this may represent only a transitional housing stage.

The questions, then are not only when, why and how people leave the parental home, but how all three of these questions inter-relate. The reason for leaving home is likely to govern the age at leaving and the means by which it is done. The primary issues to consider are whether the process of leaving home is one way or reversible, how the reversibility of the process might affect the type of housing situation entered, whether single independent housing exists on a large scale, and whether it can be distinguished from typical marital housing situations. For each of these questions there exists a further question: how do social class and gender affect the process.

a) **The age at leaving home**

It is not a simple exercise to look at the age at which people leave their parental home. Young's study in Australia showed that many young people there leave home more than once. Simple cross-sectional analysis based on age comparisons of the proportions currently living in the parental home, such as can be obtained from the GHS, are not therefore sufficient, since any previous history of leaving home will have been lost. The NCDS, in contrast, allows an analysis of the age at first leaving home and of whether the respondent has ever returned.

Figure 1 shows the age at first leaving home in the NCDS data, represented in the form of box plots. By the age of 23 years, 65% of men and 84% of women had left the parental home. The median age at leaving home for the first time was 21.9 years for men and 20 years for women, rather higher than the medians reported by Young (1984). The stable middle class appear to leave home earlier than the other three classes, among both men and women, and this will be seen to relate to the reason they left home - to go to college. Apart from this obvious difference, which relates to the greater access of the middle class to higher education, there are no other obvious class differences visible. This suggests that class expectations about the age at which the young begin to establish independent households may not vary greatly.

Young (1974, 1984) and Leonard (1980) have both shown that leaving home is not necessarily a permanent move. Many young people move

back to the parental home. The NCDS provides both cross-sectional and retrospective data and thus can be used to look at the current household situation of the respondents and then see whether they have ever left home.

Table 2 shows household status by youth class and sex, for the NCDS sample. 47% of men and 25% of women are shown to be living with their parents. However, of those currently living in the parental home, 30% of males and 38% of females have at some stage moved away from their parents (Table 3). Furthermore, there are considerable class differences in this table; among the stable middle class currently living in the parental home, 43% of men and 58% of women have at one stage moved away (and moved back), whereas among the stable working class, only 26% of men and 29% of women have moved away and back again. There appears then to be evidence that the process of leaving home varies between classes in its **reversibility.** It seems that it is the middle class who are likely to leave the parental home earliest, not the working class. While the middle class "live away" at a younger age, the working class "leave home", later but more permanently, in Leonard's terms (1980).

b) **Reason for Leaving**

The next question to ask is why people leave home. The reason that people leave the parental home will be seen to be associated with both the age at which they leave and whether they are likely to reverse the process and return to their parents again.

The NCDS asked respondents the main reason why they left the home they were in at the age of 16. Table 4 shows the relationship between the reason for leaving home, and the age at leaving home, for each sex. The question people were asked has inherent difficulties: for instance, it is more acceptable perhaps to say you left home in order to take up a job, than to say that you left home because your parents made you leave, or there may be several reasons for leaving home and the choice of main reason could be problematic. Those who left home because they were told to go may prefer to say that they left in order to set up on their own.

Overall, 39% of men and 52% of women said that they first left home in order to live as married. This does not suggest a very close association between the age at leaving home and the age at marriage, therefore. The table shows, however, that the reason given for leaving home varies among men with the age at leaving home. Among men who left home before they were 18, 50% said it was to take up a job; among those leaving at 18-19, 49% said it was to begin studies; among later leavers, 63% said it was so that they could live as married. Among women, the predominant reason at all ages was so that they could marry, though the second most common reasons were to take up a job, in the younger group, and to begin studies in the middle group, in a pattern similar to that of men. Most women leave home on average about two years before most men. Given the age difference between spouses, which among the working class is around two years, then this difference in age patterns for leaving home becomes explainable. Women marry two years earlier than men, for the most part, and the gender difference in the age at leaving home is largely a result of the age difference at marriage, a suggestion already made by Christabel Young (1974).

Class differences become apparent when the reason for leaving home is looked at. Table 5 shows the main reason for the first move from the parental home, by youth class and sex. It can be seen that around half of stable middle class men leave home in order to begin studies and only 21% do so in order to marry; among stable working class men, 55% leave home to marry. The "mobile groups" show, as they have been observed to do in other circumstances (Jones, 1986a), patterns which are between those of the two "extreme" groups. There is little variation between genders: stable middle class women are most likely to leave home to study (54%) rather than marry (22%), while stable working class women mainly leave home to marry (67%). The overall picture shows women generally more likely than men to leave home for marriage and less likely to leave home in order to take up a job.

