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THE NATURE OF THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS ON THE EDUCATIONAL  
AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE OF SCHOOL - PUPILS

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September 1979

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ABSTRACT

NATURE OF THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS ON THE EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE OF SCHOOL-PUPILS

MICHAEL HENRY COOPER

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This enquiry arose from the writer's experience in the Careers Service where staff adhere to the view that parents are the single most influential factor upon the occupational choice of a pupil. At the same time, they argue that it is difficult for people not in regular touch with careers information to be informed about many jobs. Experience showed, too, that only a minority of parents had contact with careers advisers and that, because of time and work-load, rarely did careers staff learn much about parental knowledge of work.

The aim was to discover what parents talked about to their children whether they used their own experience to help children see what issues should be considered, or was any help given limited to practical activities like job-finding. In addition, the survey sought to find out how parents reacted to professional help offered. Occupational choice can be affected by choice of educational courses so the enquiry started by asking for parents' views about schools subjects. An attempt was made to discover if there were differences in attitudes and actions according to parental occupational level.

A pilot stage was followed by a postal questionnaire to the parents of fifth form pupils in three different kinds of schools. 173 were returned completed or were completed at follow-up interviews. The school described as having the greatest percentage of social problems produced the lowest response; but nevertheless showed considerable agreement with the response from the other two groups of parents.

Parents expressed interest in the topic and the need for careers advice. Their replies indicated that they generally felt powerless to influence school advice about subject choice and in all contacts with advisers saw their role as a passive rather than a contributory one; that they believed pupils to be ill-informed about work and would support schemes for working experience while at school; that they believed the job of a boy to be more important than that of a girl; and that the most important items to think about when choosing a job were that it should use one's ability and interest, be worth doing and be in long term demand. Few parents would seek to enforce their views and the nature of their influence amounted to support and encouragement.

KEYWORDS

Occupational choice

Parental influence

Careers information

Work experience

Subject choice



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been helped in the preparatory work to the main survey and in the main survey itself by the co-operation of the Principal Careers Officers and their staff in Solihull and Hereford-Worcester. They made helpful suggestions regarding schools and areas which might show a diversity of opinion, facilitated introductions to particular schools and allowed me free access to talk to careers officers attached to these schools, as well as to see the confidential interview records for individual pupils. The headmasters of six schools contacted for the pilot and main surveys were most helpful again in allowing me to meet careers teachers, obtain lists of pupils and have copies of information provided for parents.

Throughout the investigation I have been helped by my supervisors, Dr Geoffrey Brown of the Applied Psychology Department at the University of Aston in Birmingham and Mr J C Houston, formerly a chief psychologist in the Employment Service Agency. It was to Dr Brown that I first went with an outline of my scheme; he encouraged me by giving support to the view that the topic justified investigation.

The General Secretary of the Institute of Careers Officers kindly circulated an appeal for information regarding courses and special activities organised for parents by Careers Officers.

A number of individuals concerned with relevant research gave time to me to learn about their work in the initial stages of my enquiry, and I am grateful to the Careers Guidance Inspector of the Inner London Education Authority, who also discussed with me her impressions of the way parents were involved in careers work in the United States, for introductions to staff of the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations and the Institute for Family and Environmental Research.

I would not have been able to undertake this research without the agreement and support of the Department of Employment. Within my work in the Department I was able, during day-to-day work, to ask many careers officers and teachers for their views regarding parental influence. I was able to discuss the subject with two groups of careers officers in training at a training centre then run by the Department of Employment and to obtain their views on their own experiences.



PART 1

INTRODUCTION AND SURVEY OF LITERATURE

## SECTION 1 - PERSONAL APPROACH TO THE TOPIC

The need to involve parents in what are often termed educational decisions for their children, is much discussed at present. It is not, however, a new consideration. It has long been the practice to involve parents in discussion, mainly through invitations to evening meetings with school staff or interviews with careers officers, when consideration of destination after leaving secondary school has been considered.

This practice has been less frequent in the case of grammar schools where a smaller proportion left to local employment. The implication of this difference of operation according to school attended is that parents had greater interest or more to contribute when the discussion was about work and when entry to work was fairly immediate; and were needed to be contacted less when an academically more able pupil, who might be postponing entry into work for a few years while continuing full time education, was being interviewed.

As a careers officer for 10 years, the writer found himself questioning the role given to parents to perform at these interviews as well as the different methods of dealing with parents, based, it appeared, on the intellectual ability of their children. It seemed that if home background and communication between parent and child was important for some pupils then it was for all pupils. Further, as the range of opportunities grew with the extension of post-16 full-time education and of post-18 higher education the need to inform parents about opportunities seemed even more necessary than when dealing with those children planning to enter work in the known neighbourhood.

The seven years as an Inspector of the Careers Service gave more opportunity to observe the way parents were brought into discussions by school and Careers Service staff, and also to have discussions about this topic in training courses for careers/advisory staff. It is customary for staff in



careers work to argue that parents are the single most important influence, and to support this view by pointing to the help given at the time of job choice and entry; secondly to argue that the atmosphere at home has a profound influence upon the thinking of the child. Undoubtedly, both points are true, but little appears to be done to influence this environment; parents are invited to attend school functions to learn about the progress of the children. Frequently, these are so organised that there is little time for real discussion between parents and staff. Yet these evenings, and letters sent to parents are the two principal ways of involving and informing parents. Nor, when interviewing parents and pupils together, is very much done to learn the views of the parents other than to obtain their approval for suggestions being discussed with the interviewer, nor yet to discover the parents' occupations.

The research project arose from dis-satisfaction with the way parents were involved or informed, either by schools or by the Careers Service. It appeared to be useful to see also how far in this period of change in the employment scene parents felt that they were able to keep up to date and so help their children in a factual way regarding their decisions.

An appeal in the Newsletter of the Institute of Careers Officers produced no information about courses for parents, but through personal contact details of some courses were received and a synopsis of topics and examples of such courses is given later. Although individual careers officers and teachers who have been spoken to about the value of courses and education of parents refer to advantages coming from such activities, none of these schemes have been evaluated to see if there is, in fact, any greater or more informed involvement by parents who had attended them, nor to discuss whether or not there has been more positive discussion in the home among families where parents attended these kinds of information sessions.

The most frequently mentioned comment made by teachers and careers officers



is that "the parents most in need of help never attend school functions". When questioned about interpretation of "need" the answer generally includes references to wanting to talk to parents whose children are not working well; or parents of children who are being encouraged or told by their parents to leave school when the teaching staff believe the child could achieve higher educational standards or level of work through continuing education. Those who do attend are often said to be the "kind of parents" who would get information or make contact with the school whether or not the school arranged activities to allow staff and parents to meet.

It is no doubt true that some parents have the ability, connection and knowledge to find out information, for example, about careers and courses without the need to have this facility offered. Many who do attend take the opportunity offered because they realise they have limited knowledge and they wish to obtain knowledge of a wider field; they would be willing to do more searching themselves but take the chance of a specific invitation to come to a parents evening or to an advisory interview knowing they will get other views in a short space of time and not have to make several attempts to see a number of staff.

By arranging particular events the Careers Service and schools, in fact, are making it more possible to organise time, and avoid a large number of interruptions to work.

The implication in the remark regarding "kind of parents" is that parents who do not attend are not interested or even not deserving of attention. At one school visited as a careers officer, if a boy's parents said they were unable to come to the interview the Headmaster either removed the boy's name from the list of interviewees or, if persuaded, included the boy, but so timed the occasion that only a rather perfunctory chat would take place.

Perhaps such boys needed more support and time than those whose parents attended; without seeing them one could not say. Personal experience was that they sometimes did need this help and their parents would attend the careers office when asked to suggest a time they could fit in to domestic life or shift work.

In conversation with people in careers work a number of points do emerge regarding their contact with parents. Since the survey started in 1974 about 110 schools and colleges have been visited and it is during these visits, mainly to observe interviews with pupils, that it has been possible to gather a number of impressions of the other activities to which parents are invited and the issues they raise, as well as talk to staff about parental involvement and influence.

Firstly, there is a great concern among parents regarding employment or unemployment. In the last few years a large number of pupils have come from homes where a parent, normally working, has been unemployed. This is shown nationally by the rise in the number of free meals for which pupils have qualified. Some parents have said that their child should leave school at the statutory age and get a job, but it is of interest to note that this is not always because of the need for added finance at home, but because getting a job will give the child security while continuing in education may just prolong the period of uncertainty regarding finding work.

Sometimes dependence upon a particular firm is mentioned. The collapse of Rolls Royce in Derby in 1971 was described by two headmasters as a severe but temporary shock, temporary because within the community there was always an underlying belief that the firm could never close completely, so that when the firm was re-constructed there was still encouragement at home for pupils to apply to the firm for work. One headmaster said one result of the changes in the firm had been to alter the range of jobs held in the catchment area of the school as many people were not re-instated and many jobs at



professional level were not re-introduced. This was a shock to the many qualified people in the area and meant a loss because people moved away. On the other hand, people also express doubts about the advisability of going to certain firms; the car industry is sometimes mentioned when parents have spoken of their wish that their children should not adopt a work pattern of interrupted employment. Coal mining is a difficult job, and at one time school-leavers took apprenticeships in the engineering side purely to obtain a skill which they could then take to another employer when qualified. With greater security and pay in the industry this appears to have changed and careers staff in South Staffordshire and Derbyshire explained there was no difficulty of recruitment now. This is another example of an industry where it can help a boy to be able to say he has relations in the industry, and having a parent in the mine can guarantee an interview.

These examples cover three forms of influence - the effect of an important company upon the employment and social structure of a community; features parents may think of, or, for example, not want their child to experience; and the help which can be given to an applicant through having relations in a firm or industry.

It has certainly appeared in conversations that security of work is important. In addition, changes within an occupation can affect views of the work. An example met in one area was of a school where many parents taught in schools and higher education, and where, for many years, there was a tradition of a large number of pupils applying for Colleges of Education. Disillusionment arising from reorganisation of schools had led many parents to tell their children not to follow into the job and the number of applicants had fallen from an average of 30 a year to 4, and finally in 1977 to 1. Enquiries in schools has also shown an increase in absentee rates among teachers, and these have been greater than among pupils. This has emerged in secondary schools where some form of reorganisation has taken place and has been mentioned by some teacher-parents when talking about the child's future.



An obvious result of this reduced interest in teaching about which children could expect to get some help from their teacher-parents, is that they have needed a much wider range of information to be presented to them about careers.

Sometimes parents express the view that they hope their child will advance further than they have themselves. Many say they want their child to have a wider choice than they themselves had when they left school. Sometimes behind the remark that 'they, the parents, are leaving him to make up his own mind' one suspects there is not an abdication of responsibility or a lack of interest, but a wish not to seem to limit a child by making comments which may arise from a lack of knowledge. It is not always the case that for pupils nowadays there is a wider range, the child's ability may not be any greater than that of its parents and although there may be more jobs on the market, they may demand a higher standard of entry than was the case in the past. A particular group mentioned to me who were concerned about achieving a higher status of job for their children were the East African Asians in Leicester. Many parents were in jobs of lower status than those they had had in Uganda before expulsion, or were in jobs where they were not using their qualifications or experience. They were, by dint of hard work, or long hours, often able to afford the same life style, but were not achieving this level in their work. They did not want their children to have this sort of disparity in levels.

Sometimes the pressure of parental expectations can be too great for a child who may not have the ability for occupations acceptable to their parents. Some young immigrants want the same sort of life and work as they see their peers having, and domestic crises can arise when a girl or boy wishes to break away from a family pattern. The results of these breaks in families is a sad feature in careers work. The need to maintain cultural

ties is an influence upon a child's choice and in a minority group can influence, for example, choice of higher education institution. It can be important to be able to be near social and religious centres of their own faith and race, and parents undoubtedly have this in mind when talking about possible courses away from home.

It has been said by careers staff in some areas that the influence of the home is much stronger among immigrant families than among English born families, that there are differences between those born in this country of immigrant parents and those who have been born abroad. In addition, the longer the family has been in this country means greater chance to have become acquainted with opportunities and less insistence upon those jobs which may give security and status in their home country, for example, motor mechanics in West Indies, electricians and doctors in India.

The final group of parents to be considered is that of parents of physically handicapped children. Where the parent is not handicapped in the same way he can be more concerned over his lack of appreciation of the opportunities open to his child. He will be less able to use his own working experience to talk to a child about jobs and he may worry that the child will not be able to work. He may feel cut off from his child. Careers staff speak of the need to provide help and reassurance to parents that they can find work for the child. It is more difficult sometimes for a parent when the child has grown up at a residential school away from home. Sometimes a parent will not want his child to go away again on leaving school to undertake technical training.

Within this summary of views received, it has been possible to outline some aspects of the topic - contact between schools and careers service and parents; concern about employment; experience with immigrants and handicapped pupils. These last two groups cannot be ignored, but in the time available for the research the introduction of the cultural and medical differences



would have increased the work beyond the bounds of time available. It was, therefore, decided that the survey should concentrate upon the majority group of children, namely, those in general secondary education.



SECTION 2 - BACKGROUND TO REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Careers advisory work with young people commenced in some parts of the country with the Labour Exchange Act of 1909. However, it was of a varying standard and in certain parts of the country only, and in effect concentrated upon helping young people into jobs. It is probable that the work started in Birmingham by Smith and Hunt in the 1930's was the first attempt to develop some form of objective assessment through which an adviser might learn something of the talents and potential of pupils. This has contributed significantly towards the development of what is now the more complete guidance procedure in careers work. Following the Employment and Training Act of 1946, Youth Employment Officers worked with pupils and young workers and were instrumental in stimulating activity in schools designed to help pupils prepare for their future careers.

The establishment of the Vocational Guidance Research Unit at Leeds University in 1964 was a further encouragement to the creation of a professional outlook in careers work and a philosophical basis for this work. From the unit and the movement closely associated with the name of Peter Daw s have grown the subjects of careers education and vocational counselling in schools. The last phase in which schools operate now is the development of careers education with the implications that preparation for leaving school must be central to school life; but also that careers advisory work is not solely the application of the diagnostic skill of the careers adviser, but also necessitates a process of student learning. This learning is firstly about how to make decisions and then from that to an understanding of the influences which are upon the student in decision making. The adviser contributes to the process, not only through information regarding the person's ability and the requirements of occupations, but also in discovering something of the strength and range of influences which are upon the student.

The change appeared most clearly in the controversy over what one is seeking in careers work. At first, and still so in many cases, this was felt to be the provision of information which a pupil could use, so that by learning about what was needed in terms of qualification and main activities a pupil was able to see what was, or was not, advisable to enter. This purveying of information was often accompanied by a form of self analysis which dwelt upon the principle of establishing levels of abilities. The method contains a suggestion that once so established, or recognised, these features would be important and immutable for all time.

As careers work became more established, the need to look more closely both at work and its implications, and the individual, was acknowledged. One should look at the effects of choice of a particular job, the effects of undertaking a certain job or forms of training and education would have and of the process of job choice itself. Occupations were studied to learn more of the psycho-social factors of work. It was argued that choice of job implied commitment to a way of life and therefore it was necessary to see what sort of life this was going to be. In terms of work with individuals it meant that views, standards and values of individuals were discovered as well as capabilities and potential. To do this fully has meant that it is even more important that the adviser should make all possible efforts to meet parents to explain his function and also to learn something of the nature of the influence that the parent and the home might exercise upon the child.

If this was to be followed it seemed the second point of development and controversy in career work was inevitable. If the individual's views are going to be paramount for the careers teacher and officer to know, and if these are to be translated by the expert in occupational knowledge into suggestions of areas of work the young person might look at, then the interview as the main form of face-to-face contact had to change from a conversation directed by the officer, to an attempt by the officer to create



a discussion atmosphere in which both young person and adviser were contributors. The style of interview would seem to allow the young person more opportunity to express views about the ideas a careers officer might suggest; the careers officer with a responsibility to help in placing of a young person, or to the employer for help in satisfactory recruitment would have to obtain a clearer picture of the needs (which might be solely information) of the young person and how these might be met by the demands of differing jobs. Further, that in "careers education" there should be recognition that young people progress towards a decision and the development should be monitored by the interviewer.

The young person as a child in a family atmosphere would reflect some of the views and strengths or limitations of that atmosphere and therefore advisers should look at the nature of the support from the home, how impeding or enabling it might be, both to the ability to make decisions, and in helping the young person in transition from school to employment.

Therefore, in looking at current research it was necessary to try to see if any work had been done on the transmission from parents to children of attitudes about work which might derive from the parents' own experience of employment; how far the parents thought they had an influence and what was the nature of this influence, whether it was just a practical one like giving information or helping in finding a job, or whether it was a more unconscious influence; how far parents would go to impose their ideas upon the child or if not, to do this at least to make clear their own wishes.

Two sources of information about research into careers work were the ERIC Clearing House in Careers Education at the Centre for Vocational Education, Ohio State University and the National Foundation for Educational Research/ Careers Research and Advisory Centre Research Register. From ERIC the only relevant items received were publications dealing with involvement of the community in school. The NFER/CRAC Research Register, kept up to date with a record of research taking place in this country, was more productive and

it was possible to pursue some items from this. The Institute of Careers Officers had, at one time, held a research register but this had become out of date some years ago. A similar register compiled during 1976 by Research Branch of the Employment Service Agency was of value for reference.

Individual research that was relevant and which was considered and discussed, was at Manchester Polytechnic, Leicester University, Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Studies, the Tavistock Institute and the Institute of Family and Environment Research. Information about this work is contained in the review of British research.



SECTION 3 - SUMMARY OF RELEVANT BRITISH RESEARCH

When considering the nature of parental influence upon school subject and occupational choice, it is necessary to look at the relationships between parents and children within the home; the relative strength of the family compared with other sources of influence; the reaction of parents to contact with schools; and the degree to which parents can become informed about opportunities for their children.

Relationships between parents and children within the home

Veness (1962) conducted research into job attitudes of young people. She endeavoured to test the theory that attitude to work could be related to the pattern of relationships in the family. This had first been described in America by Riesman <sup>(1951)</sup> who devised the terms 'tradition-directed', 'inner-directed' and 'other-directed' to describe the infrastructure of a society and within that, of families. Veness interpreted this by suggesting the 'tradition-directed', centred upon the closeness of the family, could lead people to choose work which might be described as being 'in the family' or work which people of a particular area might accept as appropriate for them. This is a situation more likely to be true of communities where a traditional occupation dominates as in mining or farming.

In Veness' second group the 'inner-directed' family would tend to choose a career which would be consciously related to talents and interests. These factors would be the most important to be considered when looking at a range of occupations. The final group, the 'other-directed', consists of people who are most influenced by factors external to the job, by salary or status for example, aspects often learnt about by accident.

Carter (1966) introduced another set of descriptions to distinguish three main types of home and social background. His categories of 'home centred', 'working class' and 'rough' emerged from research into families in Sheffield.

His classification suggested that in terms of knowledge of jobs outside the home the 'home centred' youngsters could be at the greatest disadvantage when compared with other young people. The very closeness in the family may not allow children casually to gather views of work outside their own circle; and where such views are gathered their impact may be lessened by the vetting by the family group. But there are advantages in this closeness. In 'home centred' families Carter found a real concern on the part of parents, shown by their attendance at school functions and their attempts to help youngsters find jobs; and their chances of success in the latter could be enhanced by the fact that pupils frequently wanted to follow in their parents' footsteps so that parents were well placed to be able to help their children. A further stimulus in this kind of family was described by Carter as an achievement-seeking stimulus provided by parents who encouraged their children to aim at an occupational level they themselves would have liked, but had never been able to attain. This stimulus was double-edged, because through the closeness of the family the child became aware of his parents' views and felt pressure to try and satisfy parental wishes for which they might not always have the capacity.

Carter's second category of 'working-class' describes families to whom one job was usually thought of as good as another. These families often had limited knowledge of work and what knowledge existed tended to relate to trades and craft level work. Children often did not expect their parents to know very much about the opportunities open to them and rarely did either parent or child think of any alternative through, for example, further education. In fact, families tended to accept life as it was rather than something to be deliberately shaped, and parents were inclined to take the view that once the child had left school he was very much in the hands of fate, an attitudes Mays (1959) called the 'tacit acceptance of existing conditions'. Douglas (1964) described this same view as a self-



perpetuating cycle of occupational levels, arguing that it was due to a lack of encouragement and interest on the part of the parents, but also to the fact that children did not wish to move into occupational levels or work dissimilar in style to those of their parents.

Carter's final group, the 'rough' families, also accepted their situation in life. Life for them was a matter of luck, and you had to take your chance when it came. Within the 'rough' family, often a much larger group than the 'home centred' family and the 'working class' family, members tended to live unconnected lives, mother, father and children going their own way. The values of school were likely to be repudiated by parents and contacts with the teachers who were felt to know little about life, kept to a minimum. A 'good job', contrary to the sort of definition given by the school, was simply a way of earning money. But for school leavers work has some attraction because it provided the opportunity to get away from education and make some money.

