



Generating Routes for Women's Leadership Project (GROWL)

GROWL Enquiry Tool 1/6

Developing Girls' and Young Women's Leadership Identities



GROWL is Manchester Metropolitan University's Toolkit of Enquiry Tools, an Ideas Bank and a Network that supports organisations to engage with research evidence to Generate Routes for Women's Leadership.

We are taking research evidence out to organisations to create a dialogue about how they can Generate Routes for Women's Leadership (GROWL). Our approach involves supporting you to draw on six GROWL Enquiry Tools, a GROWL Ideas Bank of 'better practice' and a GROWL Network to reflect on your context and Generate Routes for Women's Leadership that fit with your organisation. We are learning about engagement as we go and invite you to learn with us and our network.





Getting Started: Developing Girls' and Young Women's Leadership Identities

Summary

- Early experiences of the workplace are vital in developing the leadership identities of girls and young women. Differences in the experiences offered to young women compared to young men can create an early unequal playing field, impacting negatively on the career aspirations and future progression routes available to girls and young women. These effects last throughout the life-course.
- First steps on the leadership life-course include school work experience, apprenticeships, university work placements, and graduate internships. These can provide inspiration and open opportunities for fulfilling leadership pathways. To develop diverse leadership, employers and educational providers need to think creatively about the inclusivity of their work-based learning schemes and initiatives and create conditions that enable women to access a wider range of career options.

Navigating Early Gendered Leadership Pathways

- School work experience works. School children with in-school work experience go on to earn 16% more in the first year of work than those without such experience.
- There are significant differences in the quality and career outcomes of school work experience, apprenticeships and internships for young women and men. This is due to outdated stereotypes about the type of work women should and should not pursue – not IT or construction, for example – and disparities in the value placed on the skills and attributes that young women and men typically bring to the workplace.

Apprenticeships: (Better) Jobs for the Boys?

- Nearly half of all apprenticeships are accessed by women, but far fewer women access apprenticeships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths (STEM) related occupations. Worryingly they make up a lower proportion of apprenticeships than a decade ago. A sharp gender divide is evident – 90% of engineering apprentices are men and over 90% of beauty therapy apprentices are women.
- Young female apprentices are paid less than their male counterparts. They receive £6.67 an hour compared with £7.25 – a gender pay gap of 8.7%. This gender pay gap at such an early stage of the leadership life course is concerning.

First Experiences: Navigating Early Gendered Leadership Pathways

The first experiences that many young women have of the workplace (and their place in it) are from school work experience schemes, apprenticeships, formal university work placements and internships. Such early and ongoing engagement shapes the aspirations and leadership identities of young women at a formative time in their lives and career development.

Early interactions with the workplace send clear messages about how organizations value the skills and abilities of young women and also how they may be positioned (or not) as future leaders.

Girls and young women are increasingly successful within education; male students are outnumbered by females in most UK Universities, for example. This means that more girls will have opportunities to engage in some form of work-based learning through their educational providers.

Although young women can and do pursue such work-based learning schemes, there are gender disparities across the board as far as quality and resultant career, pay and promotion prospects. These distinct differences serve to detrimentally affect the future leadership trajectories of girls and young women.

The Persistent 5 Cs

Research has shown that over half of women in the UK are clustered in just 10 (out of 77) occupations, mainly in what has been referred to as the 5 Cs of cashiering, caring, clerical, cleaning and catering.

This occupational clustering is underpinned by wider gender stereotypes which assume women take on domestic roles at home and need to work under their potential to accommodate this. And that women prefer caring and nurturing roles in the workplace. Low pay in ‘women’s work’ often arises from unfair assessment of the skill involved in work that is ‘feminized’.

Research also shows that men are more likely to be employed in skilled trades and are more likely to be managers and senior officials. The extent of occupational concentration varies by contract and is particularly high among women working part-time, whose range of occupations is far more limited and much more confined to stereotypically feminized (and therefore lower paid) forms of work.

Who Gets What? Women’s Access to Work-Based Learning Experiences

Research shows wide variations in who gets offered the chance to be involved in school work experience, apprenticeships and internships, and the types of sectors that young women are concentrated in. There are also documented differences in the relative levels of challenge and variety of tasks that young men and women are exposed to during such activities. For example, female apprenticeships are clustered in low-paid sectors, with those in child-care most likely to be unpaid.

Young women are more likely to choose work-based learning that develops general skills, yet they are penalized for this later in leadership pathways when their comparative lack of specialist and technical skills presents fewer opportunities for career openings and future career prospects.

Young women are less likely to opt to undertake technical apprenticeships such as engineering, IT or construction, and therefore miss out on the higher pay and greater opportunities for career progression afforded by embarking on such apprenticeships.