The temporary or permanent nature of the move from the parental home is largely defined by the reason for leaving. Leaving home for the purpose of marriage appears to be more of a one-way process than leaving home for other reasons. When (Table 6) percentages of

those returning home having made a move, are looked at in relation to the reason for the first move, then it can be seen that while only 11% of those who left home to marry returned home for 6 months or more, 48% of those who left to begin studies went back home again, as did 52% of those who left to take up a job. This suggests that many of those who left home for particular reasons might return home when the reason for leaving has disappeared, i.e. when the job or the studies are over. This pattern has been found in another recent study (Rauta, 1986). In contrast, unless the marriage ends, people who left home to marry are unlikely to return.

This points again to a fundamental difference in the class patterns of leaving home. The middle class youth who leave home earlier, and principally to go for further education, may not really have "left home" at all, as Leonard (1980) has suggested, but may only have "gone away" temporarily, regarded by parents and perhaps themselves as "living away". It may only be later, when they marry, that the middle class are regarded as living in fully independent housing, but with a higher median age at marriage among the middle class (Dunnell, 1979; Haskey, 1983), some form of intermediate stage between being the child in a household and forming a marital household appears to have become common. The working class, who are likely to leave home when they are older and marry younger, are more likely to leave home in order to marry than for any other reason, and leave home more permanently.

So marriage is a main reason for leaving the parental home (though, surprisingly perhaps, was the reason for first leaving home for less than half of the NCDS cohort). Marriage is also a major determinant of the reversibility or otherwise of the leaving home process, since those who left home to marry were seen to be the least likely to return to the parental home.

c) **Housing stops and destinations**

The next question is where do people go when they leave the parental home, and how is their new living situation affected by their age at leaving home, their reason for doing so, and their marital status. In the following analysis "married" means all who

are living as married or who have ever been legally married.

The class patterns of household status appear similar until marital status is controlled for. Table 7 shows clearly how household status varies with marital status, class and sex. Among single people over 21 years, 89% of stable working class males live with relatives, compared with 61% of stable middle class men; the difference between single middle class and working class women is less (57% and 77%) and single women of all classes are more likely to be head of household or living with others than are single working class men. One possible interpretation of this gender and class difference could be that the more rigid adherence to traditional gender roles of the working class, leads to an expectation on the part of the working class male of having his needs catered for, rather than of being self-sufficient in the home. This has been observed elsewhere (Wallace, 1985:19; Rauta, 1986:4).

The GHS data also shows that, while for the working class there is a direct transition from the parental home to the marital home in most cases, reflecting the pattern among the working class of leaving home to marry, the middle class are more likely to be in a living situation which is neither as child in the parental home, nor as Head of Household, i.e. among the middle class, there is an intermediate household status of "living with others". This may be because many of the middle class will already have shared accommodation while away at college. Table 8 shows that among full-time students aged eighteen and over in the GHS, 12% of men and 13% of women were "living with others", and these figures are probably an underestimate.

The NCDS allows an examination of the living situations of the sample in the homes to which they moved on first leaving the parental home. The analysis is restricted to those who were described as currently single and childless in 1981, and Table 9 shows class and gender comparisons. The table shows that while shared accommodation is most common for both men and women, there are considerable class and gender differences. Among men, the stable middle class are more likely to live alone or with friends

than the stable working class, while the latter are more likely to have been living with a partner or with kin. Women are less likely to live alone than men (only 15% of all single women, compared with 19% of all men). Among women, the middle class are considerably more likely to be in accommodation shared with friends, while working class women are (like working class men) more likely to be with kin or to have moved in with (ex)partners.

The most striking class differences revealed in this table are in the proportions living "with kin" and those living with friends. The data suggest that many of the working class who leave the parental home for reasons other than marriage move in with relatives. This phenomenon seems particularly related to the working class (16% of single working class men lived with kin, compared with only 6% of middle class men, and 22% of single working class women, compared with 9% of middle class women), and would appear not to be a move towards independent living at all, since the respondent is still likely to be in a dependent relationship with the relative who is the head of household. The pattern recalls the nineteenth century patterns of working class migration to areas where there was employment, and dependence on kin for both accommodation and job information. In contrast, the middle class more frequently leave the parental home to live with friends in shared housing which is independent of the family of origin and the extended family. 66% of middle class men and 75% of middle class women shared accommodation with friends, compared with 47% of working class men and 51% of working class women.