It is hard to estimate the exact size of these groups. Carter roughly estimated that 33% of the population would fall into the 'home-centred' group, 25% into the 'rough' group and the remainder into the 'working-class' group. Carter admits that a number of factors can cut into the 'rough' group, and these factors emerge strongly in a longitudinal research study by Douglas et al (1968). This study of a cohort of children born in 1947 and followed up regularly thereafter found a number of issues relevant to progress in school, attitudes to schooling and progress towards settlement in employment. The relevant issues were found to be sex of child; actual position of child in family; death, sickness and unemployment in the family; and length of time since parents left school. Broadly speaking, what emerged was that the less frequent the 'interruption' to family life, the longer the full time education of the parents and the greater the affluence of the family, so the greater was parental encouragement to achieve success in school and parental interest in how that knowledge could be used.

Douglas and his team discovered a stronger link too with circumstances in the home than with potential ability of the child when they examined the aspirations of the parents for their children.

The degree of encouragement which parents give to their child is very significant in determining the attitude of the child to schooling and therefore to preparation for employment. The following table is based on research among children under the age of eleven and is quoted by Douglas in his work, but in conversations which have been held with teachers in secondary schools on this subject, a similar pattern emerges. The closer the link with parents and the greater the interest they are able to take, the better the child progresses in school. Sometimes parents are inhibited by their own lack of understanding what goes on in schools, and consequently take little part in discussion with teachers. Sometimes they feel too inhibited to show their interest because of domestic circumstances; as Douglas suggests, for example, one-parent families or invalid parents may have greater difficulty displaying their support for their children by attending events in school. The following table is from Douglas et al 'All our Future' (1968):

<u>Level of parents' interest</u>	<u>Children's attitude to work</u>			
	<u>Hard or very hard</u>	<u>Average worker</u>	<u>Poor or lazy worker</u>	<u>Total</u>
High	69.5	47.3	3.7	100
Average	47.3	42.1	10.6	100
Low	32.6	48.4	19.0	100

Sometimes it appears that parents' job aspirations for their children are closely linked to their own knowledge of jobs. For example, over 50% of boys of higher academic ability from manual-working homes looked for jobs in the same area of work. Only 13% of boys and 9% of girls wanted jobs in different occupational groups to those of their parents and only 8% parents overall aspired to higher level jobs for their sons (and an even lower figure of 4%



for their daughters). How far children in this survey by Douglas spoke of jobs knowing them to be within an acceptable group to their parents is of interest to consider.

Maizels (1970) also found evidence of the influence of family size and material resources upon links between families and schools and aspirations of school leavers. She looked at the Veness nomenclature of families and estimated in her study in London that among 106 boys and 102 girls the groupings were:

Tradition directed	51%
Inner directed	22%
Other directed	5%
Not classified	22%

Undoubtedly, knowledge of jobs or conditions at the end of training or further education can have an influence on the way people look at career choice. Although many people may not know much about a lot of jobs, the higher they themselves go in an occupation, the more they may be able to see and the greater the number of contacts they may personally acquire.

Aspirations can also be a part of the view of acceptability of certain links in work to their perception of themselves: to some, promotion may be only a few rungs of a ladder, while to others, much longer deferred rewards may be sought. One needs to consider the different interpretation people put upon the words 'job' and 'career'. Some families will actively seek long term prospects of promotion from work, others will only see on their horizon a small change in the level of responsibility. This point was considered by Ashton (1976) whose findings on this will be referred to later.

As well as parental influence, there is the influence of brothers and sisters. Bowen and Child (1976) reviewed work looking at the sex of the child and position in the family. They pointed out that sons may model themselves on their father, while daughters would then take a contrasting role; but that if there are no sons in the family then some of the father's 'male' interests

may be directed to, and accepted by, the daughters in the family. The researchers sought to discover if there was any link between subject choice and the sex, birth order and size of the child's family. In a study of 98 grammar school girls, Bowen found more interest in artistic subjects where there was an elder brother in the family, and that this was less so in single sex families (where the siblings were female) or the girl was an only child. Neither the size of the family nor a child's position in the family appeared to affect approaches to interest in physical science.

Rapaport (1975) is continuing to conduct research into relationships within the family and the capacity of the family to cope with transition stages of which school-leaving is one. He is examining the nature of communication, reliance upon schools and other agencies and needs of parents to assist their children, in an intensive study of 20 families in North London. His interest is in the ability of families to cope with change in circumstances by seeing to what extent they establish patterns of activity which may help the child ultimately to cope with decisions, including that of transition from school to work. As children grow older, parents feel a decline in their influence over them and sometimes resent this or have difficulty in accepting it. It is, perhaps, necessary to remember that they, too, may be going through changes in their own working lives due to age; for example, they may be at the point of realising that ambitions are not going to be achieved. Rapaport considers whether the parents are enabling or are disabling influences upon school leavers at leaving time. His preliminary observations show an influence by both fathers and mothers with fathers adopting a greater disciplinary role with teenage children. Sometimes, when looking at job ideas, the influence of the father may arise from the fact that he is more likely to be in full time work, and thus provides a model for working to both sons and daughters. Where parents find themselves rejected by their children as sources of advice, then elder brothers and sisters are found to



play an important role as influences. Girls, he finds, experience greater problems than boys in occupational choice because of the expectations and limitations society may put upon them, despite recent legislation to promote equal opportunity, and may have greater difficulty in establishing their position as both career makers and potential mothers.

#### Reactions of parents to contacts with schools





There are several significant factors affecting occupational choice, such as family circumstances, physique, personal values, degree of interest in certain subjects and activities. The educational level a child has the potential to achieve, or has actually achieved is another important factor. Encouragement and interest in progress at school which has already been referred to, can therefore be a means of partly helping to determine the level of entry into employment. Glass et al (1953) have illustrated in their work that the higher the occupational level of the parent, the longer the education, and therefore, the higher the achievement of their children. For example, only 5% of children come from a professional and managerial background, but 25% of grammar school places and 44% of sixth form places were occupied by this small group of children.

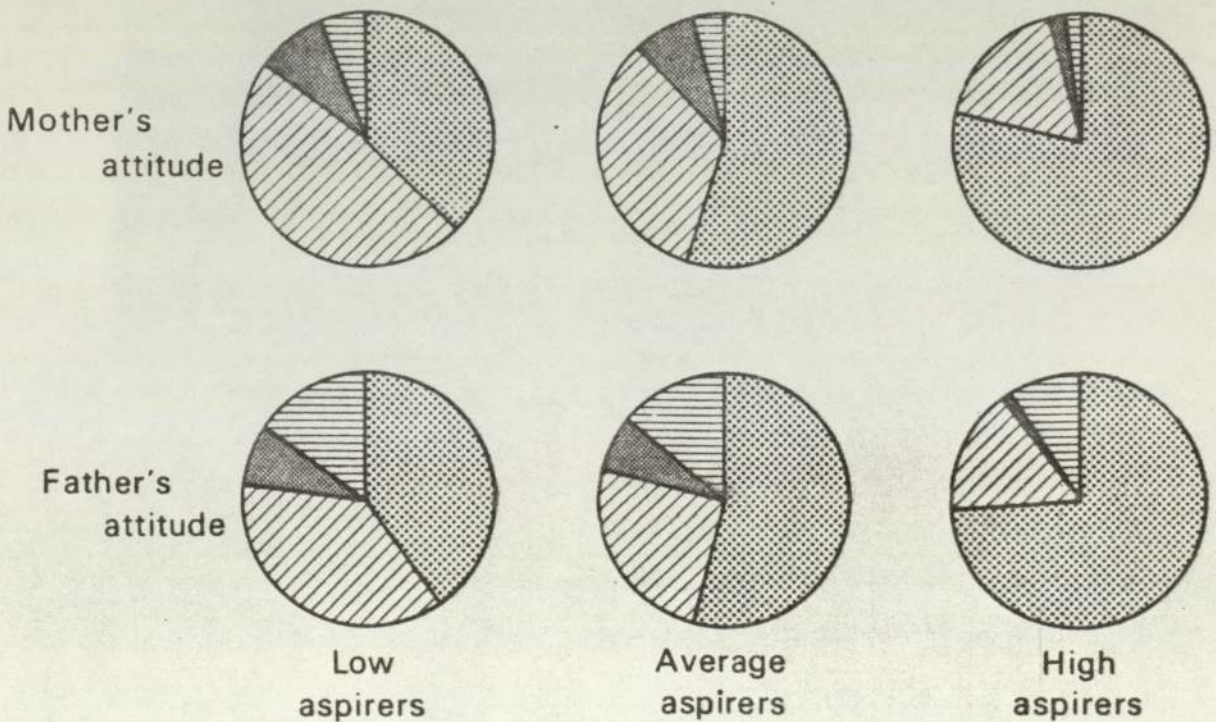
This has been most recently supported by a survey carried out by the Department of Education and Science into the attitudes to education by 16-18 year olds. <sup>(1976)</sup>

The following table illustrates the connection between the occupations of fathers and the length of education of their children in schools and colleges. The final column indicates the occupational spread of fathers of 16 year olds and the second column the situation of 18 year olds. There is a marked increase among the higher levels of occupations and a similar decline in staying on in full time education among children of fathers at lower employment levels.

	<u>16 year olds</u>	<u>18 year olds in schools or college</u>
Professional and Managerial	5	20
Intermediate	18	40
Skilled - Non manual	10	12
Skilled - Manual	39	18
Unskilled & Semi-skilled manual	19	8
Others and don't know	9	2
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total number	100% 806	100% 1,986

Rauta and Hunt (1976) support this connection in a survey of 1926 girls. They found that girls whose fathers were in professional work, or who had remained in education beyond the statutory leaving age, were more likely to stay longer in school. Girls were asked what they thought was their parents' view of leaving or staying in school. The diagram following gives a picture of their replies.

 *Should stay at school*    
  *Don't mind*    
  *Should leave school*    
  *Other\**



\*Other includes "No mother," "No father," "No answer," "Don't know."



Perhaps from this, one can deduce that those most in need of help were least likely to receive it, because the greatest number of 'don't know' replies came from girls with the lowest aspirations.

Part of the research for the Plowden Report on Primary Education ( ) recorded parental aspirations as having a stronger link with achievement in schools than other factors. Bynner (1972) supported this, adding, as Rapaport did, that fathers seemed to take a closer interest in their children's progress at the secondary school stage. Parents seemed generally satisfied with the kind of information supplied by schools, although this satisfaction was less evident among working class parents of children in secondary schools, who felt alienated from the purpose of the school, and less able to understand teachers and so were more critical of them. This finding confirmed the view of Pallister and Wilson (1970) whose study of a group of 77 mothers of primary school children in Hartlepool showed that working class mothers were less happy and knowledgeable than middle class parents, about what went on in schools and particularly commented on the unhelpfully vague terminology of school reports.

Although the studies of Pallister, Wilson and Bynner were concerned with children of primary age, they do point to the importance of interest by parents in schools. The Schools Council Enquiry No.1 'The Young School Leaver' (1968) recorded this in relation to subjects offered by schools. Parents, teachers and pupils were asked what activities were important for the last year of secondary education and parents' interest in particular subjects is important to note, as Diagram 2 shows.

Diagram 2 (Source: Schools Enquiry 1: The Young School Leaver. HMSO 1968)

Parents

Proportions considering that various school subjects were very important for their child to learn at school.

<u>15 year old leavers - Boys</u>	%
English (including reading, writing, spelling).	91
Mathematics (including arithmetic)	91
Metalwork, woodwork, technical drawing and other technical subjects like these.	71
Physical education, things like athletics gymnastics, games and swimming.	68
Geography	54
Current affairs, social studies	45
Religious instruction	43
Science subjects like chemistry, physics, biology, rural science and general science.	40
History	28
Foreign Languages	28
Music, arts and crafts, and subjects like basketwork, drawing, painting, pottery etc.	24
Cookery, housecraft, mothercraft, needlework and domestic subjects like these.	17
Typing, shorthand, bookkeeping and commercial subjects like these.	13

15 year old leavers - Girls

Cookery, housecraft, mothercraft, needlework and domestic subjects like these.	92
English (including reading, writing, spelling)	90
Mathematics (including arithmetic)	86
Physical education, things like athletics gymnastics, games and swimming.	59
Typing, shorthand, bookkeeping and commercial subjects like these.	54
Geography	47
Religious instruction	45
Current affairs, social studies	41
Foreign languages	31
History	29
Music, arts and crafts, and subjects like basketwork, drawing, painting, pottery etc.	28
Science subjects like chemistry, physics, biology, rural science & general science	24
Metalwork, woodwork, technical drawing, etc.	7



Parents expressed great interest in activities like gaining work experience and preparation for employment, though this declined with the higher ability level of the pupil, so that the more able the pupils the less concerned were the parents that they should have some form of work experience, no doubt indicating their view that it would be many years before such pupils went into employment and therefore too early to start thinking about such direct preparation for it.

B. ynnner (1974) asked a group of parents what functions they thought they would attend in their children's school. The following table lists their replies:

Activities parents said they would attend		
Activity	Secondary Modern School	Grammar School
Open Day	67%	87%
Speech Day	48%	64%
Parent/ Teacher Meeting	36%	57%
Careers Meeting	52%	50%

These figures are interesting in showing the different interest to careers meetings between parents of children at different types of schools and supports the view that, perhaps parents of academically able children defer decisions about employment and see little need to consider direct employment experience at this age. The comparatively high interest in careers meetings amongst parents of secondary modern school children perhaps reflects the fact that a greater proportion than grammar school parents would have children going directly into employment from school rather than on to further education. The lower interest in parent/teacher meetings by secondary modern parents no doubt reflects the situation in which parents have difficulty in seeing the point of such meetings other than as social occasions, May be they are less interested in the rather formal nature of the lecture sessions such associations tend to have; or may be less concerned about the overall aims

of the school as opposed to particular information which can be acquired from an open day or careers meeting relating to their own child.

The DES Education Survey 18 'Careers Education in Secondary Schools' (1973) put great importance on links between parents and schools and instanced the frequency and nature of arrangements which schools made for contact with parents as one criterion for assessing the adequacy of careers education within a school. The survey recorded the proportion of schools which offered facilities for parents to meet teachers to discuss careers education, as the following table from the DES Survey 18 shows:

Careers Education Discussed at Parents Meetings

<u>Discussed</u>	<u>Modern</u>		<u>Grammar</u>		<u>Comprehensive</u>		<u>Other</u>		<u>All Schools</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	473	66	715	75	1224	80	184	69	3596	72
No	745	34	236	25	311	26	82	31	1374	28
No. of Schools	2218		951		1535		266		4970	

Although one may applaud such facilities which enable parents and teachers to meet, it is easy to overlook other considerations concerning the effect of such contact with parents upon school pupils. Howden (1975) writes 'the adolescent's right to privacy and a life at school separate from that at home needs to be respected by both home and school'. Growing independence of the pupil should be respected and is reflected in the current debate in the Careers Service on a patterns of self-referral interviewing which may contribute to a lessening of contact between parents and the Service, while, at the same time, encouraging independence and a greater responsibility amongst pupils. Howden and also Reid<sup>et al</sup> (1974) commented frequently that children did not want their parents to go to school because they, as pupils, wanted to demonstrate their maturity and independence to the visiting careers adviser and often felt awkward if their parents were present or feared the kind of outburst or comment that their parent might produce.



Further, it is necessary to consider how parents can be involved in school life. An account of activities designed to help parents take part in careers work is given later in Section 9, but it is relevant here to record some work by Wood (1974) on a scheme to generate more co-operation between parents and primary schools in Southampton. Between 1969 and 1973 the schools experimented by designing work which could be done at home and which needed a joint contribution from both parent and child. This work was then assessed by teachers to build up what they called 'Parental Involvement Factor', (PIF). At the same time, communication between the school and parents was increased by means of a newsletter and a series of meetings designed to help parents know how to tackle their project work. The results of the scheme included not only better relations between parents and teachers, and a greater parental understanding of what was going on in school, but also greater interest in the child's education, and a marked rise in the school performance of those children with a high PIF marking.

It was action like this which the Plowden Report sought to encourage. Reid et al (1974) recorded head teachers' views of parents as often uninterested, overpowering, lacking in information and unable, therefore, to participate. Despite this, all heads surveyed by Reid held evening sessions to meet parents! But it is worth considering the impact of these occasions. Many parents in Reid's survey felt that there was little real interaction, largely because of the way such evenings were organised. They said that frequently evenings were held at schools to give out information, or to obtain confirmation of teachers' views, rather than to create any real dialogue between people equally concerned, from different angles, with particular children. Parents often did not see teachers as allies. Those who frequently missed these meetings at school said they did so because of a difficulty in taking part, and not out of lack of interest in their child. Reid supports Plowden by saying "attention should

focus on ways by which parental participation in, and an understanding of the choices facing the child can be increased". Experience in the Careers Service would support the view that many school heads and teachers, and, indeed, careers officers, bemoan the fact that parents who most need help are least likely to attend activities arranged for them. This is said sometimes as a condemnation of the parent, and without acknowledging the fact that, for some, coming into school, or talking to professional advisers, may be extremely difficult to undertake, and that absence from evenings or interviews can be no real measure of interest in their child's future, but may simply be a reflection of domestic pressures or personal experiences of their own schooling. The later section describes courses for parents and the kind of issues that such courses give rise to, and the Appendices, contain examples of the kind of communications used between schools, Careers Service and parents.

The transmission of occupational knowledge by parents, and the extent to which they persuade their children to do a particular job or course.

The third part of this review deals with an investigation of the questions as to whether parents pass on occupational information to their children and the degree to which they may try and help their child by directing them to particular work. Jahoda and Chalmers (1954) asked groups of pupils to whom they would go for help in finding work. As the school year progressed, the number mentioning family and friends dropped from 27.5% to 13%, but when they had left school and were asked who had helped them find their jobs, 22% claimed to have got their work through contacts of their families and friends, a rather low figure when compared with the table from Sneath (1969). These figures are, of course, of help in finding actual work. Veness (1962) also asked pupils the source of their information, and here parents received the greatest number of mentions by pupils (68% of boys and 67% of girls), although children attending grammar schools mentioned careers literature equally frequently as their mention of parents.



The figures in Diagram 3 appear to support the contention that closeness of the family inevitably means that parents and children will talk about work, but that obtaining the actual job for a child is a separate issue. Veness and Carter both found that the overt influence of parents was so vague that children did not feel any particular pressure to choose in any one direction. Hughes (1953) discovered that most parents were not thought by their children to have had any strong preference for them and thus he supported Jahoda (1951) one of whose conclusions was that parents left decisions to the child and made no strongly declared preferences about their choice of work. In a complex industrial society, it may be expected that parents will find it hard to know about the range of occupations for school leavers and where such vacancies occur. Jahoda has pointed out that influence by the parents can, at times, be quite incidental. A remark about a particular job, a firm, for example, may be all-important to a pupil, ill informed about a range of occupations.

Jahoda found 68% of the boys and 78% of the girls recalled jobs they felt their parents were especially opposed to, at that time domestic service being the most frequently mentioned job that girls were being told not to enter. A similar percentage said that parents had made suggestions about work (66% of boys, and 80% of girls) but frequently that parents had not wished to impose their ideas upon them. Hill (1965) reported that children did not receive direct suggestions, indeed, that parents "leant over backwards not to put ideas to them".

Jahoda suggested there were forms of parental influence in the home.

- (a) the influence exerted by parents who make positive recommendations ranging from overt pressure to mild suggestion.
- (b) the influence exerted by parents who have a definite interest in work choice, but are not reported by the pupil as making any positive suggestion.
- (c) the influence exerted by parents who appear to take no interest, do not talk about occupations, do not offer suggestions and do not raise objections to the ideas their children have.

Diagram 3 - How young people heard about their first job (six studies compared)

	<u>Wilkins</u>	<u>Macpherson</u>	<u>Carter</u>	<u>Willmott</u>	<u>Morton-Williams</u>	<u>Sneath</u>
<u>Boys</u>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Youth Employment Service	25	17	31	41	20	34
Family, Friends	26	-	40	32	41	25
School	8	2	2	-	5	7
Advertisements	7	9	5	12	12	14
Personal enquiry	26	42	18	-	16	6
Already working there part-time	-	-	-	-	4	3
Other sources	8	17*	3+	15	1	12+
Not known	-	13	1	-	-	4

Girls

Youth Employment Service	22	17	23	-	22	23
Family, Friends	22	-	30	-	35	18
School	13	2	1	-	3	6
Advertisements	12	15	12	-	19	24
Personal enquiry	25	37	16	-	16	5
Already working there part-time	-	-	-	-	3	7
Other sources	6	17*	17+	-	2	13+
Not known	-	13	1	-	-	-

Notes: \* includes contacts through family or friends  
 + includes teachers at college and employment agencies  
 - means no figures given: they may be included in 'Other sources'

<u>Author</u>		<u>Group studied</u>	<u>Date of fieldwork</u>
Wilkins	(1955)	1204 boys, 393 girls aged 15 to 19: UK national sample	1950
Macpherson	(1958)	470 boys, 489 girls aged 18: Scottish national sample	1954
Carter	(1962)	100 boys, 100 girls, secondary modern pupils aged 15-16; Sheffield	1959-60
Willmott	(1966)	177 boys, aged 15 to 20 Bethnal Green (East London)	1964

References continued overleaf ..