When young women do pursue more technical areas, such as engineering, they are often given less challenging tasks and projects than their male counterparts. This severely restricts their ability to progress within organizations and has been cited as a reason for women leaving the profession. It also contributes to the gender pay gap.

► **Enquire:** Can you collect data on take-up of work-based learning opportunities within your organization? Can you analyse this data and look for gender patterns regarding who has which opportunity? What type of experiences and opportunities are offered to young women and men? If there are unintended gender disparities, how could you take steps to address this?



First Steps into the Gendered Workplace:
School Work Experience

Undertaking work experience at school is usually a girl’s first introduction to the work of work. Whilst we could argue that by this point, the die has been cast in that girls have already made GCSE and higher educational level choices that are likely to be influenced by gendered messages about the kinds of subjects they should choose, i.e. not Science Technology Engineering and Maths related subjects, we should not ignore the fact that work experience offers tangible opportunities for young women to ‘try on’ and test out different work environments, identities and career options.

Rather than schools organizing work experience, students are increasingly encouraged to find their own work experience, by contacting local employers and using their personal and family networks.

There are gendered issues at play here in that young women may opt to gain

► **Enquire:** If your organization operates within a traditionally male-dominated sector, what could you do to actively encourage girls at school looking for work experience to apply to your organization? Could you develop more formal procedures for working with schools and attract young women to apply for work experience, rather than waiting for them to approach you? Can you showcase your female role models within schools?

► **Enquire:** Who do girls work with or shadow in their work experience in your organization? Could you introduce them to female role models who are leaders or on leadership pathways and encourage them to take on challenging or technical work (despite the possible temptation to give them the jobs that no one else wants to do such as photocopying and tea-making)?

work experience in traditionally feminized occupations because of the conscious or subconscious messages they have received and internalized about their role in, and place at work. And, organizations may inadvertently reproduce gender norms in their selection of candidates for work experience, thereby perpetuating the status-quo. This may be even more apparent in male dominated sectors.

Those responsible for managing work experience within schools and organizations should also be mindful of class and race inequalities in securing work experience. Research evidence highlights the importance of having access to relevant and appropriate networks to find and secure work experience.

Yet women from different ethnic backgrounds and classes are all too often excluded from these all-important networks.

Apprenticeships:
(Better) Jobs for the Boys?

Apprenticeships combine work and study by mixing on-the-job training, for a specific trade or profession with classroom learning. In 2017, more than a quarter of a million workplaces in England took on an apprentice.

Recent Government attention has focussed on apprenticeships as they have been shown to benefit individuals and employers by boosting workforce skills and helping to drive economic productivity.

Employers in England, with a pay bill over £3 million each year are now required to pay an apprenticeship levy to support the Government’s target of 3 million new apprentices by 2020.

There are different levels of apprenticeships:

Name	Level	Equivalent Educational Level
Intermediate	2	GCSE
Advanced	3	A Level
Higher	4–7	Foundation Degree and above
Degree	6 & 7	Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree

According to the Young Women’s Trust, women are missing out at every stage of apprenticeships. They are under-represented, achieve poorer outcomes and are paid less.

Although in 2016/17 more women than men accessed apprenticeships, women apprentices were older, with 51% over 25 compared to 36% of men (Young Women’s Trust, 2017).



There are wide variations between men and women’s access to different sectors and eligibility for apprenticeship level. The Young Women’s Trust in 2016/17 stated that:

- Nine times more men than women started IT apprenticeships.
- For every female apprentice entering the construction sector in England there were 50 men.
- There were 25 men for every woman starting an apprenticeship in engineering.

Apprenticeships:
(Better) Jobs for the Boys? (continued)

An examination of salaries offered across apprenticeships in different sectors highlights wide variations in the pay women and men can expect to receive.

Table 2 compares the salaries offered in the three most popular sectors for apprenticeships for men and women and shows that men are more likely to earn more and are concentrated in different occupational sectors.

This reflects gender disparities in the status of traditionally female compared to traditionally male dominated sectors and careers, which can have a detrimental impact on women's future leadership trajectories and career prospects.

Popular Apprenticeships: Women		Estimated full-time salary	Popular Apprenticeships: Men		Estimated full-time salary
1	Health and Social Care	£18,000 p.a.	1	Construction Skills	£26,000 p.a.
2	Business Administration	£21,000 p.a.	2	Engineering	£30,000 p.a.
3	Children's Care Learning & Development	£17,000 p.a.	3	Hospitality and Catering	£19,000 p.a.

Are There Still Girls' Jobs and Boys' Jobs?