The pattern which is now emerging is of working class young people leaving the parental home usually on a permanent basis, for marriage (in which case they move into the marital home). Among the middle class, the picture is different, with temporary moves away from the parental home which are not associated with marriage and which result in most young people sharing with their peers some form of intermediate independent housing, unless the initial move from the parental home is for the purpose of marriage. When the stable working class leave home for reasons other than marriage, they follow a pattern which is similar to that of the stable middle class, but are more likely to live with kin.

The intermediate household status of living alone or with friends can be associated with intermediate housing. While the marital and parental homes are likely to be unfurnished tenancies (probably in the public sector) or owned by respondents or their parents, intermediate household status means bedsitters, hostels, furnished accommodation and in rare cases unfurnished accommodation in the private sector. All these housing situations can be seen as intermediate stops, rather than destinations, and associated with the independent housing of the single or recently-married.

Table 10 cross-tabulates housing situations by youth class among respondents aged 20-24 years in the GHS. Overall, most single people are living with their parents and most married are in council housing or owned accommodation. The stable middle class are more than twice as likely as the stable working class to be in "transitional" housing situations, among the single. Among married respondents, most are in "housing destinations", i.e. public sector rented or owned housing, though a sizeable proportion (between 14% and 20%) of married men and women of both classes are in "transitional housing".

Ineichen's study of recently-married couples in Bristol found that the establishment of an independent household at marriage was achieved by only 66% of his sample. The remaining 34% of couples were living with relatives, usually the wife's parents, though all but 10% had moved out within eighteen months (Ineichen, 1981:253). Analysis of the GHS is not directly comparable to Ineichen's study, since it has not yet been possible to restrict an analysis to recently married couples, but from Table 10 it would appear that only 6% of males and 4% of females are living with parents after marriage.

Housing destinations vary considerably between classes. Table 10 shows that among married men, aged 20-24 years, 67% of the stable middle class are home owners, compared with 44% of the stable working class. Among women, the figures are 75% against 41%. Conversely, very few of the stable middle class become council tenants, in comparison with the stable working class.

Transitional housing might be seen as the first step in a housing career for some (mainly single and middle class) people. Some indication of the direction of housing careers can be gleaned from the GHS, since it is possible to cross-tabulate the current housing situation by the last housing situation among all respondents who are currently heads of households, and Table 11 shows these results. People who have moved straight from the parental home are marginally more likely to be in bought accommodation than are those who have been in intermediate accommodation. Is this because they have benefitted from family support and been able to save in order to buy?

The data (Table 11) show that generally the progress is towards "better" accommodation - that is, towards what I have referred to as housing destinations, rather than from ownership to "transitional accommodation", and makes the concept of a housing "career" seem valid, at least in some situations. The transitional nature of furnished and private rented accommodation, in comparison with council housing and home ownership, is apparent from the low proportions who remain in the "transitional" sectors after a housing move. Only 36% of those in furnished rented accommodation and 17% of those in unfurnished private sector rented accommodation stayed in the same type of accommodation. In contrast, 74% of Council tenants and 85% of home owners stay in the same housing type after a move. Those in furnished accommodation, probably the most mobile group of all, appear to move equally into other furnished accommodation or home ownership. Those in unfurnished private sector rented accommodation moved equally into public sector rented and ownership.

The table also shows some movement from public sector rented accommodation to home ownership. One quarter of those whose previous accommodation was "Council housing" are now living in owned housing (but it should be noted that a lower proportion of council tenants became owners than people in transitional housing situations). The data do not show, furthermore, whether owners who were previously council tenants bought homes on the open market or the homes in which they were already living as tenants. There may

be two distinct types of home-ownership combined here, concealing two different strata among home-owners (as Saunders has suggested, 1982). The extent to which home-ownership is a meaningful status, associated with enhanced life chances, will depend to some extent on the stratum to which a home-owner belongs. Ownership of an ex-council home on an ex-council estate is likely to provide access to lower grade local amenities (such as schools) than ownership of a home elsewhere.