When Jahoda enquired which parent had taken any part in any discussion at home he found that, although fathers had taken most interest in sons and mothers <sup>in</sup> daughters, in overall terms it was the mothers who had given the greater amount of time to both boys and girls.

The most recent survey, confined to boys, was carried out by Thomas and Weatherall (1974) who found that while 88% of fathers knew what their sons hoped to do - and 85% of these felt satisfied with their choice - only 33% had done something about helping them to get a job and 10% of the fathers had never talked at all to their sons about their future, even by the school leaving time. Thomas and Weatherall pointed out that most surveys showed parental involvement mainly in terms of practical assistance in job getting rather than in more general discussion about job choice. Amongst those who did offer practical help to their children, helping to contact an employer and to complete an application form were the two actions most frequently mentioned.

Turning from the tangible activities of helping to find work to the less quantifiable areas of interest, Thomas and Weatherall looked at similar factors to Douglas when examining the material background and domestic and family set-up of the boys in their survey.

They found, as had the Schools Council Survey, that there was a link between a father's age of entry into employment and that of his son's. They also created a scale of attitudes to features in work considered to be important by fathers by asking them a series of 12 questions about work, for example, attitudes to earning, travel, training, future prospects against high earnings. The scale, described as 'Cynical Apathetic Material' as opposed to 'Actively Aspiring Idealism', showed that the shorter the schooling of parents, the less the concern about intrinsic factors of a job, such as interest or training; and that the higher this non-interest score became, the more likely that the parents were in unskilled work themselves. The following tables record this.

Relationship of father's occupational status and his score on the attitude scale

Occupational Level %

Scale	Non-Manual Supervisory	Skilled Manual	Semi- Skilled	Unskilled	Unclassified	Total
0-3 Actively Aspiring Idealism	37	19	19	8	41	24
4-5	26	23	24	17	14	24
6-7	14	29	28	36	25	28
8-12 Cynical Apathetic Materialistic	13	29	29	39	20	25
Bases	368	590	340	94	31	1424

Relationship: Parents' Educational Level and score on the attitude scale

Scale	Both Parents left early	Mother early Father late	Father early Mother late	Both Parents late	Total
0-3 Actively Aspiring Idealism	19	36	36	48	23
4-5	22	26	23	21	23
6-7	26	27	26	19	28
8-12 Cynical Apathetic Materialistic	30	11	15	12	27
Total	1294	117	135	93	1659



This seeming preference for material rewards was also noted by Veness (1962). Evidence came from asking pupils what they thought was important for them to take into account when considering factors in work. The following are the results which are listed in frequency of mention.

<u>Modern School</u>		<u>Technical School</u>		<u>Grammar School</u>	
<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Pay	Pay	Pay	Pay	Pay	Overseas
Pensions	London	Pensions	London	Interest	Interest
Interest	Associates	Interest	Associates	Fulfilment	Meeting People
Travel	Travel	Travel	Overseas	Overseas	Associates

No doubt these reflect the values of their families because home has already been mentioned as the prime source of information and place where discussions about the future are most likely to occur.

The kind of impression parents have about work is based on their own occupational satisfaction and progress and could be a forming influence upon children. Hartington (1964) found that many parents' interest in their children's careers depended first upon the fulfilment of their own ambitions. He found that the more successful a father, the less important it seemed to him to push his child to succeed; but that those who had experienced frustrations and disappointment in work gave greater push to their children. Within the family, talk about work will give the child an insight into how far his parents have settled in their jobs and this could very well influence him when making his own decision. That children are concerned about the opinions of their parents is clear from a survey of a different nature, carried out among university freshmen by Musgrove (1967). The students were asked whom they would least wish to disappoint by failure in their studies and their parents were the most frequently mentioned group. Sometimes in work, as in education, the fear of letting the family down is too great a pressure for someone not adequate for a chosen course or career. Alternatively, it could be a spur to achievement and determination to succeed. Most surveys

show that parents' aspirations for their children are for a level of work which is certainly not less, and generally higher, than their own level.

This was noted by Hartington (1964), Chown (1958), Maizells (1970) and Liversedge (1974).

The effect of interest and encouragement of parents upon school achievement has already been mentioned. Willis (1975) and Ashton (1975) both commented upon the acceptance of a certain level in schools as a determinant of future occupational level. In particular, boys who see little value in schooling and receive little challenge while at school, become alienated and separated from schools so that they do not wish to obtain qualifications. It would appear that this decision can be taken quite early in secondary school life and that, once made, there is little chance that it will be altered. Ashton developed this theme, suggesting that the type of work parents do and the experience they have within it could greatly affect children's views of work. He described a new trilogy of family attitudes gained from experience in employment as being:

"Career-less" people in lower educational and occupational levels leading into semi-skilled work with little prospect for consideration of advancement.

"Working Class" people with a positive regard for school yet also an acceptance to a form of allocation of themselves to certain areas of work. Skilled crafts with some promotion and slightly longer term rewards than the first group is the ambition of most parents for their children.

"Middle Class" people generally prepared to defer satisfaction and go for long term rewards in employment. They also seek to be involved in their work and anticipate receiving some personal satisfaction from the nature of the work they are doing.

Ashton spoke of the "perpetuation of the frames of reference and associated self concepts acquired in the family and reinforced in the passage from school to work". It is these frames of reference which will appear to be important when attempting to defer, as well as the tangible activities in which parents get involved when trying to help their children put into practice, a career plan.



Summary

From the evidence, there seems to be some agreement that the family is potentially the most profound source of occupational influence and information. This is particularly clear in the summary of evidence Sneath offers from several pieces of research. Clearly, in this summary, is seen the primary position of family and, after that, of personal enquiry, many of which could be assumed to arise from family connections or suggestions. This derives from the frequency of contact and closeness. What is of interest is to consider firstly how willing parents are to pass on their information, or to appreciate that their experiences can condition and affect the expectations and anticipations of their children; secondly, how far parents feel confident that they have sufficient occupational knowledge to pass on; and thirdly, how far they consider their children are willing to take notice of them as they go through the adolescent stage of growing up.

Further, one is faced with a number of questions which form the basis for further investigation. These revolve around the level of work finally entered by school leavers and its relationship to the work and level of their parents - what proportion appear to enter the same work or work ultimately at the same level; the freedom with which parents feel they can be involved in debate about educational matters like examinations and subjects which their children may undertake; parents' views as to the value of contact with schools, the type of information received from them, the contribution parents feel they can make to discussion about careers; how parents would get help and from what sources; what kind of things are important to them to encourage their children to pursue in employment; how far these points do relate to different levels of work and, therefore, types of experience and satisfaction received in work by parents.

SECTION 4 - REVIEW OF RELEVANT AMERICAN RESEARCH

It has not been possible in the review of American research to find any accounts of investigations into practical measures parents might take to direct their children to follow any particular course of action when choosing a career. Nor has it been possible to find any work which sought to examine how parental experience in work might influence their approach to job discussions in the home. Work that has been found deals with factors affecting the atmosphere in the home in which the child grows up. These items may be grouped into influence upon job choice based upon relationship between parent and child; influence arising from the degree of encouragement parents give a child in educational support; and influence deriving from the socio-economic factors which, themselves, come from parents' occupational level.

Influence arising from family relationships

The first main contribution is that of Roe (1956) who suggested that when one looked back, it was possible to see a relationship between up-bringing and subsequent occupational choice. If this was so, then in giving occupational guidance, the attitude of parents to the client when a child was important to consider.

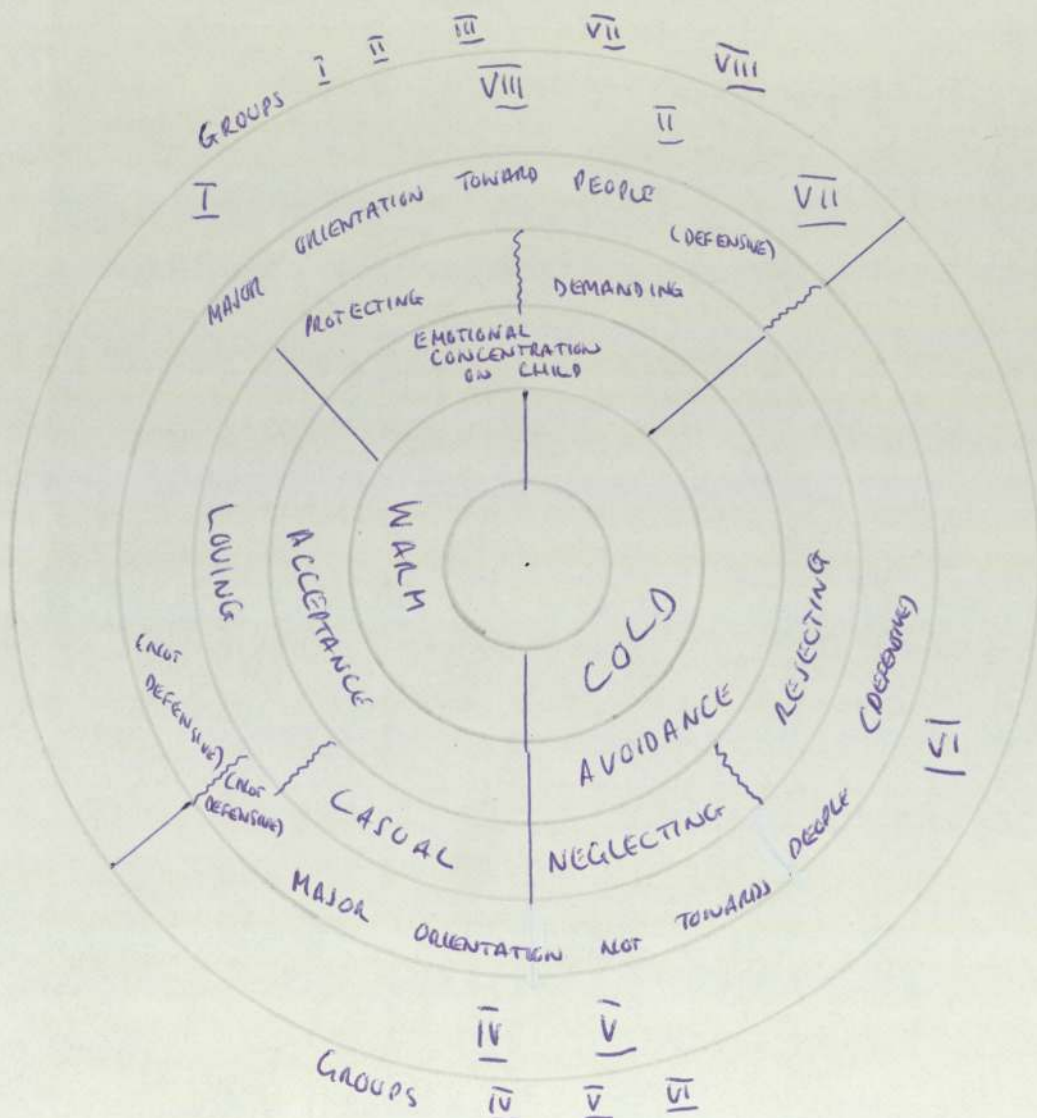
Roe asked adults to recall their childhood and, from this data, described three types of family environment; namely "concentration", that is a child-centred experience; "avoidance" which was described as experience of rejection, avoidance by parents of their child; and "acceptance" which would be a loving concern for the child even if, at times, expressed in a casual way. Roe suggests that this early experience may consciously or unconsciously determine relationships people will subsequently look for in work. For example, someone with a child-centred experience will seek work giving a constant need to establish oneself in relation to others, being concerned at other people's views about oneself; on the other hand, someone who has experienced rejection may be defensive in social relationships and enter work avoiding people and find satisfaction in non-people jobs, for example,



certain scientific careers; finally, the group which have enjoyed acceptance and interest in the home may find it easier to establish links with others, though they may also find satisfaction in impersonal types of work relying upon one's own personality and self-confidence.

The diagram illustrates Roe's view of the ripple effect leading outwards from the early family experience to choice and settlement in work.

Diagram 4 - Roe's diagram showing the predicted relationship of childhood, family and occupational choice.



Groups

- |                     |               |                             |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| I Service           | IV Technology | VII General culture         |
| II Business contact | V Outdoor     | VIII Arts and Entertainment |
| III Organization    | VI Science    |                             |

Roe's theory has been tested by a number of people. Hagen (1960) considered 245 families with a child aged 4 years and then again 14 years later. He classified the family relationship on Roe's scale and looked at jobs entered. He found that the young people were spread through a wide range of occupations, and that there was no real link to background except a slight agreement between people in technological careers and an "acceptance" environment as a child. It must be remembered these subjects would only just be setting out on their career. Hagen's work looked at the choice of first job and not at any changes or degree of settlement in work.

Utton (1962), in an investigation of former social service type careers, was unsupportive of Roe. The careers were social work and occupational therapy, dietitian and laboratory technicians. There were differences in attitude to work for example, social workers and occupational therapists were more altruistic than dietitians and laboratory technicians, but he recalled differences in the nature of their home background which would suggest similar patterns for either pair. What evidence there was indicated that social workers and laboratory technicians both felt a degree of rejection in the home, but had ultimately entered very different types of work. One of the problems of this method is that it is based upon remembrance of childhood and a willingness to talk about childhood. Utton suggested that, although the method of retrospective thinking has a weakness due to passage of time, this may also be an advantage - time may have mellowed a respondent's view of his early years.

Switzer (1962) compared 40 chemists and 40 ministers of religion and again found no support for Roe's theory. He commented that Roe did not differentiate satisfactorily between parents and argued that one should look at the attitude and experience of each parent. He further said that differences between them and their attitudes to their child might create problems in the home environment which could be the influence on subsequent choice.



Finally, Green and Parker (1965) gave partial support to Roe. In a study of 355 cases they found that, more important than the atmosphere of the home was the relative influence of one parent - fathers more than mothers - upon the choice of work made by daughters. This could derive from current external factors affecting the home and thus the environment in which the family had been brought up. Green and Parker state their doubts about the value of retrospective study. Hagen is, perhaps, the only person to have started his study from an early stage of childhood and looked at the choice after becoming aware of the type of home. He does not, however, support Roe any more than those who relied upon recollections from childhood by their clients.

Differences between parents may be accounted for by a lesser desire for promotion in work, in particular on the part of the mother. Also, it is necessary to consider that, while a mother may aspire to certain work, she may not be in a position to achieve her hopes. This may be because of marriage, for example.

Brunkan and Crites (1964), in summarising Roe's views, remarked that they have not been upheld, or they say that Roe perhaps underestimated the variety of parental influence, and the influence of each parent separately. At the same time, Crites considers some of the tests were not particularly comparable with the clients Roe used, for example, Utton used women and not men, as Roe had done, and Crites questions whether these faulty measures to investigate her theory really put her theory totally in doubt.

Another area for consideration, apart from the relationship within the family, is the influence of being born in certain areas or families. Ginzberg (1951) writes, "In some cultures, occupational choice is resolved at birth, for the family, more or less, determines one's occupation". In this he echoes Riesman (1950), who, writing of society, described the nature of society as a determinant for opportunity and experience. In looking at the growth of societies, Riesman describes three categories and extends this view to influence and structure of the family.

Thus, a society may be one with high growth potential at a point where conformity within the society to accepted codes of practice is essential for progress. The society is carried forward by the maintenance of caste, and conformity within grades, the family can therefore be a major agency in character formation, a child makes choices on the basis of example and instruction, and is inclined to accept his elder's advice.

A second structure of society may be that of transitional growth with more emphasis upon discussing one's own goals and values and acting upon these. There is often less parental control of children who are encouraged to make decisions upon their personal convictions.

Thirdly, Riesman categorises what he calls the incipient population in which social character is formed by a sensitivity<sup>for</sup> and expectation of each other's behaviour. Individuals are concerned that they should choose, or behave in a way that can be as conducive to others, within the family there can be great change, but also a subjugation of personal motivation.

The application of Riesman's typology has been explored in England by Veness and Maizells whose work has been considered. Undoubtedly, it is of interest to consider the wider influence of the society in which the family itself exists, but it is of value to relate these descriptions of social grouping to the inter-relationship within the family. The pressure of being born to certain cultures or sub-culture groups may affect a child in its motivation to work and in consideration of what is acceptable in terms of career choice.

#### Influence arising from encouragement of educational progress

Turning to a second issue of a link between educational levels of parent and child, Lesser and Kandel (1969), in a study of 2327 students, examined the encouragement that mothers gave for higher education for their children. They compared <sup>this</sup> with the level of encouragement peer group members had given to the student, by looking at the goals of the student's mother and the student's best friend. They found a concordance equally high between both possible



influences with greater agreement between mothers and daughters than mothers and sons. They compared their findings with those of Coleman who, in "The Adolescent Society" argues sources of influence upon the student were in order, peer group, parent and school. Lesser and Kandel quote other sources showing a link between parents and student aspirations and, without disagreeing with Coleman, <sup>(H<sub>u</sub>)</sup> argue that it is often the case that a student will have chosen friends who adopt similar values to those of his parents. The influence of parent and peer thus are supportive to each other.

A similar view is recorded by Sewell and Shah (1968) in a 7 year study of 10,318 subjects. They looked at the parental level of education, encouragement to child and child's intelligence and motivation. Although inevitably the intelligence factor was a strong one, they found, when looking at achievement and aspiration, that the extent of encouragement and support from home could not be overlooked. This encouragement related to parental experience of higher education; for example, the student's achievement was greater if both parents had gone to higher education. When comparing parents, the father's experience was a more significant factor than the mother's. Strauss, Sewell and Haller (1957) had already pointed to a significant relationship between parents' social status and girls' educational aspirations, independent of the girls' intelligence, and gave their support to the view that aspiration can be a more powerful determinant than social class membership. By aspiration is meant here, educational aspiration going beyond high school education: by occupational aspiration, level of job the person was planning to enter.

Progress and success in education is linked to the students' own view of himself. Gecas (1971) looked at the level of self-esteem an adolescent had and related this to parental behaviour. He examined what may be termed the subject's view of his own power and worth in a survey of 620 16/17 year old students. The results showed that, where there was support and affection in the home, so a person's capacity for higher self-evaluation was increased.

This, then, could be turned to greater academic progress, placing a student in a strange position in occupational choice. Gecas quotes Bronfenbrenner and Kahn that middle-class parents gave more control and support than working-class parents, thus one is returning again to the style of family that concerned Riesman.

#### Influence arising from occupational level of parents

Turning now to a possible link between occupational levels and encouragement for employment aspiration, it is first necessary to consider Jenson R and Kirchner WL (1955) who wrote an article entitled "Do sons follow their father's occupation?" in a review of research on the subject to that date. They, themselves, surveyed 8,000 householders in 1951 and came to a conclusion that there was then a tendency to follow father, and that this was more so in manual than in non-manual levels of work. They pointed to the fact that changes in society will affect the situation as more opportunities become open to children than to their parents.

In particular, as the following diagram shows, in only half of the occupational groups more sons followed their fathers, in other categories, sons tended to go higher in the occupational ladder than their father. Much of the change could be due to creation of new job opportunities.

In general, Kirchner and Jenson found many sons follow fathers into the same level, even if in a different area, of work. In contrast, they say Pinney found little agreement but, in their review, take support from Nelson, Dyer, Kroger and Louttit. Louttit found father's job level the most influential point, and Dyer and Nelson both found a link between permanence in a job by father and son.



Diagram 5 - Summary of studies on the relationship of father's occupation to son's vocational choice.

Investigators	Percent (or correlation) who chose same kind of occupation as father	Percent (or correlation) with occupation on same level as father
Anderson, 1932	12	
Beckman, 1929		49.3
Jenson & Kirchner, 1955		71 (Manual) 63 (Non-manual)
Jones, 1940		r = .40
Krippner, 1963		r = .22
Kroger & Louttit, 1935		19.1
Mowesian, Heath & Rothney, 1966		1-26
Nelson, 1939	C = .23	
Pinney, 1932	(No statistics, but this conclusion: "The father's occupation seemed to play a very small part, although there was some evidence of its influence," p.287)	
Proctor, 1937	13	57
Samson & Steffire, 1952		C = .29*
Sears, 1915	(No statistics, but this conclusion: "The boys tend very largely to select some occupation other than that of their own fathers," p.756)	
Sisson, 1938a	r = .003	

\*This contingency coefficient was computed by the writer from the  $X^2$  value reported by Samson & Steffire (1952, p.36).