Some key findings about gender and apprenticeships:

- **Nearly half of all apprenticeships are accessed by women**, but far fewer women access apprenticeships in Science Technology Engineering and Maths occupations (Department for Education, 2016) and they make up a lower proportion of apprenticeships than a decade ago (Young Women's Trust, 2014).
- **Young women are less likely to access the best apprenticeships.** Female apprentices are more likely to be found in the service sectors where pay, qualification levels and career prospects tend to be lower (Fuller and Unwin, 2013).
- **There is a sharp gender divide in apprenticeships.** For example, engineering apprentices are 96% men; beauty therapy apprentices are 99% women (Kirby, 2015).
- **Two thirds of female apprentices work in just five sectors** whereas the same proportion of young male apprentices work across 10 sectors. Furthermore, 16% of female apprentices said they were out of work after their apprenticeship, compared with 12% of men (Young Women's Trust, 2014 and 2017).
- **Young female apprentices are paid less.** They receive £6.67 an hour compared with £7.25 (Young Women's Trust, 2017), a gender pay gap of 8.7%.
- **There are few part-time apprenticeships, and this disadvantages young mothers and carers in particular.** Fewer than 1 in 10 apprentices work less than 30 hours per week (Young Women's Trust, 2017).

The Gender Skills Penalty

As a skills regime, apprenticeships are more likely to be segregated. This is because:

1. Girls invest more in general skills at secondary school. This leads to later sex segregation because employers requiring specific skills tend to hire men.
2. Women choose to develop general skills because they are more interested in skill portability and possible job interruption.

The service sectors, where women dominate, offer fewer apprenticeships above Level 2 or the GCSE equivalent. To progress beyond Level 2 can be difficult in sectors where less value is placed on qualifications and where skills tend to be regarded as 'soft' or 'interpersonal' and are equated with taken for granted/stereotyped feminine attributes.

► Enquire: To what extent does your organization value and reward specific skills more than general skills? How does this relate to the apprenticeships your organization offers and the gender ratio of those taking up these apprenticeships?

In the UK, the attainment of a Level 3 apprenticeship is important as it provides access to advanced further education and higher education.

► Enquire: If you are in a female-dominated sector and your qualifications are at Level 2, could you start a conversation about raising this to Level 3 (or higher) to generate routes for women's leadership?

New Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (Levels 4–7) are specifically aimed at developing management professionals through to Chartered Manager status. These are aimed at non-graduate managers and school leavers. They are potentially an attractive route for women as they focus on more general and transferable skills, but no data exists on their take-up and/or the diversity of students. Indeed, the most recent report by the Chartered Management Institute (2016) makes no mention of how such opportunities might be gendered.

To promote more diversity in apprenticeships, The Young Women's Trust (2017) calls for better affordability and flexibility. They recommend the publishing of apprenticeships data by employers, greater availability of flexible and part-time apprenticeships, and increased pay and financial support for apprentices, inc. childcare provision and the introduction of a single national minimum wage for all ages regardless of apprenticeship status (Young Women's Trust, 2014).

► Enquire: What type of apprenticeships do you offer and who accesses them? (for educational providers) To what extent do you offer creative, flexible apprenticeships to support diversity of routes to leadership? What first steps can you take to help promote and champion diversity in apprenticeships?

► Enquire: Does your organization collect and publish apprenticeship data? Do you have a champion within your organization, or can you appoint one, to look at data and investigate first steps to attracting women and getting them started on diverse leadership routes?

University Student Work Placements and Internships: Navigating Masculine Work Cultures

There is little research on the gendered effects of university work placements. The evidence that does exist suggests women tend to have different reasons for pursuing work placements and their experiences can be markedly different.

For many students, work placements are about adjustment, and the key task seems to be one of individual orientation to the demands of work.

Such demands are closely linked to the work culture, and masculine work cultures seem to have specific effects on female work placement students.



Blending In and Standing Out

Several studies have investigated women’s experiences of work placements in male dominated industries.

In their research on female engineering students in work placements, Powell et al (2014 p. 411) found that women “performed their gender in a particular way in order to gain male acceptance.’ In doing this, they utilized certain coping strategies: acting like one of the boys, accepting gender discrimination, achieving a reputation, seeing the advantages over the disadvantages and adopting an ‘anti-woman’ approach.

In ‘doing’ engineering, women often ‘undo’ their gender. Such gender performance does nothing to challenge the gendered culture of engineering, and in many ways contributes to maintaining an environment that is ‘hostile to women’ (Powell et al, 2009 p. 411). The idea of ‘femaleness’ here is interesting because there is no inherent way for a woman to behave.

What the authors seem to have identified is that stereotypical ways of being a woman are devalued in engineering, putting women who have internalized these between a rock and hard place in terms of the culture they were raised in and the professional culture of engineering. Similar results have been found for female students in construction placements.