The finding that 25% of council tenants became owners, contradicts the findings of Payne and Payne (1977) who doubted that there was movement between the two, and who suggested that the direction of housing careers was determined at an early stage, since renting and ownership were separate housing markets, rather than separate segments of the same market. Their contention was that young couples face the choice between home-ownership and early childbirth. Because of the different means of access to different housing destinations, entry to the one tends to preclude entry to the other.

Murphy and Sullivan (1983) have re-examined the findings of Payne and Payne, and of Ineichen (1981), in a study of the relationship between fertility and housing tenure, according to which home ownership is associated with low fertility, while public sector rented housing is associated with high fertility. They point out that conclusions are hard to draw from cross-sectional data, and it is likely that tenure affects fertility as much as fertility affects tenure, in a complex relationship. They distinguish between "choice" and "constraint" explanations of the housing market:

> ... whether there is a general normative consensus on the values attached to, for example, housing tenure categories, with access then restricted by resources and power, and an association of deprivation through disappointed aspirations with high fertility (as suggested by the "constraint" hypothesis) or, alternatively, whether different social groups have differing normative values with respect both to child-bearing and tenure, with access to tenure depending largely upon volition (as suggested by the "choice" hypothesis).

(Murphy and Sullivan, 1983:67-8)

The notion of a housing career, as with careers in employment, is based on a combination of choice and constraint. The intention to improve one's housing status or employment status meets varying degrees of constraint, in the form of access to opportunities. Social class is a major indicator of the extent to which constraint may structure opportunity and modify "choice".

Differential access to housing opportunity is clearly shown in the data presented. Table 12 shows the extent to which tenure varies by social class among recently married women aged 16-29 in the GHS. While 65% of all recently married women are home-owners, 87% of stable middle class women are in this category, compared with 54% of stable working class women. The stable working class are over four times as likely as the stable middle class to be in public sector rented accommodation. Housing destinations are closely related to social class.

Britain has one of the highest levels of owner-occupation among young people in the world, according to a recent survey conducted by the Building Societies Association (BSA Bulletin, July 1985). Thirty per cent of all householders under 25 years of age were home-owners in Britain compared with 18% in the United States and 7% in France. The report suggests that the reason so many young people buy housing is through the shortage of available rented accommodation rather than through choice, and indeed points out that home ownership is not ideal for an age group which may need geographic mobility, since the cost of moving home is so high.

The notion of housing opportunity may need to be modified, in this case. Home ownership may for some result from constraint rather than choice. The suggestion is that young people may need a longer period between leaving home and settling into long-term housing destinations. The narrowing housing market, with decreasing stock of rented accommodation, may be forcing young people to make housing decisions which will affect their work and family building prospects. By taking on a mortgage, and limiting their geographic mobility, they may also be limiting their potential in the labour

market.

Summary

Patterns of leaving home vary between classes in terms of the reason for the move, the reversibility of the process and the type of accommodation entered on leaving the family of origin. Class differences in the patterns of leaving home are closely related to class differences in access to educational opportunity. While the working class may typically remain in the parental home until marriage, when the move away will be permanent, one way, and into marital housing, the middle class may leave home for educational reasons, at a younger age, return to the parental home after having ostensibly left it, and live in temporary, intermediate forms of living accommodation. While the working class are likely to maintain a continuous physical attachment to the parental home, or to the extended family, the middle class are more likely to be nominally distanced from the parental home, though returning to it for long periods of time. While the working class show a greater dependence on their kin, the middle class even when their education is complete show patterns of living with their peers.

It seems useful to distinguish between housing destinations and transitional housing, when examining the housing careers of young adults. Transitional housing was seen to be used by those in full-time education, the single middle class and by recently-married couples, representing for all of these groups perhaps a temporary living situation prior to permanent independent housing in the public sector or home-ownership. Among the married, transitional housing may represent a very brief period in their housing careers, while for the single, it could represent a longer-term housing situation (since the public sector is not an option and for the single, house purchase may be difficult).

Harris (1983) has suggested that the proportions of young people moving into independent single housing may have increased over recent years. If this is so, then it represents a new trend, and should not be confused with nineteenth century and earlier patterns of leaving home before marriage. If the trend continues, then the implications for housing policy are immense, and it may well be that more rented accommodation in both the public and the private sector will be needed to cater for the housing requirements of the

geographically mobile young. From this analysis, it seems that although around 60% of males and around 50% of females leave home for reasons other than marriage, around half of these move back into the parental homes again at some stage and that the principal need at present is for temporary housing which allows geographic mobility to take place.