Source: J O Crites - Vocational Choice (1967)

The issue of change due to wider opportunity is taken up by Adams(1953 & 1954). In two surveys, Adams compared the occupational origins of physicians and business men; by origin he meant father's occupation. He found in the first survey that less doctors came from a doctor base-point, pointing out that the expansion of the medical profession had, of course, widened the base of background from which doctors were going to be drawn. Again, in the business-leader survey, he found a decline, no doubt, again due to expansion of opportunities. He does, however, point out that even if children did not go into the same profession, they generally went into work of a similar level in terms of training and salary, though not necessarily in the same field. This, he said, was due to wider opportunities with each succeeding generation.

Crites (1967) reviewed studies of family and vocational choice. He wrote that there appeared to be some link between sons and fathers although this could, perhaps, be because at the time less mothers worked full time, and hence they

appeared as absent from the influence field regarding employment. Choice of career does, he argues, involve or reflect identification with parents and family aims, relationships with parents do affect choice at the time choice is made. He recalls, in general, that 13% enter the same occupation, the level was the significant factor and not the actual job. Diagram 5 has summarised the statistical information of a number of surveys. Turning to what he termed the psycho-analytic research, Crites quotes Dynes that in level of occupational aspirations "differences in aspiration is more closely related to subtle inter-personal factors than to overt parental pressures".

Krippner (1963) considered 189 boys and 162 girls in junior high school and looked at their vocational preferences and the parents' occupational level. He found a significant relationship amongst preferences to the actual work of parents. It appeared mother and daughter links were stronger than mother and son links, and that father's occupational level was more significant to both son and daughter. In looking at the kind of occupational interest among fathers, scientific work was least favoured, and the traditional professions of law and medicine highly considered. His survey produced other points concerning the aspirations of young people, boys rejected teaching as too female-dominated; disliked business because of its gentle or non-muscular image, and found also that business work was difficult to envisage. Many children wanted to choose careers in agreement with their parents, generally with one parent, within general a sex link with mother/daughter and father/son, but some boys rebelled against the father's position and so chose differently. It was also, of course, the case that many of the jobs parents did were not within the immediate horizon of their children, and could not, therefore, be considered by them at that age.

### Conclusion

Finally, it is important to consider the views of Shoffner and Klemer (1973) who, when writing about parental education to advise parents of their role



when helping their children in the latter's vocational choice, comment "Often the family's most significant experiences and discussions involve the occupation of the parents .... jobs frequently establish time allocations and dictate day to day living arrangements. Occupational influences extend to non-working hours, to dress, to friends, to leisure activities, to speech and topics of conversation .... Few parents seem to recognise the full effect they have on their children in job choices". The influence of parents is said by them to be a combination of:

- (a) being themselves in a position to provide by themselves or through their efforts, actual hard job information.
- (b) finding sources of such information through contacts and adult relationship.
- (c) to encourage a child's interest in achievement so affecting the level at which they might enter work.
- (d) affecting the child's self concept and, finally,
- (e) providing an occupational model. In this last point is the reason why, perhaps, fathers, who were more likely to be full time workers, than mothers, may provide the stronger influence.

In this connection, Ginzberg,<sup>(1951)</sup> having said how greatly the family can influence, goes on to say that many parents avoid direct advice or influence because they often feel they are talking about an area of choice they cannot fully understand; parents feel children are better informed and more mature and resent their "interference". He feels young people can miss an essential type of support, parents do not need to be up-to-date, but they do need to be willing to talk over their child's plans. Shoffner and Klemer thought advisers should help parents fulfil their role by encouraging parents to realise the part they play.

No doubt children become aware of the values and views of work their parents have, and this will affect their own choice of work. Kinane and Pable (1962)

suggested the more a boy is impressed by sight of money and material possessions, the more he will value monetary rewards in work. They looked in a survey at the closeness of the family, considering whether children would choose work which would reflect some aspect of family attitudes. It was hard to identify actual influences as these were often too subtle to measure, but there appeared some support for their hypothesis. **Examples**

were a link between a close-knit family and concern for working conditions and work associates; and of cultural stimulation in the home and settlement in creative careers.

With **Baban**, Kinane tries to find out what students thought were important factors in work and then compared these with points mentioned by parents. The topics were entitled the Intrinsic, that is, social welfare factors, creativity issues and variety; and the Extrinsic, namely, economic security, associates and prestige. The conclusion was that the higher the socio-economic status of the family, the greater the reference to Intrinsic factors, with the reverse among the lower occupational groups. Between parents, fathers put greater value on such factors as prestige, economic security and supervision, and mothers on social welfare and people with whom one was working.

#### Summary

To return to the three original questions, this review of American research would suggest a similarity in level of aspiration of child and parent, especially with a link to the father; that there can be a link between factors involved in work which are important to both fathers and children; that it is the degree of encouragement by parents which is most important to consider. This encouragement is shown by interest in school achievement and in a willingness to assist the child in the process of learning about work. Attitudes to work and its place in life will be noted by children, parents providing a model for choice and behaviour in work.



There is, therefore a similarity between the findings in Britain and in America despite cultural variations. For example, the growing range of occupations widens the range of opportunity, yet young people keep to the same occupational levels, and the link between parents and sons or daughters. Differences may exist in the influence parents may have upon a school's work because of the community involvement in school board management in America and not in Britain. The intra-family influences being explored in the work of Rapaport in Britain and the evidence of Thomas and Wetherall in their effort to quantify method and type of influence parallel the conclusions of Shoffner and Klemer in America as to what may be termed the potential influence of the home environment.

PART 2

PLAN OF THE INVESTIGATION



SECTION 5 - RATIONALE AND HYPOTHESES

In forming hypotheses for the research, the following variables were borne in mind. Firstly, there could be different involvement between fathers and mothers with possibly less influence by non-working mothers. However, as many mothers would be working, each parent would be asked what they did, and then what they thought might be differences in the question of occupational choice between boys and girls. The situation about employment of women is changing considerably, and most mothers appeared to work, although some may not have been in work to their satisfaction or qualification; they may be in part-time work, or have taken any job available, or which fitted domestic commitment. To attempt to get each parent's view would have been impossible as one could not be sure that parents would complete the form separately, if two forms were sent to each family; and, if asked to fill up two identical forms, they might be less willing to do what seemed a more complicated activity. There would be no guarantee as the forms were being returned by post, that these had not been completed by the same parent.

Secondly, it would be of interest to see if there was any difference in involvement of parents of children of different academic levels. Although secondary schools have, in the main, been reorganised on a comprehensive line, two of the schools chosen had only recently been reorganised so that fourth and fifth year pupils in each school had been allocated to the school on the basis of a result of an examination taken at eleven years old. One 5th form group was, therefore, a Modern School group, the other a Grammar School group. As already mentioned, the organisation of careers work is such that a different pattern may be followed in each type of school, parents are not generally invited to interviews with careers officers in grammar schools, and this was the case with the school chosen. If the Careers Service and school feel these academically more able pupils can be more independent it could be useful to know if this was supported by less active discussion in the

home, or, on the other hand, by more positive help which might be held to suggest careers advisory staff need to be less concerned to help academically able pupils.

Thirdly, the occupational level and experience of the parents might affect the attitude to school subjects and the kinds of values or jobs considered to be important for children to discover. It would also be useful to see if occupational level would affect an awareness of the occupations open to pupils these days.

The hypotheses to be tested and the questions to be asked in the survey were as follows:

- 1 Parents in different occupational levels will be concerned about different school subjects.
- 2 Parents have insufficient knowledge of school subjects to be able to take an active part in choice.
- 3 When choosing subjects, parents consider future use, but expect their children to have more short-term objectives.
- 4 Parents may think they can only help their children to know about the job they themselves hold, and not realise they can also help form views about work in general.
- 5 The ease with which parents can gather job information varies between occupational levels.
- 6 Parents may not be clear as to their role in advice *vis-a-vis* careers staff, nor how those professionally occupied in careers work seek to use parents.
- 7 The parents' knowledge of their child is not sufficiently gathered by careers teachers and officers.
- 8 Views about the importance of work for girls will vary with occupational level of parents and with whether or not the mother works outside the home.



- 9 Parental influence is bound up with general family communication and willingness to get involved in events provided by schools.

SECTION 6 - PILOT STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

The main questionnaire was developed over a period of nine months through a series of pilot studies involving interviews and questionnaires.

First Stage

The first pilot study was a group of four interviews with parents who had children at different stages of secondary education. The interviews were conducted at the interviewees' home with the use of a tape recorder. A schedule of points was followed in each case. The parents were:

- a postman whose wife is a nurse,
- a local government officer whose wife is a secretary in the college of further education,
- a non-employed widow,
- an insurance manager whose wife is an office worker.

The purpose in the interviews was to find out how they had felt about arrangements for contact made by the schools; how far they, as parents, felt they could be brought into these educational decisions; the ease with which they felt they could approach schools; what they had in mind when considering school subjects; how they thought their children had made decisions; and how far they, as parents, would go to influence these decisions.

PILOT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The questions used are listed below:

When was the 3rd year option exercise done?

How was it organised?

Were parents involved?

What period of time did it cover?

How much can you get from normal school reports?

What more did you get from teacher contact?



How easy do you find it to understand changes in schools nowadays?

How easy is it to talk to subject teachers?

How did the pupil decide between interest and ability in subjects?

How realistic is the whole procedure?

What sort of problems did parents have?

How far can parents help their child choose school subjects?

What did you think of the school attitude to parents?

Did you get any leaflets to explain process, booklets?

Why did you dislike a subject?

Why prefer choice to rejected subject?

What would have made you want to interfere?

Did you think about sixth form courses and the future work when making  
3rd year choices?

Was any information given about 6th form subjects?

How much do you know, or were you told about what subjects contain?

How much do you think pupils know about content of subjects?

Why do you think schools involve parents?

Are teachers interested to know parents' and children's background?

How did teachers react to meeting parents?

What would you feel if all decisions were done by teachers?

What would you think if process was done just by letters?

How far should parents go to dissuade pupils in their choice?

Did you have in mind careers? stages of leaving school?

Was it possible to talk to careers teachers or careers officers?

What would you expect from them at 3rd year stage?

How far do you think teachers take note of out of school activities when  
thinking of personality and motivation of pupil?

Do you feel you are wanted as having equally important knowledge of the  
pupil?

Is there sufficient parent/teacher contact?

Would you like to talk to teachers with or without pupil present?

Comment

- 1 Parents felt decisions and activities inviting parents to be involved were always organised on the schools' terms. They believed they should be involved as a part of the parent-teacher-child triangle, but were not on an equal footing in relation to the child when compared with the teacher. Time was always short at parents evenings but although several sessions would be better, it would unfairly take up teachers' private time.
- 2 Teachers knew parents' jobs, in the main to know where parents could be contacted in any emergency in school. Parents did not think teachers considered their work as any indication of the level of interest they might have in school work. Parents were only really identified, they thought, over some extraordinary activity like a complaint.
- 3 All parents had attended parents evenings held by the school but were uninterested in the Parent-Teacher Association type of social event. Mothers seemed more concerned than fathers over the short time they had to talk to teachers, fathers accepted this as a fact of life. One father thought information about subject choice could as easily be dealt with by post, but the meetings gave an opportunity to parents to see teachers and understand rather better why their child did, or did not, like a particular subject.
- 4 Career plans at the time of subject choice was considered. One mother was worried about unemployment. One school told parents and pupils not to think of careers and discouraged them from talking to careers teachers or careers officers.
- 5 The parents showed greater interest in what were considered 'useful' subjects, one father would discourage taking subjects like craft,



religious education and art, drawing on his experience in recruiting staff for his company as criteria for 'useful' subjects.

6 Subject choice was felt to be in part unreal - staffing and timetable restrictions were the main factors and not necessarily interest and demand by pupil and parent.

7 Careers and future plans were discussed in the home. This was considered a family matter anyway, but parents also felt teachers knew little about work. At one school the pressure was to stay in full-time education, so children had to turn to family and friends for advice about employment.

### Conclusion

Although the interviews were very open and the parents co-operative, the fact that they were personal friends may have been an inhibition. They may have thought they should express concern and interest in education. The value of the interviews came from the importance the parents put upon certain issues - the time for contact with teachers; the lack of help they received regarding careers from school staff; the awareness of organisational restrictions which effectively determined subject choice. The schedule of questions appeared to be too long for a 45 minute discussion.

### Second Stage

Through the County Careers Officer for Hereford/Worcester, two comprehensive schools were approached in October 1975. One was in a new town development, the other in a smaller developing town. It had been thought that there would be a greater difference in social mix than was, in fact, the case. The purpose of this second pilot study was to contact ten parents of 4th year pupils at the first school and a similar number of 5th formers at the second school, so as to interview them about how they had reacted to involvement in subject choice at 3rd year at the first school, and occupational choice in the 5th year at the second. To learn something of the type of occasion

when the school was open for parents to talk to teachers and see work done by pupils a third year parent's evening was attended at the first school.

There was some reluctance on the part of the second school to co-operate despite earlier agreement given verbally, but eventually the names of twelve pupils who had left the previous summer were provided. The school did not wish to be seen to be involved and chose only pupils who had left and did not have younger siblings in the school.

Ten parents at each school were written to; some refused and others did not reply. Eventually visits and interviews were held with parents of 6 pupils at the first school, but only one at the second school (parents of 4 girls and 3 boys). The interviews followed a check list of questions, were recorded on tape and later transcribed onto a form (copy at end of section).

The occupations of the parents were:

- Father - teacher, office manager, engineer, foreman fitter, engineer representative.
- Mother - office worker, sweet factory worker and three with part-time evening jobs (teacher, factory worker, barmaid).

#### Comment

- 1 All parents had been to parents evenings and individual interviews at school. Three recalled receiving written information from the school. One mother thought children were often embarrassed by teacher-parent meetings.
- 2 When asked if they thought more leaflets, or even a course to help parents understand schools, would be useful they did not give much support to the idea. Some worked in the evenings, the teachers were quite satisfied, two one-parent family parents said they could not spare the time. One couple was interested because they did not read much and ignored the leaflets; they thought hearing talks would be



easier for them.

3 With regard to importance of particular subjects, most parents would leave decisions to the child and only push the child if the teacher said he could do better. The engineer would not want his "very bright daughter" doing art or craft, he thought them a waste of time for an able child, and the office manager was against such subjects for his son. One parent felt cut off through not understanding school work now; two said they found taking an interest in homework encouraged their children.

4 On the question of who was most involved, the replies were:

Father 3 (two of these had wives who worked evenings)

Equal 1, No answer 1, Unsure 2

Two of the fathers thought they were more likely to be involved because they worked full-time.

5 Six of the seven pupils were in the 3rd year. It is not, therefore, a surprise to find that their parents thought the child had had little thought of future plans. Three of the parents had looked ahead, one had obtained some careers literature. One father, but not his wife, thought it less important for his daughter than a son to plan ahead.

6 In their relations with teachers and careers officers, most parents said they were not very happy. The large size of one school was mentioned as a problem; the father whose daughter was at the other school was quite satisfied, saying teachers had gone out of their way to help him (there was no mother) and his three daughters. Two parents thought teachers less dedicated than they used to be, more inclined to take any questioning as criticism and then to take it out on the child. Two found interviews with the careers officer hard to be involved in, they had not been brought in to the interview at all, and had resented the passive role they were apportioned. Two fathers felt teachers did

not understand what work was really like, and were therefore not equipped to advise children.

7 When asked what impression of work they thought they might give, the view which emerged was that work would be seen as a necessary, if not a satisfactory activity. To find information about work they thought films, the media in general, leaflets at school or careers office were the main sources of information and impressions of work.

### Conclusion

Although both parents took part when available there did not appear to be differences of outlook between parents. There was one occasion of difference of views regarding the value of boys and girls future careers; one mother (a divorced parent) thought fathers might be better talking to teachers, she found teachers too technical; some mothers found it difficult to attend evening functions for the same reason that fathers found day interviews hard to attend - work. There was interest in the topic. Calling on parents in two cases ensured interviews; they had not replied to the letter thinking, in one case, it was "something official" (an OHMS envelope had been used) and, in another case, it was "sure to lead to trying to sell us something".

### Third Stage

Because of full-time work commitments it was not possible to envisage conducting the main survey through interviews and it was therefore necessary that a further pilot study should be conducted using a questionnaire, the questions on this deriving from items which had emerged during the personal interviews during the earlier stages. The third pilot was therefore conducted through a small postal study using a form which, after some modification, became the Main Questionnaire. This was sent with a covering letter and stamped addressed envelope to parents of eight school leavers from the second school which had been used in the second study, and parents of twelve 5th formers at a very similar comprehensive school in



another small town. Three replies were received from each school group. The purpose of this pilot study was to test questions and invite comments on items contained and to encourage contribution for areas omitted. How parents reacted to the questionnaire was more important than the actual answers to questions.

#### Comment

Only one reply contained any unanswered questions and even this one was, as a reply, answered correctly. That is, that the two questions left blank depended upon an answer from an earlier question because they were questions relating to reaction to interviews which the parents had not attended. It did not, therefore, seem difficult for people to understand the questionnaire. Two respondents were later met and they said they had not found the questionnaire difficult, except that it was rather confined in its four pages. The Main Questionnaire compiled later, was spread over six pages to give more space for replies and to separate more clearly the sections and questions.

#### Consideration of Method of Survey

The first two pilot studies were deliberately carried out through interviews as it was hoped the main survey would be conducted through family discussion. This method would have made it possible to gather views from each parent separately and thus see their separate contribution to their child. If the child had been present also, some idea of the relationship within the family could have been noted. There would have been the opportunity to ensure parents understood the questions and, through supplementary questions which they might ask, enlarge upon an item; the nature of the supplementary questions could have shown how respondents approached the item and reached their answer. In an interview, it is also possible to detect any difficulties a respondent has in understanding the item and of measuring any degree of misinterpretation of the question which could lead to an unexpected slant with the answer. Finally, in the development of their career plans, there is often ignorance of services available to help pupils and the family discussion could

have been an aid to break down such ignorance and thus contribute to the young person too.

It is necessary to consider the different effects interviews and postal questionnaires do have. A postal survey is cheaper and quicker, can avoid bias introduced through the personality of the interviewer, and can allow the respondent time to talk privately about items, perhaps also to the child himself, which could be relevant in this case, before answering a question. On the other hand, there is no control over who is, in fact, completing the form, it is not possible to check understanding or misunderstanding of items, one cannot learn anything of the interaction between people, which, in a topic like this, is important to try to assess. Much of the overall success derives from clarity of instructions and explanation, yet, at the same time, in sending a postal questionnaire it is necessary to keep instructions and explanations to a minimum to avoid making the exercise look too cumbersome.

With both methods, the introduction and explanations of the purpose of the survey are vital in helping to obtain agreement from the respondent to take part. In the postal survey method the letter needed to be short so as not to put people off, and in this case was written in a way that would suggest that parents would be helping others if they agreed to take part. The topic of helping prepare young people for leaving school is one which has, it appears, quite considerable interest at the present time, and to suggest that information arising from the survey would not be used purely to acquire knowledge, but in the training of staff concerned with careers advice, seemed to be important to stress.

#### Additional Investigation

There were two important considerations in mind when trying to find out parental job knowledge. One was to discover what activities in jobs, other than basic details like pay and qualifications, parents thought were



important. Secondly, to learn the extent of parents' knowledge of jobs, that is, how many jobs parents felt they could describe. It was suggested that, possibly, some form of test could be devised to explore these points, and two experiments which were relevant had recently been conducted within the Employment Service Agency.

The first test asked registrants for work to list fifteen jobs which they knew, with the result that few adults could, in fact, do this. On the second issue, registrants for work were presented with cards with aspects of work written on them, these were items like 'getting on with people', 'money', 'conditions of work'. These cards were presented in groups of three and the registrant asked which two items were at all linked and then, of these two items, which was the more important. Similar tests in knowledge of jobs have been constructed by Moore (1975), Super (1973) and Crites (1961) and into work values by Haller (1959) and Taylor (1964). Question 11 of the Main Questionnaire sought to examine this issue and contained items used by Haller and Taylor and the Minnesota State University Work Belief Check List, as well as from comments heard when observing interviews or talking to young employees and from the earlier pilot interviews. The next step was to investigate the degree to which parents thought their children learned these points which they, in their working experience, had found to be important for choice and settlement in a job.

A final consideration was to attempt to find out directly the views of pupils themselves. On two occasions, in the first pilot stage, and at three interviews of the second pilot stage, pupils were present. In addition to this, an attempt was made to talk to a group of pupils at a fourth school. This was a small grammar school chosen because the whole year group of 28 could, if present at school, be met in one session and because it drew on a mixed area, part rural, and part the edge of an industrial town. Having explained the purpose of the survey, the pupils were asked for any views on the involvement of their parents in their own

careers planning. The pupils seemed to accept involvement as inevitable, but several said they had to explain courses to their parents so that they did not think parents could be very helpful in assessing their child's interest in a subject or advising them about other subjects, but that parents would rely upon the pupil themselves or the teachers.