► **Enquire:** As a placement coordinator do you consider the implications of placing women in male-dominated environments? Do you follow up on their placements and evaluate their experiences? Could you provide gender sensitive mentoring or coaching to support women to benefit fully from their placement?

(for
educational
providers)

Blaming the Women: How Inequality is Individualized

Research in the engineering industry has identified three main coping strategies used by women in male-dominated environments:

‘Fronting it out’ – involves confronting the problem as a challenge and having the ‘personality’ to do it. This can result in being seen as too ‘masculine’ and aggressive. Such negative perceptions can affect women’s career progression.

‘Playing the little woman’ – requires tolerance, even acceptance, of gender challenges and avoiding confrontation. This in turn positions women who employ this strategy as passive and unsuitable for career progression and promotion.

‘Building a reputation’ – the preferred strategy as it actively contradicts negative gendered expectations. However, this is also linked to the individual and perceptions of their skills and excellence. Building a reputation can be difficult in companies where promotion is extremely competitive and where unconscious bias continues to affect women’s assessment and career progress.

Ultimately, all these coping strategies individualize the issues, taking the onus off organizations to put in place effective support strategies for women in male-dominated work placement environments and expecting women to cope with inequality.

► **Enquire:** Discuss the extent to which you see these patterns in your organization. Could reciprocal mentoring for women – whereby mentee and mentor learn together, and mentors are empowered as change agents – be useful in your organization to challenge underlying gendered stereotypes and structures?



Internships: The Undervaluing of ‘Women’s Work’?

A recent UK survey found that a fifth of internships were unpaid and about a third paid less than adult minimum wage. This has led to criticisms that internships are a transaction where experience, rather than money, is exchanged for work. They are often seen as essential training for professional careers in feminized occupations such as PR and fashion, and male-dominated sectors such as engineering.

Evidence suggests that the majority of unpaid internships are in feminized sectors and a gender and class divide is evident in the growing ‘pay-to-work’ economy, where internships can be bought from companies that find internships and place interns. Women gain fewer internships but secure more graduate scheme places, so there seems to be something specific about internships that disadvantages women.

Happy Housewives and Male Breadwinners?

Women are much more likely to be in unpaid internships than men, evidence of the undervaluing of women’s work. This is linked to the belief that women do not need to support themselves, as they are financially dependent upon male others (such as fathers and husbands). Indeed, Madeleine Schwartz (2013), describes female interns as ‘the happy housewives of the working world’, drawing parallels between unpaid internships and women’s unpaid household work.

To challenge inequality in internships, some organizations are promoting better practice. For example, Restless Development, an international youth development agency, has published an employer handbook. Although not specifically focused on gender, they argue that good practice should include:

- Paid internships
- Formal mentorship
- Performance reviews
- Permanent positions

- **Enquire: Do you offer unpaid internships? If so which departments in your organization offer these? Is there a distinction between unpaid and paid internships? Could this be based on feminized and masculinized roles?**
- **Enquire: Can you identify what is working well? What better practices exist in your organization or sector and can you share these to inform better pathways for future female leaders?**

PLEASE HELP US BUILD THE GROWL IDEAS BANK

Do you have a ‘better practice’ idea that relates to one of our GROWL themes?

Please get in touch so we can add it to the GROWL Ideas Bank and share it with the GROWL Network!

Just drop an email to Dr Helen Woolnough at h.woolnough@mmu.ac.uk to get started.

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References to research are published on our website at www.mmu.ac.uk/growl.

GROWL is led by Professor Julia Rouse, Dr Helen Woolnough and the Sylvia Pankhurst Gender and Diversity Research Centre at Manchester Metropolitan University. It is sponsored by Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor Julia Clarke, and the Governing Body.

GROWL is passionately supported by Northern Power Women and advised by academics and practitioners.



(From left to right) GROWL project leaders Dr Helen Woolnough and Professor Julia Rouse are joined by Lindsey Watkin, Faculty Director of Global Programmes at Manchester Metropolitan Business School, at the Northern Power Women Conference 2017.

We are interested in researching all issues covered by GROWL and the process of engagement. Get in touch to talk about commissioning research or consultancy in your organisation by emailing Dr Helen Woolnough at h.woolnough@mmu.ac.uk.

To join the Network, find out more about the rest of the Enquiry Tools, and contribute to the Ideas Bank, please email Dr Helen Woolnough at h.woolnough@mmu.ac.uk

For more information on GROWL, visit our website at www.mmu.ac.uk/growl or see us on Twitter [@mmu_sylvia](https://twitter.com/mmu_sylvia).