When Anderson (1983) assumed from GHS data that the average time gap between leaving home and becoming head of household was one year, he could not have been aware of the class differences, which show that for the majority of the working class, there is no time gap between the two, compared with the middle class for whom the parameters (with going away and returning before leaving the parental home "for good") are ill-defined.

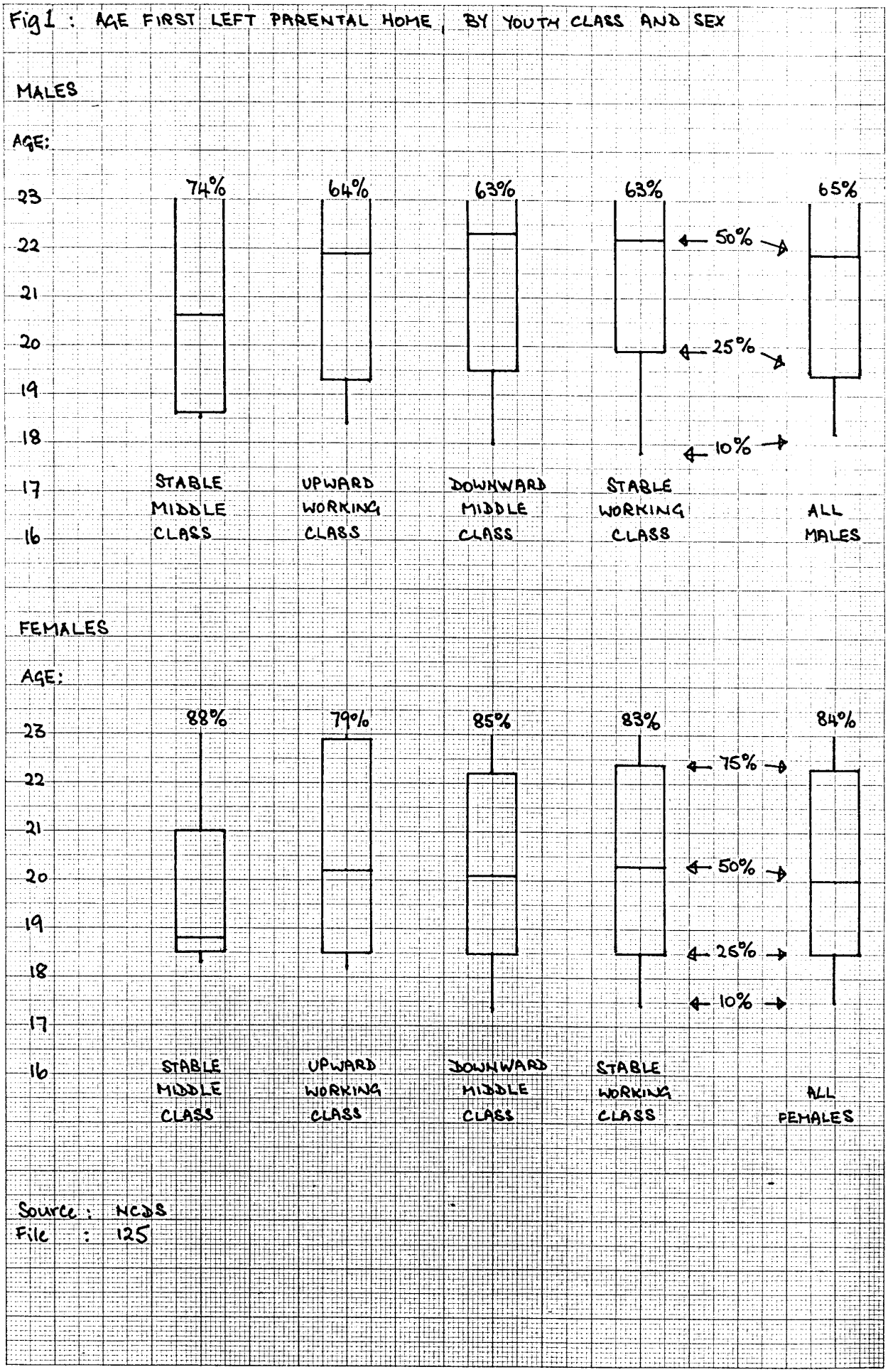
Overall, the findings reported here and elsewhere (Jones, 1986a) confirm that the concept of an ordered transition to adult independent status is simplistic. While for some there may be a phased progress from living as a child in the parental home to setting up a marital home and forming a family, for the majority there is rarely such a clear order. The middle class are often in independent single housing before marriage, and may defer marriage and childbirth in order to purchase a marital home. For the middle class, leaving home, getting married and starting a family may thus be spread over a decade.In contrast, the working class are to move straight from the parental home into the marital one, and start family building at the time of marriage, the three-stage process occurring within a year in many cases.