The pupils said that their parents left decisions about what to do after leaving school to them, about half the class was leaving after the 5th year to go into work. Amongst those staying on there appeared to be more discussion by parents and this was aimed at encouraging the pupil to stay in school. After this class meeting, ten of the parents and their children were written to asking for their views so as to try and individualise the general form discussion. The Main Questionnaire with a short additional questionnaire for the boys were used and replies were received from four families.

#### Comment

- 1 Parents replies were not different from those of the Main Questionnaire.
- 2 Two boys thought parents should be invited to careers advisory interviews, two did not think so.
- 3 All four boys thought their parents' contribution to the interviews could be to give information about character and abilities.
- 4 In their conversations with their parents about careers, the boys felt what they wanted was a general discussion. One mentioned getting information on work compatible with their parents. One boy, whose father was a lecturer in carpet design, specifically wanted advice about carpet manufacturers, as this was the industry he hoped to enter.

#### Conclusion

The individual and group replies did not suggest a strong view either way about bringing their parents into careers discussions. Although careers staff may not automatically involve parents in grammar schools, these boys seemed to



see no reason why they should not be involved. The boys saw the parents, to some extent, as a support, helping advisers to get a fair picture of the boys.

SCHEDULE USED IN THE SECOND PILOT STAGE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Type of house \_\_\_\_\_  
 Father's job: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mother's job: \_\_\_\_\_ Education: \_\_\_\_\_  
 No.in family: \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT CHOICE

when \_\_\_\_\_ how \_\_\_\_\_ attend PE \_\_\_\_\_  
 Who involved \_\_\_\_\_ documentation \_\_\_\_\_  
 What information given \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

speak HM CM FM SM

Comment on arrangements \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

HOW SHOULD YOU INFLUENCE

Views about particular subjects \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Extent of any dissuasion \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Why should parents be involved \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What do you want to know from school \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Talk at home \_\_\_\_\_ pupils want you there \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Which parents greater involvement \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



HOW FAR AHEAD LOOK

Pupil \_\_\_\_\_

Parents \_\_\_\_\_

PUPIL talk to others \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL

Do pupils talk more to one parent about work? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did job ideas come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Pupil \_\_\_\_\_

Parent \_\_\_\_\_

How far would you go to dissuade? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you know about jobs? \_\_\_\_\_

ATTITUDE TO SCHOOL

Teachers' awareness of work \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers' awareness of pupil \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers' awareness of parent \_\_\_\_\_

MISCELLANEOUS

SECTION 7 - CASE STUDIES AND THEIR PLACE IN THE RESULTS

At one stage in this research, it had been hoped to obtain the field information through interviews with parents. This proved not to be possible because of the amount of time available for the survey. A number of parents were spoken to, sometimes at length, during the pilot stages, and as follow up to the Main Questionnaire.

After the Main Questionnaire had been dealt with a number of interviews were arranged with the intention of tape-recording conversations with parents, a head teacher and a senior careers officer. It was hoped thereby, to obtain some contributions on the main themes of the survey. Interviews were not arranged with pupils to ask them their views about parental influence because one aim had been to seek parents' views which derived from their own experience and maturity. In the pilot stage one class discussion was held with boys when the involvement of parents was discussed. At one of the case study interviews, the daughter of the house joined in.

The parents involved were people whose names had been on the fifth year school lists provided for use in the pilot stage, but who had not previously been contacted. One parent was met in a different way when, after listening to his daughter being interviewed in a school and hearing a little of the father's views, he was asked and agreed to have a longer talk. The senior careers officer selected was one who had been concerned about the role of parents for some years and was known to have instigated a course for them in a Coventry school. He had also been closely involved in a major research project of the Grubb Institute in Coventry which was published as *School Life - Work Life* (1971).

A fifth interview arranged with a head teacher proved to be rather unhelpful. The teacher had recently moved from an inner city comprehensive school to a similar sized school in what may be described as a 'better-off' residential area of an industrial town. At both schools he was keen to have close and informed contact with families of pupils. In discussion it emerged that this was really



for two reasons. Firstly, to tell parents what went on in school, and secondly, to learn about any domestic problems which might affect attendance or progress in school. In the inner ring school this meant receiving reports from a school counsellor who visited homes in the neighbourhood. Disappointingly nothing was really done to involve parents in work in the school, or to find out about employment within the family, other than to know when parents were out of work and eligible for any financial assistance. Although the area had changed over the past years and contained a greater mixture of races, apart from varying school meals and religious education, nothing extra was done to help immigrant families to understand the school about which they might have more questions than indigenous parents. The purpose of contact at both schools appeared to be to maintain family records of pupils and to inform parents of what the school was doing, rather than to suggest to them any share in discussion either about the children or the curriculum. The teacher, when asked, could not think of any issues on which parents could contribute.

The careers officer's ambivalence in his attitude to parental contributions, as shown in the record of the interview in Section 11, is of interest. He saw their role as largely background support for the child, and in this respect, was similar in view to the teacher. The additional element he spoke about was of learning about the range of occupations which might be discussed in the home. He recognised this as a source of job knowledge for pupils and found it a helpful talking point during interviews with pupils, especially when their parents attended. It could help to establish rapport to ask about parents' jobs and show his own knowledge of firms and occupations. This, he thought, gave confidence to parents in the Careers Service's links with employment.

It appeared that the careers officer felt that the course run with parents had helped parent-school relationships and the parent-parent link. The size of the meetings, perhaps 40, compared with the numbers who attended year group meetings, had led to more contributions. Could such a scheme be organised solely by the school? No doubt it could, but there may be some advantage in

having as organiser, a service particularly concerned with work entry and not bound by the policy of any one school.

The interest in meetings with staff and possibly in courses of the type listed in the Appendices, was shown in the three interviews with parents. Parents thought that they would be useful, although it transpired they doubted whether they would commit themselves to several sessions. None of the parents hesitated from getting in touch with the school if they felt they wanted to but, as in the main survey, they appeared to accept education as a stage through which everyone had to go, as indeed, is the case by law, but not necessarily a stage when people other than teachers should have much say in what went on in a school.

In part this was because the parents' concern appeared to be less with what the school was doing than with what was happening over their own child, so they did not expect, once their child had left, to be interested to know they could affect change for the future. Partly they avoided too great an attempt at influencing their child's teaching because of the child's opposition to any pressure.

To some extent, the apparent unwillingness to participate may be explained by the fact that, when parents were brought together, it was in large numbers and few knew many parents' views to be <sup>able to do</sup> more than listen, provide support and information if possible, and wait to be consulted. In saying this they underline the views of Shoffner and Klemer, already quoted in the review of American research. However, as they suggest, perhaps parents need reminding of their responsibility for their children and, in particular, over occupational choice they have experience which could be used so that they could adopt a less passive role and help their child.

The small group of selected interviews described here serve to add to the information gleaned in the main survey. The interviews with parents are not dissimilar to those within the pilot studies. Parental involvement, as seen by parents, rarely includes participation, other than attendance at functions and giving information when asked. Although some parents would seek to influence



the school, this would only be on behalf of a particular child, and not seen as an attempt to get involved in planning in the school. The community does not, therefore, get involved in its schools in a caring manner. As regards influencing their children this is, it appears, a position of overall support rather than action seeking to direct their children. These longer interviews served to add to, and confirm, views received in writing in the main survey,

and are given in detail in Section 11.

SECTION 8 - DESCRIPTIONS OF SCHOOLS USED IN MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

It was decided to approach three different schools with the request to contact parents of pupils in the 5th year. The intention was less to compare the results from different schools, but more from parents living in different types of areas. Thus, one school (Evesham) was in a small market town and drew from a mainly rural area; one school was situated in a residential area within a Metropolitan Borough (Knowle); one school was situated in a developing new town (Redditch). Between them the schools together contained a full range of academic ability, although they were at different stages of reorganisation of secondary education to a fully comprehensive pattern. At Evesham, the school chosen was a former Grammar School, the all ability year groups for pupils were in years one to three, thus the fifth year cohort consisted of pupils who, at age eleven, had been selected for a grammar school education; at Knowle, on the other hand, the school chosen was a former secondary modern school with an all ability group only in years one and two, and the fifth year pupils, therefore, were former secondary modern group. At Redditch the school was a comprehensive school with an all ability group in each school year.

Upon advice from the tutor, the intention was to contact approximately 300 parents, with as near as possible, equal numbers at each school, and from each school equal numbers of boys and girls. It was found that the 5th year group in May 1976 was made up as follows (that is, this is not a full year group as some of the 5th formers who had started in the previous September had left school at Easter 1976).

	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>
Evesham	71	69	140
Knowle	63	47	110
Redditch	136	108	244

In order to see if there might be any difference of views, between parents, and to be sure that each pupil whose parents were contacted had both parents to compare in his mind regarding work, it was requested that one-parent





families would be missed from the survey. In the event, however, school records only contained this information in the case of a family where the mother was the parent with whom the school had contact, and as resulted in the survey, there were some one-parent (father only) families and also some families where the survey report was returned by one parent saying that there had been a very recent break in the family. The following lists the number who were left, from whom the selection was then made.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>
Eligible	67	66	61	45	120	102
Contacted	67	66	45*	45	50	50

\*This included one family with twin boys in the school.

#### Details about Careers Work in each of the Schools

##### Evesham

This is a former Grammar School in a busy market town and pupils come from villages for some miles around, as this is the only grammar school in South Worcestershire. An unusual feature of the year group in years 4 and 5 is that the school received part of the senior years of a village based secondary modern school two years before, and pupils were distributed in each of the forms, rather than make a special 'secondary modern' group. The headmaster commented that, far from being at the bottom of each of the classes, these pupils were indistinguishable from the 11+ successes. Approximately 50% of each 5th year stay in school into the 6th form and a small number go on to vocational courses in further education. In the past, most of the 6th formers have gone on to University or other kinds of full-time courses after 'A' level. The town contains a number of manufacturing concerns especially connected to agriculture, for example, agricultural machinery and feedstuffs, and there are a number of farms and market gardens in the area; there is a concentration of professional offices and financial institutions in the town which acts as a

commercial centre to this part of the county.

Careers work is almost non-existent. There is a small careers room with literature laid out for pupils to use, but the emphasis in the school is upon pupils requesting help and being left to read and learn for themselves. The local careers officer interviews pupils in 5th form and helps to organise an annual careers convention. A number of pupils visit the careers office which is nearby, as also do their parents. Parents are not invited to interviews with careers officers in school, but attend in large numbers when parents evenings or other careers activities, like conventions, are held. This year, something like 90% of the children were represented by their parents at such evenings.

#### Knowle

This is a long established secondary modern school with no 6th form or provision for external examination courses beyond the 5th year. There had been such courses until recently when the Borough opened a 6th Form College to which a number of pupils now aspire. Some pupils beyond 16 also go to the College of Technology in the centre of the Borough. The school is situated in a satellite residential and shopping area within the Metropolitan District. It is not the main centre and the school draws from this small township and villages around this; some houses may go back to the beginning of the century, but the majority of pupils come from pleasant private housing estates.

The school has 660 pupils with 108 in the 5th year, organised in 5 forms in mixed ability classes on an alphabetical basis. There is a tradition of encouraging children to remain in education beyond the statutory leaving age, and interest in these courses in the 6th Form College and College of Technology is high. It is possible that the wealthier families in the area avoid the school and send their children to private schools, of which there are a number within the vicinity.



Careers work starts in the 3rd year with the application of Interest Guides to pupils and these results are used to help in advice about subject choice for the following two years. Two members of the school staff organise careers lessons for all pupils in the 4th and 5th year. A careers convention planned by the local Rotary Club is held each year and the local Careers Service visits to give talks to pupils and interview them individually. Because of staff shortage of the last two years, the Careers Service has not given as much time as it hitherto did to this particular school. An interesting feature of this school is the Parents' Clinic which is held weekly when parents can come to the school if they have particular questions they would like to discuss with the head or senior members of staff.

#### Redditch

This is a school of 1,350 pupils with a 5th form of approximately 250. It is a purpose-built comprehensive school on a housing estate in a developing new town. The town has a population of 50,000 and is expected to rise to approximately 70,000. It is not the only comprehensive school, the other in the town developed from a grammar school. Pupils attend from a particular area in the town which includes some Development Corporation property, and some private property. Virtually all the housing in the catchment area is post-war and the main expansion has been within the last 10 years.

Pupils enter the school from middle schools at 13, and in that year choose subjects for the rest of their statutory education, a small proportion continue into the 6th form and some pupils go on to the local Technical College for vocational courses. Preparation for leaving school, therefore, has to start on admission. All parents are seen by school staff at a pre-entry evening and again in the first term at a parents' evening or by individual interview arrangements. Parents are invited to these evening events with the incentive that, at such events they are given their school reports. The events are called Workshops because, on each occasion, there

are some demonstrations of work done in school to give parents an idea of the kind of work pupils do. The headmaster feels there is a great need to educate parents in the opportunities the school has to offer and in training beyond school. There is, he says, a large number of 'at risk' families, with something like 25% of pupils coming from families with breaks in marriage or employment or illness.

In the 3rd year pupils receive 4 periods of careers work each week and this continues for the following 2 years. These sessions cover information on how to make decisions about subjects and careers and information about careers themselves. In the 5th year, all pupils are offered the opportunity of attending the local Technical College on a Link Course which is planned to integrate work in the school with the greater facilities that the Technical College can offer.

Employment in the area has always been good. There is a traditional needle-making industry, and a range of modern factories with a number of storage/warehouse units, small and medium sized manufacturing concerns employing perhaps 20 - 100 people and an emphasis upon light engineering. There are some commercial and professional offices and a wide range of retail organisations particularly, based within a new shopping centre in the centre of the town. Few pupils need to leave the town to find employment, but quite a large number of parents work in Birmingham, having got employment there before they moved out to the new town.



SECTION 9 - ACCOUNT OF CAREERS COURSES AND ACTIVITIES IN SCHOOLSCommunication with parents

In most secondary schools it is customary to hold evening meetings for the parents of pupils in year groups. These occasions may be linked to the handing out of school reports. The purpose is to let parents and staff meet and talk about the pupils; it allows staff to get some measure of the degree of support and interest parents show. The occasions are sometimes also taken up by schools to pass on comments about other matters, like uniforms, discipline and homework. The evenings are planned by the school, which will dictate the programme and aim of the occasion. It is customary for parents of those in the first year in school to have their session early in the school year, and, in many cases, pre-entry evenings are held for parents to come to the school to which their children are moving from junior schools.

For first year pupils and parents there are often brochures giving information about the school. In these, and at the evening meetings, the pastoral care system may be explained, and if there is a school counsellor, he may be introduced. It is rare for events for first year pupils to contain reference to careers advice, but this may be mentioned as a service the school offers in the future to pupils. It is sometimes quite definitely mentioned to parents of children coming into Special Schools, where, perhaps, the need to encourage parents of handicapped pupils may be felt to be greater, and where the occasion may be used to encourage parents to think positively about the future.

Subsequent evening events, when future occupations may be considered, are generally held when pupils are 13/14 onwards. In this particular year, pupils have to decide about courses for the next two years; this is usually the first time that they, or their parents, have been invited to plan what subjects the child takes. There may be implications for their future career at this stage. Each year after this it will be important for parents and staff of

the school to monitor progress as this can have a bearing on future course work and careers. Careers officers are normally in attendance at parents evenings in these years and find that the opportunities are of great value in giving a chance for them to meet parents outside working hours.

#### Arrangements for individual consultation

Apart from these events, parents are invited to interviews with careers officers at which school staff are sometimes present. There are experiments in other approaches to organising interviews, including some schemes in which parents are asked if they wish their child to be interviewed, and for comments about their aspirations for their child. They may be asked what plans they have in mind, and on the basis of this, an interview may, or may not, be arranged for their child. In some areas, pupils are seen separately and letters containing notes about the interview sent to parents, or simply a letter, asking if they would like to discuss the interview with the interviewer.

At some schools, opportunities are given for parents to consult the school staff at regular counselling sessions. They may be held during the day, but generally evening time is arranged so that parents who are working, or have younger children to care for, can come to school. Parents would generally see senior members of staff and, less often, subject staff. It is often the head of the year or house who will see parents from a pastoral care point of view, and interpret comments from subject staff to parents. The opportunities lead sometimes to times of criticism or complaint by parents, but often at private counselling, both parents and staff consider how they could, together, help a particular child.

At one school parents who could not attend in person were encouraged to telephone in and have an informal chat about the pupil. The more it was made easy for parents to contact school staff, the more people contacted and came to the school.



Sometimes a careers officer will plan his work to interview pupils and parents separately. This is usually so that both members of the family can have time to discuss and not over-influence each other, or take over each other's time at the interview with the careers officer. Generally, the careers officer sees the pupils first; more useful is the practice of seeing the parents first, so learning their views and something of the nature of the influence at home, and then seeing the pupil separately.

### Publications

To help parents and pupils, schools often publish booklets about courses taken in school and opportunities in 6th form study. These generally contain factual information, but also may have comments, for example, on differences between methods of study between year groups, and how to choose subjects. How far they are read, or if read, understood, is naturally hard to say, topics are complicated and generally the brochures are brief.

Within the commercial field, only one book has been published specifically to help parents in the general area of career decision and choice. There are many publications containing careers information, but "Your child's career - how you can help" written by a careers teacher is the only book designed to explain the situation of a pupil to parents and suggest how the parent can find information and help their child. Of rather more practical use is a smaller and cheaper booklet entitled "Parents and Careers Guidance" also written by a careers teacher which explains the kind of work that a pupil may find in careers education in school, and gives practical suggestions to parents to how they themselves might assist their child in decision making. Finally, the magazine "Where" contained an article entitled "The Parents Guide to Careers Books". All these three items, however, are only likely to be seen by a small number of parents and by far the greatest source of information for parents will be the individually produced items by particular schools or Careers Services.

### Courses for Parents

A few schools plan short courses rather than single evening sessions for parents and experience of these suggests that they are of value, even though they may only deal with a small proportion of the parents in any particular year group. Parents come voluntarily but rarely can such a course cater for more than a small percentage in a school. A particular feature has been the sharing of apprehension by parents of approaching their child's school. To parents, the child often seems more knowledgeable about future opportunities than they themselves, and the courses have given some confidence and information to help parents cope with their own child. Another factor arising has been the satisfaction in knowing that teachers really do seek parental knowledge of their child, and want to understand the pupil in other than scholastic academic terms.

One or two local authorities have produced video tapes to play at parents' evenings explaining careers and the Careers Service, and encouraging parents by explaining how they may be involved. One in particular had been used in social and religious centres to try and inform immigrant parents and encourage them to feel they can come into the school. Another is a series entitled "Parents need to know", available to be used at Adult Education Centre, a copy of which is included in the Appendices.

### Careers Information Sessions

On the particular question of careers work, special exhibitions or conventions are frequently held to which parents and pupils are invited to come to talk to representatives from different careers. Some schools involve parents themselves by asking if they would be willing to take part by representing a particular kind of work. Sometimes schools use parents' businesses for visits by pupils or talks to children in school or at home. It is often found hard to persuade those in non-professional jobs to take part, but when the chance is presented just to talk to a few pupils then this is generally found easier



by the parents. There are a number of problems about organisation of such help, but opportunities to talk to people already known to the enquirer or to use adults who understand something about the school, can make the interchange more fruitful than if the person is completely unknown or uninterested in the school.

Parents are rarely used in school, they appear mainly to come to events to be told information or to volunteer to help to raise money. Examples of closer contact noticed are using parents to accompany small groups of pupils on visits to employment; acting as voluntary secretary to the careers teacher and doing secretarial work in connection with work experience; filing careers literature; acting as receptionist to parents and pupils coming for interview with the careers officer; making displays for the careers room; furnishing a careers room. In one school visited, the Parent-Teacher Association had a sub-committee to look at careers work in the school and had organised a day conference for teachers, parents, careers officers and employers to review the work and make plans for the coming year.

It is perhaps true to say that much of the effort is concerned with telling parents information, but there appears to be a growing recognition of the fact that parents have much to tell teachers and careers officers. Further, that parents have experiences and knowledge which could be valuable to pupils other than their own children. It is said frequently that the parents who enjoy and benefit from special efforts are those who would come to the school to help, anyway, without such occasions. Efforts need to be made to find out why other parents will not take advantage of these activities. One headmaster, commenting on this issue, remarked that school experience is one experience that everybody has had and it may have soured them, or may have made them feel pleased about school. In the past, schools were largely places where teachers held sway. Today's parents may not have seen their own parents being encouraged by schools, and therefore feel doubtful as to whether they are welcome. If, as appears, the home environment is really so important, as an influence upon a pupil, it

is important then that teachers and adviser learn how they can present invitations so that parents feel wanted, and take up the opportunities; and at the same time show to parents that they, as the 'professionals' want to meet them and are keen to use the information they can gain from parents.