The notion of a protracted period of youth may therefore be applicable only to the middle class, and those who have been in further education. For the majority, youth ends early. The average working class youth takes on family responsibilities at around 23 years, for men, and around 21 years for women, compared with middle or late twenties for the middle class. Perhaps this is why the adolescent period, with its peer group activities, seems so much more associated with the working class young than with the middle class. Adolescence becomes a period of intense peer group activity characterised by rebellion (stereotypically) because it

represents a very brief period of freedom before marriage and family formation. For the middle class adolescent, a protracted period of semi-youth, semi-adulthood stretches out.

Housing policy needs to take account of these different patterns and allow flexibility in housing choice.

Fig 1 : AGE FIRST LEFT PARENTAL HOME, BY YOUTH CLASS AND SEX



Source : NCDS
File : 125

Table 1: TYPOLOGIES OF YOUTH CLASS
Comparison of GHS and NCDS data

YOUTH CLASS	MALES		FEMALES	
	GHS %	NCDS %	GHS %	NCDS %
STABLE MIDDLE CLASS	17	19	14	17
UPWARDLY MOBILE W-C	15	16	11	14
DOWNWARDLY MOBILE M-C	16	15	19	18
STABLE WORKING CLASS	52	49	56	51
All (=100%)	(4760)	(5265)	(4684)	(5504)

Source:GHS79&80, NCDS
Files: 21,22

Table 2: HOUSEHOLD STATUS BY YOUTH CLASS AND SEX

HOUSEHOLD STATUS	YOUTH CLASS: STABLE MIDDLE %	UPWARD WORKING %	DOWNWARD MIDDLE %	STABLE WORKING %	ALL %
MALES					
WITH PARENTS	46	46	52	47	47
WITH OTHERS	10	8	6	5	6
HOUSEHOLDER	44	46	42	49	46
ALL (=100%)	(980)	(837)	(791)	(2557)	(5165)
FEMALES					
WITH PARENTS	27	33	25	23	25
WITH OTHERS	10	6	4	3	5
HOUSEHOLDER	63	61	71	74	70
ALL (=100%)	(895)	(727)	(988)	(2771)	(5381)

Source:NCDS
File:106

Table 3: HAVE THOSE LIVING WITH PARENTS EVER LEFT?
Percentage of those currently living with parents, who have ever moved awayfor six months or more since the age of 16 years, by youth class and sex.

YOUTH CLASS	MALES %	FEMALES %
STABLE MIDDLE	43	58
UPWARD WORKING	23	36
DOWNWARD MIDDLE	31	42
STABLE WORKING	26	29
ALL	30	38
Base	(2423)	(1337)

Source: NCDS
File:117

Table 4: REASON LEFT HOME BY AGE FIRST LEFT HOME BY SEX

REASON FOR MOVE	AGE FIRST LEFT HOME UNDER 18 %	18-19 %	20-23 %	ALL %
MALES				
LIVE AS MARRIED	9	19	63	39
BEGIN STUDIES	13	49	4	21
TAKE UP JOB	50	15	11	19
SET UP ON OWN	5	5	13	9
"NEGATIVE" REASONS	23	12	8	12
All(=100%)	(660)	(1412)	(2016)	(4088)
FEMALES				
LIVE AS MARRIED	32	40	74	52
BEGIN STUDIES	13	32	4	18
TAKE UP JOB	20	12	6	11
SET UP ON OWN	9	7	9	8
"NEGATIVE" REASONS	25	9	7	11
All(=100%)	(863)	(2283)	(2010)	(5156)

Note: "Negative" Reasons combines the following values
-Wanted to leave because of friction at home
-Was asked to leave because of friction at home
-No longer allowed to stay there
-Accommodation poor

Source:NCDS
File:115

Table 5: MAIN REASON FOR FIRST MOVE BY CLASS AND SEX

REASON FOR MOVE	YOUTH CLASS: STABLE MIDDLE %	UPWARD WORKING %	DOWNWARD MIDDLE %	STABLE WORKING %	ALL %
MALES					
LIVE AS MARRIED	21	30	42	55	42
SET UP ON OWN	8	11	11	10	10
BEGIN STUDIES	49	25	17	3	19
TAKE UP JOB	15	19	17	16	16
"NEGATIVE" REASONS	7	14	14	16	13
All (=100%)	(746)	(541)	(512)	(1660)	(3459)
FEMALES					
LIVE AS MARRIED	22	34	58	67	53
SET UP ON OWN	4	7	10	9	8
BEGIN STUDIES	53	34	8	2	16
TAKE UP JOB	15	15	12	8	11
"NEGATIVE" REASONS	6	9	12	14	12
All (=100%)	(828)	(597)	(856)	(2312)	(4593)

Source: NCDS
File: 118

Table 6: RETURNED TO PARENTAL HOME BY REASON FOR FIRST MOVE
Proportion who have returned to parental home for six months or more

REASON FOR LEAVING	%	N
LIVE AS MARRIED	11	(4151)
SET UP ON OWN	27	(800)
BEGIN STUDIES	48	(1679)
TAKE UP JOB	52	(1286)
"NEGATIVE" REASONS	45	(1076)
TOTAL	29	(8991)

Source:NCDS

Table 7: HOUSEHOLD STATUS BY MARITAL STATUS AND YOUTH CLASS
Among those over 21 years of age

HOUSEHOLD STATUS	STABLE MIDDLE CLASS MARRIED %	STABLE MIDDLE CLASS SINGLE %	STABLE WORKING CLASS MARRIED %	STABLE WORKING CLASS SINGLE %
MALES				
HOUSEHOLDER	97	33	94	8
WITH RELATIVES	1	61	6	89
WITH OTHERS	1	6	0	3
All (=100%)	(318)	(324)	(1017)	(616)
FEMALES				
HOUSEHOLDER	97	28	96	16
WITH RELATIVES	2	57	4	77
WITH OTHERS	1	15	0	8
All (=100%)	(340)	(226)	(1414)	(316)

NOTES:
1. Inter-generationally mobile groups are excluded from this table
2. Householder meabs Head of Household or Spouse of Head
3. Married means "ever-married"

Source:GHS(79&80)
File:105

Table 8: HOUSEHOLD STATUS OF FULL-TIME STUDENTS
Among those aged 18 years and over currently in full-time education

HOUSEHOLD STATUS	MALES %	FEMALES %
HOUSEHOLDER	30	26
WITH RELATIVES	57	61
WITH OTHERS	12	13
ALL (=100%)	(235)	(201)

Source:GHS
File:105

Table 9: FIRST HOUSEHOLD STATUS BY YOUTH CLASS AND SEX
Household status in the first living arrangement on first leaving home, among single respondents without children

	YOUTH CLASS		
HOUSEHOLD STATUS	STABLE MIDDLE %	STABLE WORKING %	ALL GROUPS* %
MALES			
ALONE	23	16	19
WITH PARTNER/CHILD	4	21	12
WITH KIN	6	16	12
WITH FRIENDS	66	47	57
OTHER COMBINATIONS	1	1	1
ALL (=100%)	(172)	(101)	(604)
FEMALES			
ALONE	12	12	15
WITH PARTNER/CHILD	2	14	8
WITH KIN	9	22	14
WITH FRIENDS	75	51	62
OTHER COMBINATIONS	1	1	1
ALL (=100%)	(134)	(133)	(431)