PART 3

RESULTS

SECTION 10 - MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE (i) NOTE ABOUT RESPONSE

The questionnaire was posted on 17 June 1976 to 323 families with a date 11 days later as a possible target date for return, two weekends thought to be times when people might feel inclined to do their reply were included. 66 (20.4%) were returned by the closing date and a further 21 (making a total of 26.9%) on the following two days. After a few more days, during which a few replies arrived, a reminder letter containing a further copy of the questionnaire and, once again, a stamped addressed envelope, was sent in batches on 8, 9 and 10 July, and replies to this continued to be received up to 20 August. Eventually, 173 (53.5%) of the forms were received with answers from parents. A further 17 were returned incomplete by the recipient or the post office.

Analysis of forms returned incomplete

Of the five returned by the Post Office, two were marked 'gone away', two 'not known' and one 'no such address'. It should be borne in mind that the addresses used were those currently listed on the registers in the schools. Of those returned by individuals, four were blank or torn up and eight contained notes giving reasons, which were as follows:

"too busy"	2
"prefer not to answer questions"	2
"cannot help, too many school changes"	1
"personal reasons, though interested"	3

It would appear that by "personal reasons" is meant domestic circumstances. For example, one parent wrote "due to my present domestic circumstances, I do not think I can help", and may, in fact, have been commenting on a situation similar to another respondent who said "I don't think I can help you. I have four children working, but my marriage broke up at an important time, and all are in jobs very disappointing to me".



A third person wrote in a long letter that she was not interested in the topic, and went on to say "parents cannot alter the fact that schools are not capable of teaching our children to read or spell". She continued to give evidence for this opinion, namely, that on moving from Junior School, her son could not read until she, herself, had taught him, and that while in Secondary School his teachers had not corrected wrong spelling in her children's books, but had given the impression that spelling mattered less than understanding the work. The letter concluded with a comment that she had never been able to read the writing of teachers on school reports and "I have only been able to read your name because it was typed under the signature". In that this mother stated what many critics of schools are saying these days, she would have been an interesting respondent if she had completed the questionnaire.

#### Follow-up of the Questionnaire

After the reminder letter had been sent, attempts were made to follow-up a number of those who had not replied. Similarly, some contacts were made with people who had replied. These efforts were partly to ask how people who had completed the form felt about the topic and the questions. This was part of the reason also for contacting non-respondents, from whom it was also hoped to obtain reasons as to why they had not completed the form, and to ask if they would reconsider this decision, and so obtain some more completed questionnaires. The following table lists the method and number of follow-up attempts.

Table 1: Follow-up attempts with parents

<u>Methods</u>	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>		
	R	NR	R	NR	R	NR	NB:
Telephone	2	6	-	-	-	2	R = Respondent
Visit	-	-	1	11	1	5	NR = Non-respondent
Total	2	6	1	11	1	7	
Parents actually contacted.	1	4	-	9	1	5	

Reasons for not replying to either letter or questionnaire

The reasons for not replying to either the first or second letters appeared to revolve around the natural delays which people have when dealing with correspondence. Some of the written replies which had been received contained apologies for lateness, for example, "I always get these sort of things left to me, and somehow it has been put on one side". Three of the parents visited, gave this as a reason, one adding that, having looked at the form again, he thought it was too late to send it in until I telephoned about it. One mother called upon said that she was not really interested, but chatted amicably about her son's job, and it could be that her attitude to the questionnaire had been influenced by the feelings she expressed that neither school, nor Careers Service, had been very helpful. The fact that many of the pupils were not going into work after the fifth year did not appear to have been in people's minds, and yet this might have been an influence if they had seen the survey to be strictly related to help in finding jobs. In one family visited, both parents had been ill in hospital when the first letter was received, and although the father said he would complete and send the form, in fact, he did not do so.

Reasons given for refusals

Amongst the people who were visited, time and lack of interest were mentioned in association with the delay in replying. Three people, however, gave the following specific reasons for refusal. A wife said, when talking of her husband, "he would not want people to know his views". She thought that she and her husband were concerned, but that it was a private matter between members of the family. A husband said "I feel it a waste of time. Just keeping the civil servants occupied". The third father said he had "felt done by the MEB some years ago" after a questionnaire he had completed led to a sales visit and, as a result, he decided in future only to fill up those postal items which he felt essential to him.



Comments from people who had replied

Many of the questionnaires which were returned contained additional letters or quite long notes written in answer to particular questions, either explaining their view, or adding additional comment. This seemed to indicate that people had not found the style or length of the questionnaire intimidating, nor that they had thought the topic not worth more than a short reply. Where the form was completed during a visit to a home it took, on average, 45 minutes because of the amount of general conversation that tended to take place. Some of the people who had completed the form said it had taken them around 20 minutes to fill up. Only three forms contained one page that had been missed altogether, through someone not looking on the back of the page for further questions. This would suggest that it had been easy to follow.

It appeared, from the additional comments and the conversations during visits, that many of the parents took very seriously the question of preparation for leaving school, and felt that more work should be done to examine the process, content of help given, and participation of members of the family. Some parents obviously took the opportunity to express their views, often critical, of the schools' approach to parents, and a few parents made constructive suggestions about the way careers preparation might be carried out. The current concern over the unemployment for school leavers and young people seemed to be at the back of the minds of a number of parents and a reason why they wanted to emphasise their interest and willingness to help.

Analysis of those who did not reply

It is necessary to consider whether there might be any characteristics which differentiated the respondents from the non-respondents. From the lists of addresses there appeared no difference in type of housing or area. Lists of the non-respondents were sent to the local careers officer who had interviewed

all the children of these parents, and also many of the parents to see if, in fact, they contained a higher proportion of families from which no parent had attended school careers interviews than the families of the respondents; or whether there might be any incidence of movement from a particular area through a number of the non-respondent families perhaps having fathers in the armed services; or whether the Careers Officers' interviews had recorded any incidents of expressed antagonism to the school by parents who had not responded to this survey. One of the three careers officers involved thought there were such differences, although their knowledge of staff other than careers staff did not appear to be very great. No noticeable differences in attitudes or circumstances were mentioned.

It was noticeable that one of the classes at the Evesham school and two of the classes at Redditch contained less replies than other classes at those schools. At Evesham the Headmaster had mentioned the survey generally, and possibly some teachers repeated this in class periods. There was no indication, however, from the careers officer's reports or knowledge of class teachers as to whether some may have given more encouragement to pupils to advise their parents to complete the form or not.

A further point that might have been relevant was whether there was any difference in the destination of pupils of respondents and non-respondents. It might have been that, if pupils were not going into work, and parents interpreted the survey as being closely linked to the finding of work, that then they might have been less willing to give time to complete the form. However, from information obtained during October of 1976 from the careers offices, there was no indication that the respondents were more likely to be going into work or not, than compared with the respondents.

If parents had not been encouraged to feel involved in careers work with their children, then they might not have seen any value in completing a questionnaire in a survey dealing with research on their influence. There is



a difference in approach to parents by school and careers service at the three schools. At Evesham parents are encouraged to contact the school, but are not invited to interviews which their children have with the careers officer, nor are they sent any written summary by the careers officer after the interview has taken place. It is possible, therefore, that parents might have thought that they could not complete a questionnaire on an area of work in which they were so little involved by the official agencies, but the response (60.1% of the parents completed forms) would not support this view. At Knowle over half the parents attend interviews, including a high proportion of fathers, perhaps reflecting the view that many parents of pupils in this school were in work where they were able to organise time away for this kind of activity, and here 64.4% of the parents completed the form. There seemed to be considerable interest in visiting the school, supporting its activities and contacting staff over problems, although only one or two parents mentioned what is a fairly unusual opportunity in schools, of a weekly session when parents can contact school staff informally after school hours. The lowest response (41%) came from the school in Redditch, from which also came, by a small margin, the largest number of direct refusals or forms returned empty (9%). This may reflect the fact that parents are not very interested in educational matters. Many appear to attend careers interviews but normally only about one third would attend the evening Workshop to meet staff and learn about what is going on in the school.

Table 2 - Response to the Questionnaire

	<u>Evesham</u>	<u>Knowle</u>	<u>Redditch</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Received completed	79	55	39	173	53.5
Returned empty	4	2	6	12	3.7
Returned by P.O.	1	-	4	5	1.5
Completed at visits	1	3	2	6	1.8
Refused at visits	3	6	3	12	3.7
No reply received at all	45	24	46	115	35.6
No. forms sent out	<u>133</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>323</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Thus 55.3% completed the forms, 10.7% declined or could not be contacted, and from 35.6% no response was received nor any contact made. Whether many among the 35.6% would have been willing to reply if further efforts had been made to contact them is hard to say. The response when 18 non-respondents had been contacted had not been very encouraging, 6 agreed to complete the form, 4 more promised to, but did not, and 8 refused directly. Bearing this in mind, and also the fact that only a limited amount of time was available for personal visits, it was thought that if parents felt strongly about the issue they would have already taken action by returning the form complete or empty.

#### Analysis of completion of questionnaire

Only 62 of the 179 questionnaires returned complete were, in fact, fully completed, that is by containing answers to every question. However, a further 38 only had one question left blank, and that was a question asking if parents had, or were involved in helping their child find work, and when this omission is compared with destination of child, it appears these pupils did not go into work, but remained in full time education. One could, therefore, say that 100 (55.8%) of replies were completed as fully as the parents were able. Another question which was left by parents was that asking how they had felt about interviews with careers staff in school - inevitably Evesham parents could not answer this because they had had contact in a more general way than had parents at the other two schools.

Table 3 - Completion of survey forms

	<u>Evesham</u>	<u>Knowle</u>	<u>Redditch</u>
Number of full replies	15	22	25
Number of replies with gaps	65	36	16
Total	80	58	41
Average number of questions left	2.3	2.3	2.6



One of the questions left by respondents was Question 3. When the answers to this are considered, it appears most feel there is little, apart from discussion, which can be done by parents. Some may then have felt that this was so obvious that it did not need saying.

Turning to the frequency of non-answering of particular questions, there are a number of points to record. Firstly, the number of questions left as shown in Table 3. Secondly, which questions were left by respondents. This is shown in Table 4 which follows:

Table 4 - Number of times particular questions were left by parents

<u>School.</u>	<u>Question No.</u>													
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>
Evesham	-	1	7	-	-	3	-	2	1	4	1	1	51	2
Knowle	-	-	4	1	1	3	1	7	-	2	-	1	25	2
Redditch	-	2	5	3	2	3	2	5	-	2	-	1	4	2
	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u>
Evesham	3	3	-	-	10	22	20	2	4	2	4	2	2	1
Knowle	1	5	1	1	4	8	8	3	4	2	2	-	-	-
Redditch	1	1	2	-	1	2	2	-	-	1	1	1	-	-

A further point to consider is whether the different rates of completion could be significant. The Evesham figure for non-complete replies is particularly high (81.2%), but is largely accounted for by the fact that the most frequently left questions were Numbers 13, 19, 20 and 21 as already discussed, namely whether they had helped their child get a job or had attended the child's advisory interview.

Finally, it is of interest to see if there could be any relationship between completion of form and occupational level of the parents. Taking again the father's job as the base the following emerges:

Table 5 - Completion of form according to father's occupational level\*

<u>FOL</u>	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Gaps</u>	<u>No Gaps</u>	<u>Gaps</u>	<u>No Gaps</u>	<u>Gaps</u>	<u>No Gaps</u>
0	1	3	1	3	1	3
1	12	-	3	2	9	7
2	18	8	11	5	4	7
3	34	4	21	13	2	8

\*Ashton's classification:

0	not working
1	career less
2	short term career
3	extended career

Although more completed replies would have been welcome, the fact that over one third of those returned were fully completed and that, of the rest, many only had one or two unanswered questions, was encouraging. It appeared from the number and length of additional comments and remarks made at interviews that many respondents had been interested in the topic and had not found the questionnaire too difficult to answer.

It must be remembered that, for some of the families, the process of transition from school to work was not complete. Either the pupil in question was still trying to find a job when the survey took place, or he was remaining at school for post-16 courses. In these families, there might be less inclination to take part in a survey, part of which dealt with views about working life and obtaining a job. This may be surmised from the fact that, amongst those who left only one or two questions, these were those which dealt with the process of getting a job. To have carried out a second follow-up in, say, October, in the hope of getting replies from people uncertain about their future in June and July would, it was thought, leave too long a gap in time for parents to have recalled the earlier questionnaire.



The total completion figure of 55% is, therefore, considered the maximum possible, with a further 44% of people surveyed either refusing or not replying.

MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE (ii) ACCOUNT OF RESULTS

The main questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first dealt with parents' experience at the time when pupils had to choose their subjects for the following two years in school; the second, with the process of decision-making in the final year of statutory education; and the third with the process of parental involvement with, finally, some general points asking the parents for views regarding the situation in which their children were.

When looking at the replies, it is necessary to remember that the first part of the questionnaire dealt with a period which had taken place two years earlier, while the remainder dealt with the stage through which the pupils were passing at the time the questionnaire was sent to the parents. It was anticipated that replies to the earlier part might have been less well completed.

Parental influence upon subject choice

Question 1 enquired about arrangements made for links between parents and schools. It would appear from the answers to the first part of the question that, in general, parents recalled being invited to take part in the process of subject choice.

Table 6 - Were you invited by the school to take part?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>
Yes	92.8	94.7	81.2	92.3	73.6	59.0
No	4.7	2.6	18.7	7.6	26.3	40.9
No answer	2.3	2.6	-	-	-	-
Number	42	38	32	26	19	22

There is no indication as to the reason for differences in response. It is possible that some parents took the phrase 'take part' as meaning some



specific participation and, having found that, in the main there was little real discussion as shown by answers to Question 3, replied "No" to the suggestion of participation.

In the second part, there is a relatively high "no" from parents of both boys and girls at Redditch and from girls at Evesham. If parents had not attended sessions in school they would not have received information, as most of this is verbal, and there is an expected link between the incidence of answers to parts 2 and 4 of the question in the case of all parents in Redditch and of parents of girls at Evesham.

Table 7 - Were you given any information as to how subjects could be chosen?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>
Yes	88.0	78.9	90.6	92.3	73.6	40.9
No	7.1	21.0	9.3	3.8	26.3	54.4
No answer	4.7	-	-	3.8	-	4.5

To establish whether information was solely by letter or whether particular events were held in school, the third part of the question was asked.

Table 8 - Was anything arranged at school for parents to learn about future work at this stage.

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>
Yes	92.8	78.9	87.5	88.4	84.2	77.2
No	7.1	18.4	12.5	11.5	15.7	13.6
No answer	-	2.6	-	-	-	9.0

The emphasis at this stage in school is upon educational choice.

Occupational choice is avoided; very often because of a fear that pupils will choose subjects on the basis of a career in which they are then interested, but in which they might well lose interest as they grow older.

School subjects should not be chosen solely on occupational, rather than educational, grounds. If pupils choose a broad range of subjects then later on they are free to select a career without fear of having an incompatible set of qualifications and so again there is good reason to look at subjects to choose a subject which will extend the mind in different areas of learning.

When the third and fourth parts of the question were put in, it was information about future careers which was in mind. Nothing had been arranged at any of the three schools other than optional attendance at Careers Conventions to talk about careers, yet there is a high affirmative answer. It could be that respondents interpreted 'future work' as Careers Conventions or similar events, or as meaning future examinations, which is, of course, future work, albeit school work. It may be that parents, aware of the significance of school subjects to job choice, looked upon the occasions to discuss subject choice as having a bearing upon careers choice, even though this was not explicitly mentioned. This appears to be supported by the high proportion of people answering in question 5, that they thought of 'future careers'. The corollary of this is that schools should ignore the pretence of avoiding consideration of future careers, and openly help parents and pupils relate education and occupational choice at this stage.

The following table confirms the close interest which parents have in receiving any advice offered by attending parents evenings.

Table 9 - Did you attend any sessions arranged at school?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>
Yes	92.8	76.3	87.5	84.6	68.4	86.3
No	7.1	10.5	6.2	7.6	15.7	-
No answer	-	13.1	6.2	7.6	15.7	13.6



Question 2 aimed to discover which subjects parents considered important for their children. The list was comprised from looking at subjects offered in schools in general, and not necessarily only those at the three schools. This was done in order to get parents to think about subjects in a way that was not particularised by any suggestion that they should be thinking only of their child. Deliberately the subjects listed omitted any with non-descriptive titles, for example, 'Environmental Science', which can mean an amalgamation of different subjects in different schools, or 'Humanities', which has similar difficulties in definition, 'Nuffield Science' or 'New Mathematics', which parents may not understand. It was hoped thereby that parents would answer the question themselves and not have to refer to their child as interpreter, and so the answers could be more truly those of the parent. It was hoped, also, that from this question it would be possible to lead to suggestions of action which they, as parents, might try to take, if subjects which they considered important were not available in school, or recommended by staff for their child to follow.

In answering the question, many parents seemed simply to list the total list of subjects their child thought about, rather than the subjects they might believe to be of significant importance. Only one parent replied that their list, in fact, comprised all the subjects taken, and this respondent then gave an order to the choice as English, Mathematics, Religious Knowledge, Biology, Geography, History, Technical Drawing, Home Economics, Physics - an interesting balance for a girl.

Of those who answered the question the number of subjects marked was as follows:

<u>No. of subjects</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>No. of subjects</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
1	1	-	9	2	3
2	18	8	10	4	3
3	14	19	11	1	1
4	12	13	12	1	-
5	9	8	13	2	-
6	9	6	14	-	-
7	10	7	15	1	-
8	7	5			

Table 10 Subjects marked as important by parents

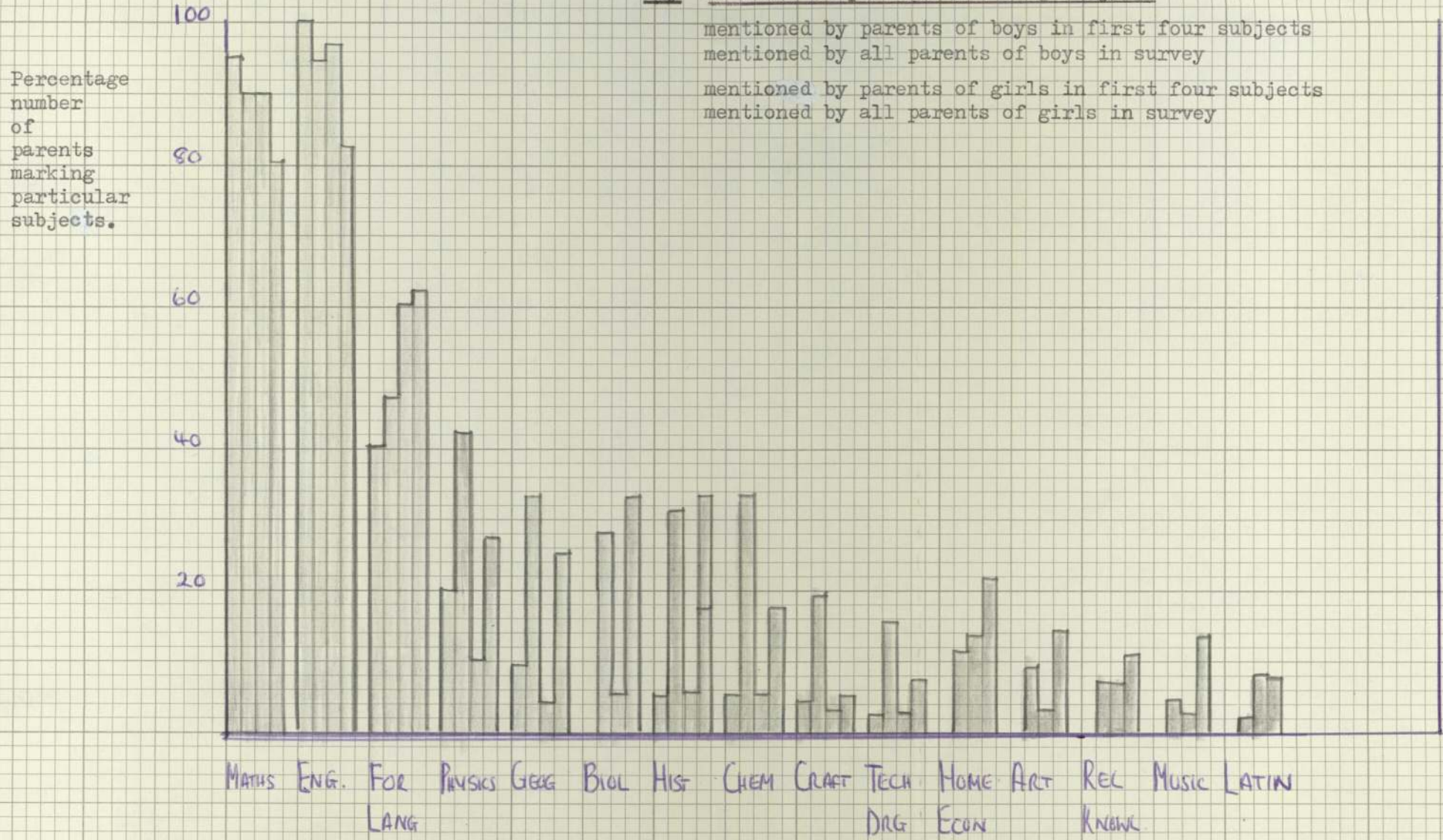
Key In order of position for each subjects

mentioned by parents of boys in first four subjects

mentioned by all parents of boys in survey

mentioned by parents of girls in first four subjects

mentioned by all parents of girls in survey





The normal number of subjects to be taken would be 7, possibly 9 at Evesham.

The order of importance is of interest. It appeared on looking at the replies that to take the first four mentioned could be an indication of real preference, particularly of those who had given thought to their answer. Almost 50% of respondents mentioned up to four subjects; it is to be expected that these represented importance and some degree of thought in selection. Table 10 indicates the percentage of parental interest in subjects; the figure for all parents and the percentage for those who marked four subjects or less as important.

The paramount importance of Maths and English is clear, and the concern for a foreign language is interesting. The figures may be compared with those of the Schools Council (p.22) although the different range of pupils must be borne in mind. The Schools Council survey was among those who anticipated leaving school at the statutory leaving date, and the choices contained an emphasis on practical skills like typing, domestic science, craftwork; this survey was of both early leavers and pupils remaining in school, and here subjects with a possible vocational bias do not appear any more important than less utilitarian subjects.

In a sense this narrowness of response is of concern as there seems little support for most of the subjects schools offer. The concern is to educationalists seeking to provide a broad education, but also to employers, especially in the manufacturing fields, who want to see more emphasis on scientific and technical subjects in secondary education.

Inevitably parents were thinking of their own child when answering the question. Several parents, in answer to questions, said they could not hope to press their child into choices the child did not want. Parents may have thought of this, and may have decided it was necessary to insist on basic subjects like mathematics and English, and allow these to be the foundations on which other

subjects, which could use these basic skills, could be built.

Two final points may be made. The considerable drop of interest in religious knowledge as compared with the Schools Council Survey. Secondly, the complete omission from the boys in the '4 only' group of interest in aesthetic subjects like art and music, which also get a low place in the order for girls.

Moving on to possible action, the first part of Question 3 asked what parents would do if subjects they preferred were not suggested by school staff for their children. If parents had strong views regarding actual subjects then it is necessary to know what action they thought was open to them should their preference be ignored or not available in school. The most frequently mentioned action would be to talk to the Head, subject and form teachers to find out why this was so. Some parents mentioned they had marked as important those subjects which they knew would be offered so that there was, in fact, little prospect of conflict. However, certain practical steps were thought upon, some parents mentioned more than one action.

Table 11 - What would you do if subjects you thought important were not suggested by the school?

<u>Action</u>	<u>Evesham</u>	<u>Knowle</u>	<u>Redditch</u>
Talk to school staff	43	29	19
Private tuition	1	4	-
Change schools	5	1	3
Complain to LEA	-	3	-
Raise at parents meetings	1	2	3
Try to get other parents to press HM	1	1	-
Talk to child	-	1	-
Ask for extra lessons	1	-	1
Accept provision	2	3	1
Nothing	8	7	4
No reply	-	-	-
Number of people replying	60	45	31



A few parents mentioned talking to their child<sup>ren</sup> to persuade them to ask for subjects not suggested by the school. Few, in fact, said they would complain, although among the many who would talk to school staff were some who would do so to question the basis of the school's advice. There were also parents who said they spoke to school staff with a view to asking for certain subjects.

Two groups which are of interest are the group who said they would accept suggestions and the group who would do nothing at all. This latter group offered expressions like "nothing, things would not alter anyway"; "from experience of our neighbours, nothing could be gained from seeing the Headmaster"; "we had enrolled him for an evening class which was stopped by the Headmaster"; "in our experience there would be little we could do if the bureaucracy decided they were not to be available (apart from private tuition or a public campaign)"; "one learns about the school before the child starts to attend". On the other hand, some would do nothing because the question did not arise in their case, or they felt there to be no choice anyway. Most would appear to accept the situation, after discussion, but to some "Administrative convenience", mentioned in one reply, could be the reason underlining other replies. Only one or two comments show appreciation that the "administrative convenience" could, in fact, relate to staffing provision in school, and that options offered had to reflect anticipated demand.

Overall, there were 38 references to action parents felt they would take. Interestingly, few would look to other parents for support, perhaps because parents do not know other parents could have similar questions to raise. They may not think that parents meetings are necessarily occasions when parents may put forward views, almost certainly there would be a lack of any organised group feeling with each parent responding to the school individually, rather than through any attempt at joint action. The critical comments recorded would seem to suggest that parents did not see they could, even if there was sufficient demand, make any changes. The assumption is that subjects offered

are those suitable for children; it is questionable whether parents really appreciate the complexity of matching demand and resource within staff of a school. Perhaps some clearer information about this would help parents understand the 'market' in which they are in.

When asked what action people would take if subjects they considered less important were suggested, the following points were mentioned:

Table 12 - What would you do if subjects you did not think important were suggested by the school?

<u>Action</u>	<u>Evesham</u>	<u>Knowle</u>	<u>Redditch</u>
Suggest don't take	1	3	-
Try and drop	-	4	-
Started evening class	-	1	-
Raise at parents meeting	-	1	-
Complain and hope to change	6	-	7
Talk about change	29	-	6
Relate to future plans	3	1	1
Number of people replying	39	10	14

Three people thought no subjects were less important to take. From other replies came comments "find out more about the subjects to see if would be of any benefit"; "see how full the timetable was"; "act only if under situation of an excessive work load". A preference for a good academic course was mentioned by one or two respondents; no specific subjects were mentioned by anyone other than one parent who thought "all unnecessary".

Again there was a feeling of impotence, "? do anything, subjects are arranged for pupils" was one reply. This inability, as with the issue of what might be termed favoured subjects, possibly reflects the lack of choice people have. This is not a new feature in the areas and is occasioned by the fact that for children attending comprehensive schools serving geographical areas there are



no alternative schools. Although some parents may talk of transferring to other schools, this is only possible if they can afford private education.

Quite a high proportion would try and change provision, 43.75% in Evesham, 31% in Knowle and 22.4% in Redditch; only one parent remarked "how can parents these days change a school's attitude". One parent passed the comment that they "believed most parents in ignorance let it pass". Perhaps this comment accurately reflects the views of many parents these days.

The large number who wrote that they would discuss the situation with school staffs did so sometimes with a view to expressing complaint or different viewpoints; most, however, wanted to learn the reasons for the suggestions with a view to acceptance.

Examination of the replies when related to parents occupational level shows no differences. People of each level appear throughout the replies, and there is no marked difference in either frequency of acceptance or intention to act between the levels. Only at Knowle did it appear that parents who thought of private tuition or complaining to the local Education Authority came from the top occupational group - it is in this area that the greatest provision for private education exists.

In Question 3, the ignorance of many parents about provision in school was mentioned; Question 4 aimed at quantifying this. In answer to this question, 78.2% of parents said they had no difficulty. Bearing in mind that the youngest parents will have left school within the last twenty years, and many much longer ago, this is of interest; there have been great changes in the content of many school subjects and this may reflect the need for the high incidence of discussion with children mentioned in Questions 3 and 8. The list of subjects offered in Question 2 contained a fairly traditional spread of subjects, excluding, for example, any reference to forms of maths, pottery, rural studies, of complementary studies, integrated science, all of which have emerged in recent years, and this, no doubt, helped. However, this would still not fully

explain the confidence in answering which one might have thought less strong over the content of subjects. There are some differences, as the following table shows.

Table 13 - Did you find it easy to know about subjects done in school?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>G</u>
Yes	92.8	92.1	81.2	69.2	47.3	59.0	79.5	76.7
No	7.1	7.8	18.7	23.0	47.3	31.8	19.3	18.6
No answer	-	-	-	7.6	5.2	9.0	1.0	4.6

It was not possible by using a postal questionnaire to ascertain whether the mother or father of a child had completed the form. At subsequent interviews it did not appear that either parents had been in the majority. Thus the disparity at Knowle cannot be put down to a view that fathers completed the form and did not feel confident about what they termed 'girls' subjects. In fact, the only such subject was Home Economics and the percentage of response (38.4) was not markedly different from the other schools (Evesham 31.1% and Redditch 45.4%).

The situation at Redditch is of concern. Almost half of the parents of boys and a third of parents of girls did not feel it easy to understand what schools did these days. This is a school which gives time and thought to involving parents, yet, apparently, with only partial success. Blame for this does not only attach itself to school, but the figures do show cause for concern as to how misunderstandings and barriers or apathy can be breached. In some interviews, parents said they would be happy for teachers to visit them at home to discuss school and this may suggest that working hours or younger children make it hard for such parents to go to school functions, or that the parent feels more sure on his own ground - he would almost certainly have more time to talk and listen at home than in the crowded circumstances of a parents evening at school. Active help outside the school would appear to be helpful in such an area.

Could there be a link between understanding and occupational level? Standards of entry to work have, in many jobs, changed in the past two decades. Many of



today's parents are in jobs which can now only be entered with some academic qualification, which they themselves may not have needed; they will, however, be in a position to see their necessity, both as means of entry to the work and for making progress within it. In terms of Ashton's categories of careerless, short term and extended careers (page 32) parents in the schools were spread thus:

Table 14 - Occupational level of parents of pupils

<u>Occupational Level</u>	<u>Evesham</u>	<u>Knowle</u>	<u>Redditch</u>
1	15	5	16
2	26	16	11
3	38	34	10
Not Working	1	2	4

From this, it seems the pattern of work in Knowle and Evesham is from the two higher groups of jobs, that is, those with some degree of planned training and advancement. This experience in work, where there may be some degree of use of subjects done in school, could be helpful in enabling them to understand the nature of subjects offered in school. In terms of attendance at school functions, parents in higher level jobs may also find it easier to visit school, talk to teachers and so benefit from opportunities to learn about their child's schooling.

In Redditch, most fathers are in the 'careerless' group, which may give little opportunity to observe jobs using subjects, a factor which could make it more difficult to appreciate relevance and value of subjects. Insofar as occupational level may be an indication of length of schooling of the parents, another difference between parents at Redditch and the other schools may be that they did not go as far in full-time education as parents from the other two schools.

Table 15 - Occupational level and ease in knowing about school subjects

Was it easy to know about school subjects?

FOL	YES				NO				N/A
	E	K	R	Total	E	K	R	Total	
0	1	2	3	6	0	1	1	2	0
1	14	3	8	25	1	2	6	9	2
2	24	15	5	44	2	1	5	8	1
3	35	24	6	65	3	8	4	15	2

NB: FOL = Father's occupational level

The majority of parents found it easy to know about school subjects. From this one may hope that they could constructively assist their children in their choice. There are differences in responses from parents at the three schools. At Evesham few expressed any difficulty. At Redditch proportions are much different and replies from those in work were almost equally divided, but there does not seem ground here for arguing the abler parents were any better informed and therefore able to help their offspring than the parents in lower level jobs. The figures at Knowle are also interesting, for here the lowest group is almost equally divided; the top group has as many as one third expressing difficulty.

Reasons for the differences at Redditch and Knowle may, at the former, be the lack of contact parents have at this school while, at the latter, it might be an expression of dissatisfaction with the educational opportunities. This was the area with the most expression of interest in taking the child away to private education if parents were not satisfied with the courses offered. The difficulties may, in fact, really be a general dislike of the comprehensive education offered.

It appears that one cannot say that there are differences due to occupational level. This result is similar to that about interest in school subjects - parents in each occupational group had almost identical order of preference for subjects.

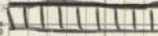
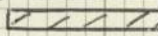
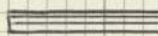
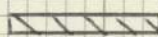
#### Basis for subject choice

When choice of subjects is discussed by teachers and careers officers in schools, they stress the need to find a balance of interest when looking at the child's



Table 17 What parents thought their children considered when choosing subjects.

Key. In order per item

- all parents 
- Evesham 
- Knowle 
- Redditch 

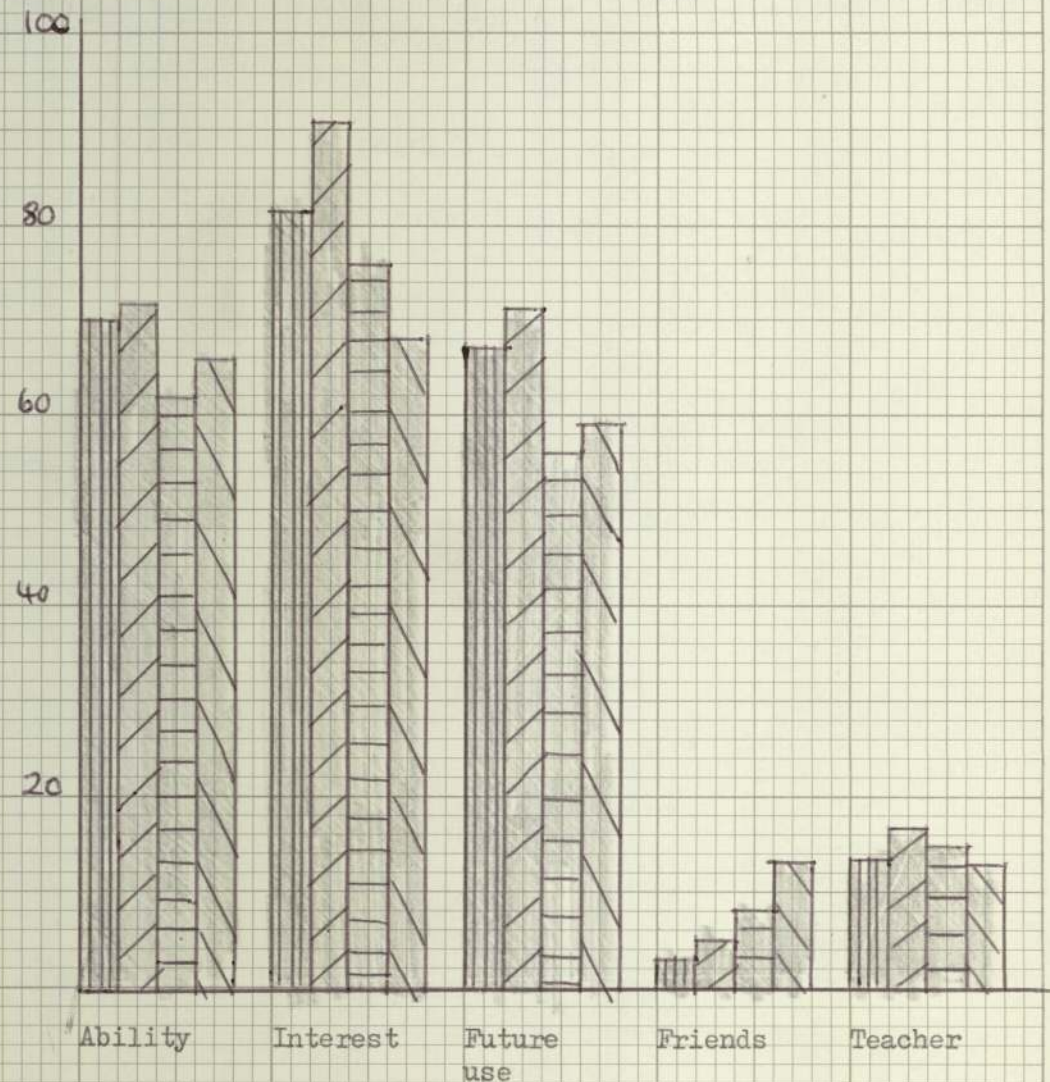
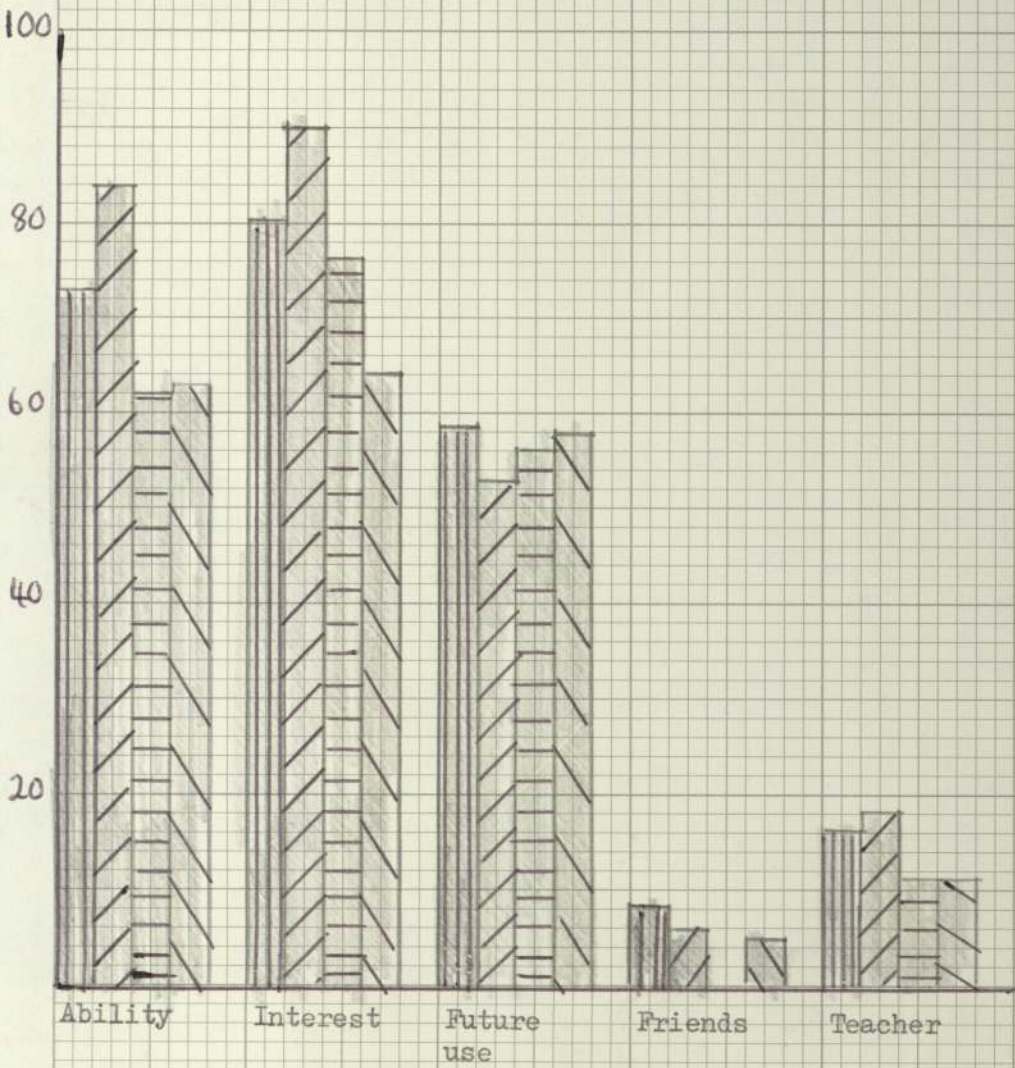
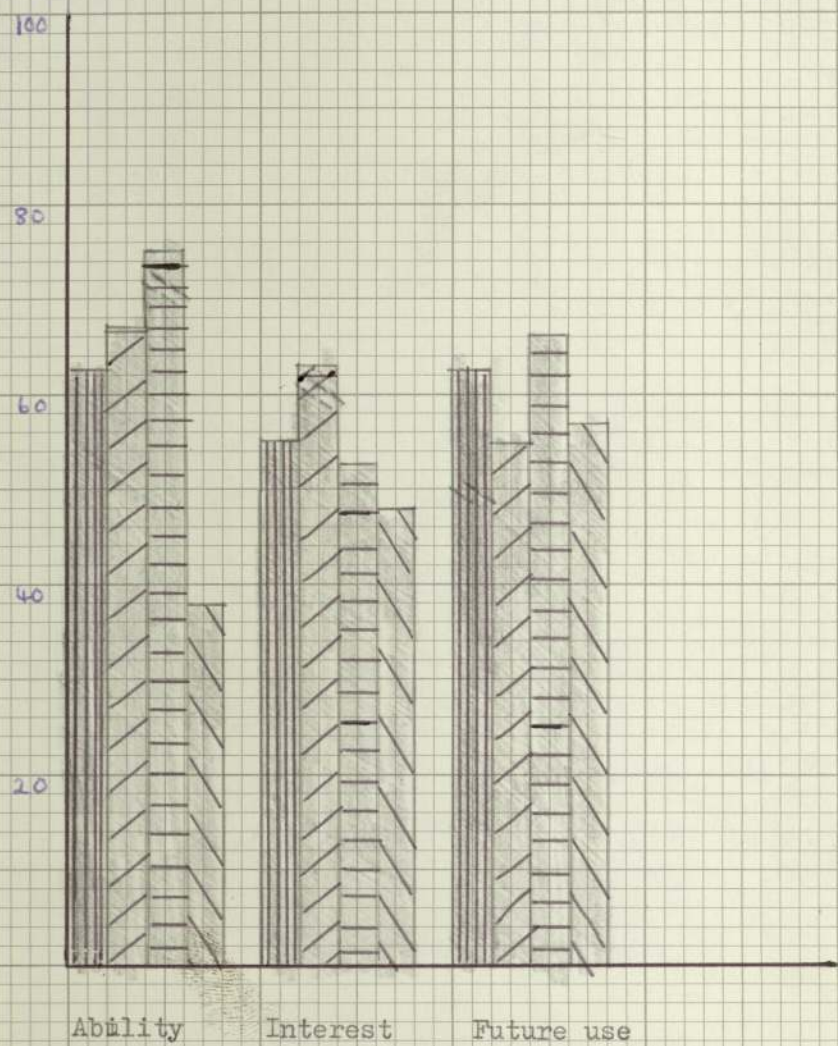
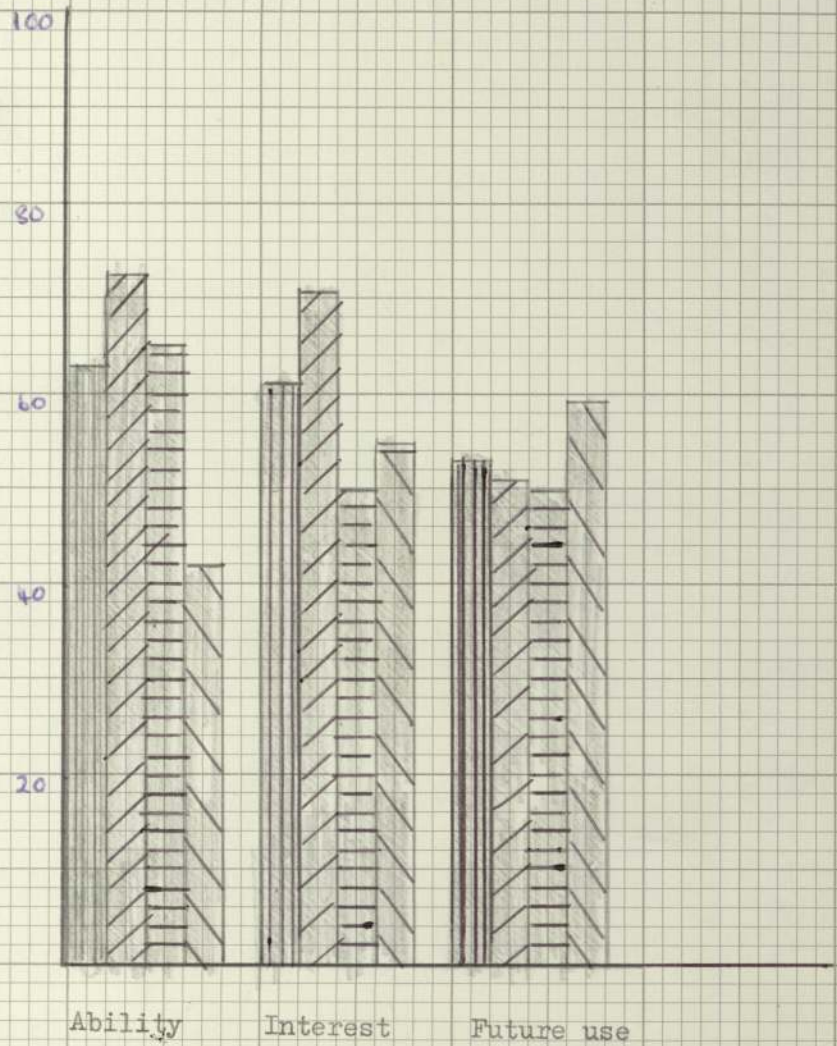