* Including mobile groups
Source:NCDS
File:119

Table 10: HOUSING SITUATION BY YOUTH CLASS
Among those aged 20-24 years

HOUSING SITUATION	STABLE MIDDLE %	STABLE WORKING %	ALL GROUPS %
Single Men			
LIVING WITH PARENTS	75	89	85
TRANSITIONAL	19	9	13
COUNCIL RENTED	1	1	1
OWNED	5	0	2
All (=100%)	(242)	(527)	(1152)
Married Men			
LIVING WITH PARENTS	0	8	6
TRANSITIONAL	20	15	18
COUNCIL RENTED	13	32	29
OWNED	67	44	47
All (=100%)	(60)	(359)	(568)
Single Women			
LIVING WITH PARENTS	68	82	76
TRANSITIONAL	29	12	19
COUNCIL HOUSING	1	5	4
OWNED	1	1	1
All (=100%)	(173)	(337)	(754)
Married Women			
LIVING WITH PARENTS	0	5	4
TRANSITIONAL	14	14	14
COUNCIL HOUSING	11	40	32
OWNED	75	41	49
All (=100%)	(104)	(618)	(1002)

NOTES:
1. * Includes all groups (inter-generationally mobile classes are otherwise excluded from this table)
2. TRANSITIONAL housing includes furnished rented and unfurnished rented in the private sector

Source: GHS
File:104

Table 11: CURRENT TENURE BY PREVIOUS TENURE
Among all respondents who are currently heads of household
(includes women who are heads, but excludes spouses of heads)

	PREVIOUS HOUSING					
CURRENT HOUSING	WITH FAMILY %	RENTED FURN %	RENTED UNF(PR) %	RENTED UNF(PU) %	OWNED/ BUYING %	ALL %
RENTED FURN	13	36	3	0	2	13
RENTED UNF (PRI)	8	8	17	2	3	7
RENTED UNF (PUB)	30	22	40	74	10	33
OWNED	49	35	40	25	85	48
All (=100%)	(1229)	(394)	(225)	(327)	(344)	(2519)

Source:GHS
File:103

Table 12: FIRST MARITAL HOME
Housing situation of married women who moved to their present address within a year of their marriage, by youth class

	YOUTH CLASS				
HOUSING SITUATION	STABLE MIDDLE %	UPWARD WORKING %	DOWNWARD MIDDLE %	STABLE WORKING %	ALL %
TRANSITIONAL	7	14	13	14	12
PUBLIC RENTED	7	12	15	32	23
OWNED	87	74	73	54	65
All (=100%)	(165)	(129)	(198)	(602)	(1094)

Source: GHS(79&80)
File:100

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NATIONAL CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY

The National Child Development Study (NCDS) is a continuing longitudinal study which is seeking to follow the lives of all those living in Great Britain who were born between 3 and 9 March, 1958.

It has its origins in the Perinatal Mortality Survey (PMS). This was sponsored by the National Birthday Trust Fund and designed to examine the social and obstetric factors associated with the early death or abnormality among the 17,000 children born in England, Scotland and Wales in that one week.

To date there have been four attempts to trace all members of the birth cohort in order to monitor their physical, educational and social development. These were carried out by the National Children's Bureau in 1965 (when they were aged 7), in 1969 (when they were aged 11), in 1974 (when they were aged 16) and in 1981 (when they were aged 23). In addition, in 1978, details of public examination entry and performance were obtained from the schools, sixth-form colleges and FE colleges.

For the birth survey information was obtained from the mother and from medical records by the midwife. For the purposes of the first three NCDS surveys, information was obtained from parents (who were interviewed by health visitors), head teachers and class teachers (who completed questionnaires), the schools health service (who carried out medical examinations) and the subjects themselves (who completed tests of ability and, latterly, questionnaires). In addition the birth cohort was augmented by including immigrants born in the relevant week in the target sample for NCDS1-3.

The 1981 survey differs in that information was obtained from the subject (who was interviewed by a professional survey research interviewer) and from the 1971 and 1981 Censuses (from which variables describing area of residence were taken). Similarly, during the collection of exam data in 1978 information was obtained (by post) only from the schools attended at the time of the third follow-up in 1974 (and from sixth-form and FE colleges, when these were identified by schools). On these last two occasions case no attempt was made to include new immigrants in the survey.

All NCDS data from the surveys identified above are held by the ESRC Data Archive at the University of Essex and are available for secondary analysis by researchers in universities and elsewhere. The Archive also holds a number of NCDS-related files (for example, of data collected in the course of a special study of handicapped school-leavers, at age 18; and the data from the 5% feasibility study, conducted at age 20, which preceded the 1981 follow-up), which are similarly available for secondary analysis.

Further details about the National Child Development Study can be obtained from the NCDS User Support Group.