Table 16 What parents thought about when choosing subjects

Key. in order per item

all parents  
 Evesham  
 Knowle  
 Redditch



1005



choices. Pupils are influenced by the choices made by friends or by the person teaching a subject, and frequently may choose subjects on these grounds rather than a careful consideration of whether they have sufficient interest and ability to cope with the subject. It is uncommon for school staff to prepare for choice by giving much information about the content of courses to be started; although this could be helpful for someone embarking on a new subject. However, teachers do encourage pupils to think how long they have been interested in a subject and often pupils ask about the use in work of a combination of subjects. Advice has to include warnings about the too close matching of subjects to careers at a time when career-thinking is generally at a very fluid state. Pupils and parents share interest in future use and may try to plan a timetable upon the basis of an interest at the present time. There can still be implications for future careers in the choice of subjects. Although, in general, in schools today there is a less divisive choice than in the past when a pupil could be set up for an arts or science based course, and not able to change, the linking of subjects or the connection between secondary school and further education need to be borne in mind.

The pattern of reasons for preference for subjects in parents' minds appears to support the picture of less concern about use of subjects among the Evesham 'grammar school' group than among the other two groups; for them entry into work was likely to be postponed for some years. For the group at Redditch earlier entry to work would be anticipated and the rising interest towards a peak in concern about future use of subjects is clear in the Redditch replies. But it is not only among Redditch parents that future use of subjects appears important; there is a significant rise also among parents of boys in Knowle.

Emphasis upon the future use of subjects may indicate concern about employment at Redditch. It should also be linked to the replies shown in Table 13. It is among the Redditch parents that the greatest difficulty about knowing or understanding school subjects is mentioned, and it is perhaps to be expected that ability and interest will receive a low rating. Later, in answer to Question 7,



both points receive a higher rating when parents are asked what they thought their children wondered about.

Many replies included comments on factors in parents' minds when looking at this subject. To some it was impossible to separate issues; they either marked them all, or none at all. The difficulty in separation was felt to be because ability and interest were considered linked; either factor encouraged the other and neither completely predominated. One parent regretted having to have made a choice between two subjects at both of which their child was capable.

Decisions like this were said to be inevitable by some parents who seemed to show rather more understanding of the compromise that they, the child and teachers had to make at times. This compromise, sometimes called balance, was one of interest and ability, but also of availability of teaching staff. The value of a general education was recognised by some parents and the need to have a range of subjects to help the development of thinking and the child's mind was mentioned by one writer - this being more important at this stage than future consideration.

It was clear from the replies that parents did really only answer with their child in mind and not, as hoped, in a more general way, about value of subjects. Thus, for example, one reply was said to describe an 'obstinate girl who was not very likely to fall in with ideas if hers were different'. Not all pupils were described as so determined, although several parents did write similar remarks about the difficulty of trying to pressurise a teenager these days!

In Question 7, parents were asked what they thought their children had considered when choosing subjects and there are some interesting contrasts with their parents' criteria. It is, of course, not really possible to say how far the parents, in completing the form, had talked with the child and the extent to which that dictated the reply. Significant differences would appear in the differing views about the importance of interest in subjects. Perhaps parents feel the child would be more subjective than them and so put greater weight upon interest; perhaps they thought they would be less able to see their own standard



and importance of this point when making up their mind. Comparatively few thought friends and teachers were strong influences. One would expect more discussion than this reply would suggest. It could be that they knew that pupils talked about choice, but did so at home in a frame of mind which suggested the matter was a foregone conclusion and therefore not feel an influence of friends taking the same subjects. It could be that parents, answering this question without reference to their child to find out what process they did get involved in and with whom, were guessing at what they thought their child considered.

For the three points common to both questions the pattern of replies is quite similar. Interestingly, the parents record higher scores than their children on almost all items, including a greater interest in future use of subject by both girls and boys at Evesham. Perhaps parents at this school worry less because they appreciate the 'grammar school' advantage their children have in terms of academic achievement likely to be obtained. On the other hand, their children may be more worried about their future; they may also be better informed about current demands for entry to certain jobs and may be more realistic in their thinking - it can be that professional parents feel satisfied that if qualifications are obtained security will be assured, pupils may worry more about the fact that this is not necessarily so. If this is the case, the question is again asked what is done to acquaint children with sound information at this stage? When asked if parents thought there were other considerations, some parents made other replies, for example, "avoidance of a teacher", "need to compete with siblings"; "rigidity of groupings in option procedure"; "prospect of passing examinations"; "interest and ability are closely related in my children". The inter-relationship of ability and interest in choice could reflect the quality of the teacher - "a good and sympathetic teacher can get a great deal out of her pupil, a bad one cause bright children to become bored and fail that subject"; "my children were aware of the ability of the teacher to control the class, this was a factor

influencing how much a willing and interested pupil can learn". This seems at variance with the earlier comment that, in answering Question 7, parents did not rate teacher influence very high. Some thought having to make choice was too early in a child's career, and that decisions should be as flexible as possible. It is for this reason a range of subjects is arranged for pupils so that, in general, no early bias is created which might make future plans hard to realise.

Whether there are differences of view, or not, parents are prepared to let their children know their views, as is clear from the following table which comes from answers to Question 6.

Table 18 - Parents who told children their views about subjects

	<u>Overall</u>		<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	81.5	89.5	88.0	86.8	84.3	92.3	73.6	90.9
No	8.6	6.9	7.1	7.8	6.2	7.6	15.7	4.5
No answer	7.5	3.4	4.7	5.2	9.3	-	10.5	4.5

Such a high response is expected after the earlier emphasis upon discussion in the home. There is no indication of a reason for the smaller number replying "yes" among boys in Redditch - other than the one already mentioned of less knowledge among Redditch parents. The figures do point to another issue. This school is one with a high proportion of 'at risk' children (perhaps as many as a quarter of the school population). As the survey shows, it also has a low proportion of parents in occupations other than 'careerless'. There is also a lower attendance at parents meetings than at the other two schools and a higher leaving rate among pupils of all ability.

It is likely that where pupils have the ability to go further in education than their parents may envisage or have experienced, they may need even more information to help with decisions about courses or jobs. How much do teachers know of the home environment where decisions are made and how far



can they influence this? In one interview the parents said strongly they would be far happier talking to a teacher at home rather than on school territory. Few teachers have the time to do this; perhaps in a school of this size and type more time needs to be given to out of school contacts.

Question 8 asked "What would you have done if you had disagreed with the choice your child made?" Only two parents in the survey said that no choice was offered; a further eleven did not answer the question. Of the 166 who did reply a variety of issues was mentioned. Again there was an emphasis upon discussion to state one's views and find out reasons for their child's choice. Some items mentioned related to activity with the child, some to activities with the school. A few parents stated they would carry out particular action.

Table 19 - Action taken by parents who disagreed with their child's choice

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
<u>Action with advisors</u>						
Discuss with teacher	9	4	6	2	-	-
Get any guidance possible, eg: from careers officer	1	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Action with child</u>						
Talk to child and teacher	11	12	9	6	3	3
Nothing, it is child's choice	2	8	3	3	2	4
Get reason, try and change but leave final decision to child	15	12	8	9	10	3
Impose will if necessary	3	1	1	-	-	1
<u>Other action</u>						
Choice determined by exam results	1	-	-	-	-	-
Ensure essentials taken	1	2	-	-	-	-
Talk about future use	1	-	3	-	1	3
Draw on knowledge and experience	-	-	-	-	2	2
	44	39	30	20	18	16

It appears almost all parents felt it was adequate time for decisions, only two, in fact, suggesting it was determined by exam or headmaster. Few, however, suggest what they would consider if they had disagreed. Answers suggest that much of the preference for discussion with child and teaching staff was simply to be fully sure about the options offered and to learn why pupils were making their choices in this way, and what advice the teaching staff would have to give.

Considering that in answers to Questions 5 and 7 the future use of subjects received a high number of mentions, the low number of references to this is interesting. It might have been expected that more people would have referred to particular areas of work and used this as a reason for expression of concern. However, the question asked what would you do, and this could account for this absence. Only a few people said they would refer to their knowledge of work as a point their child should bear in mind, and, as the grounds for any disagreement. Could this be because to many people education is compartmentalised as a 'school' activity, and not readily seen as directly linked to work outside school? Or could it be another mark of the determination by parents not to impose their own ideas? Many would anticipate wanting to have changed the choices made, but few would go so far as to impose their wishes. Indeed, a few wrote of the expected failure of such action - "To impose our wish would cause resentment"; "if not interested would not do well even if we insisted", were two replies received. Two parents wrote that they decided before the choice was made not to express any disagreement because they believed the child's choice to be paramount.

#### Parental influence on occupational choice

Question 9 starts the second stage of the enquiry. In the fifth year of secondary education pupils make decisions about leaving school or not. Of the pupils whose parents completed the schedule, 34 boys and 27 girls left school to enter work, the remainder continued their education at school or a college of further education. When making the decision to leave school



and the decision about which type of work to enter, it is possible that pupils consider the activities of jobs and try to envisage what will be involved. This is generally done with little or no experience of work at all. Some may have had part-time jobs, some may have done short periods of work experience outside school as part of their curriculum, and both give opportunities to see what is involved in jobs.

Parents with working experience will readily know what is involved in their own jobs, not just the tasks but aspects of working life like promotion, or getting on with other employees which can make life in a job acceptable. This question asked parents what, from their experience, they thought their child should consider and perhaps find out about from careers information or in an interview before making up his or her mind. The list of items offered derived from comments received at interviews, examination of two work quizzes - Taylor and Minnesota (see Appendix) - in which respondents were asked what they would look for in a job, and a similar exercise in the Employment Service Agency in 1975/76 which was used to try and build up a profile of an applicant for work.

Unfortunately, there was an undiscovered typing error and items 1 and 10 were the same in that both items asked about abilities. This was realised after the questionnaire had been sent out, and was corrected for those to whom a reminder was posted. In tabulating the answers, item 10 has been calculated on the basis of parts of answers received by those who received the amended schedule and increased in proportion to the total number of replies.

Table 20 - Order in which parents placed items a pupil should consider

	<u>Item</u>	<u>Position</u>					
		<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
		<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
1	A job which uses your abilities	2	1	1	1	2	1
2	Working conditions	=6	6	6	7	5	=5
3	Possibility of promotion	=3	5	5	6	6	=5
4	Length of training	11	9	7	=10	7	=10
5	Variety of tasks	=6	7	=8	=4	8	7
6	It is a job worth doing	=3	3	4	2	3	=2
7	May lead to responsibility for others	9	10	=8	=8	9	9
8	Important to the community	8	8	10	=8	=10	=10
9	You can leave the job behind when you go home	10	11	11	=10	=10	8
10	The job uses your interests	1	2	3	3	1	=2
11	The job can be learnt quickly	12	12	12	12	-	12
12	Long term demand for job	5	4	2	=4	4	=2

The high position given to abilities and interests repeats in another question the importance attached to these factors when parents thought about subject choice. Security through long term demand is also rated highly and is followed by hopes for promotion. Interestingly, the latter point might have been thought to have led to higher regard for length of training. However, training gets a fairly low response, particularly for girls. There is a contradiction here, for, as Question 24 shows, the type and length of training are mentioned as important factors creating differences between choice of work by boys and girls, so training would seem to be an issue considered by parents. In this question it would appear that length of training as a proportion of working life is not seen as so important as other factors when respondents were asked to compare job features. This apparent discrepancy encourages one to believe respondents dealt with the questionnaire in order of questions and did not



form an overall view and frame answers into a pattern. Finally, the seeming low regard for training may be explained by the fact that, in conversation with parents, it is apparent that training is an accepted issue as a part of the job. Yet the presence of a training programme in a job is an indication of possible promotion; the two go together in a career.

The similar items 6 and 8 show an interesting difference in response; it would appear many answered this as worth to the do-er. Item 8, taken from another questionnaire, may have suggested altruistic views for both that item and item 6. An engineer explained his reply by saying "putting on a wheel nut is not worth much, but it serves the community if put on properly, my wife's former job as a nurse is probably both". When school pupils talk about jobs they would like, "not doing the same thing all the time" is often repeated, here the concern for a variety of tasks appears low in the list - perhaps experience shows either it is rarely possible or it is in practice not so necessary.

A final general point is the similarity in order between girls and boys. This is shown in the following table:

Table 21 - Position of items for boys and girls overall

<u>Order</u>	<u>Item Number</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
1	1	1
2	10	10
3	6	6
4	12	12
5	3	3
6	2	5
7	5	2
8	11	8
9	4	7
10	7	4
11	8	9
12	9	11

There is, in fact, little difference between the sexes regarding points they should consider when choosing a career but simply a rearrangement of the order of some items.

Earlier, the concern for learning foreign languages had been noted as high; now only one reply mentions in an added note "getting a qualification which could be used abroad". This point might have appeared higher if more immigrants had been in the areas where the survey took place. It has been noted elsewhere that Asians think of qualifications which could be used outside this country, either because they plan to go back to Asia or because they feel barriers in this country and hope to move to other parts of the Commonwealth.

The question asked for further comments and replies contained much repetition, either because they did not understand the question fully and so repeated their answer, or that people wanted to emphasise their answer by writing it in their own way. Thus, for example, people who had written "demand for the job" its "interest" or "responsibility" rewrote these points in another fashion.

Many (29) made comments about 'being happy' in work or having 'job satisfaction' adding sometimes that this would be so if the job had challenge and contained 'interest' without necessarily defining what compounded such 'interest'. Job satisfaction seemed mainly to be a combination of enjoyment in work, using one's interests, having a future and suitable rewards. Thirteen people mentioned wages and the parents of three girls mentioned being able to return to the job after child-bearing. Being able to travel, mentioned frequently by pupils at school interviews, was raised only twice.

The situation of work appeared in three replies - that the job (for a girl) should be near home, or away from cities and within a healthy environment, or use a family connection to get a job. Two parents wrote of divine guidance in helping to know what was appropriate.



These additional comments were perhaps the real issue parents had in mind and could be taken as more significant than the items marked upon the list offered, especially the large number who recognised the importance of job satisfaction. The fact that a number of people repeated items in the list may suggest that the question could have been left open-ended without the suggestions. Having asked parents to mark items they thought important and add their own, the question then asked them to indicate which, from all these comments, they considered most important for pupils to consider:

Table 22 - The three items considered most important by parents

1	A job which uses your abilities	Boys and girls
2	It is a job worth doing	Boys and girls
3	Long term demand for the job	Boys
	The job uses your interests	Girls

One of the issues which gave rise to this work was the view that people in different levels of occupation had different views as to what features were important to consider in a job and which led to satisfaction in work. It will be seen from Table 23, which follows, that there are some such differences, thought, perhaps, not as many as was expected.

It is interesting to reflect that there are identical views (often criticised) held by many careers advisory staff.

Table 23 - The items considered most important by parents, divided by school and father's occupational level.

Item Number in Question 9

FOL	First			Second			Third		
	E	K	R	E	K	R	E	K	R
1	1	1	1	6	6	6	12	=10 &12	12
2	1	1	1	10	12	12	6	= 3 & 6	= 6 &10
3	1	=1 &3	1	=6 &10	=5 &6	6	3	=10 &12 = 8 & 2	2

Taking father's occupation as the guide, those in Group 1 careers believed that a job using your ability was the most important feature, at each school; they then chose items 6 and 12 - worth of the job and long term demand. It appears that interest and involvement in the job are important with security an underlying feature also.

Answers from Groups 2 and 3 job-holders gave the same first item as essential - a job using abilities. Thereafter, some differences emerge. Group 2 respondents gave long term demand as the second most important feature at two schools, while parents at Evesham referred to interest as second item; for the third item, this group all chose "a job worth doing" with equal value given to "possibility of promotion" at Knowle and to "interests" at Redditch. Having given the same first item, with equal concern given at Knowle to "promotion", Group 3 respondents then chose "a job worth doing" as second most important item, with Knowle also favouring "variety of tasks" and Evesham "interests". In third place "working conditions" appeared twice (Redditch and Knowle), "promotion" was mentioned at Evesham and Knowle, where equal value was given to four items altogether - interest, long term demand and importance to the community in addition to working conditions.

If, indeed, parents did reply drawing on their own working experience, the similarity of response is important to know. Naturally, replies do not necessarily reflect experience of being satisfied with one's own job. Some people may have referred to the importance of using your abilities because they were fully used themselves in their own case, and this was a cause for satisfaction; on the other hand, they may have marked this item because they felt frustrated in their own work and hoped their children would have more demand and use in their jobs.

It is sometimes thought by careers advisers that there are differences in aim and in appreciation of work by people in different job levels. This is only partly borne out here. There are some differences in views between Group 3 parents and the other two groups. At Knowle there is a wide range



of items amongst the first three - 8 of the 12 items appear. Because of this mixture of replies, the Knowle parents express concern about more items than either of the other two groups (8 against 5 at Evesham and Redditch).

The last point to make about the table is to point out the similarity of replies between schools. This confirms the views expressed were true of people in similar work levels in different areas.

The question had been included to try to discover what people thought should be borne in mind, and then to see if there was any different pattern of response between people in different occupational levels. This latter point has not found any difference to a marked degree, as Table 23 indicates.

If parents have views which derive from their own experience of work it is relevant to consider how they feel they can pass on these views to their children. Before looking at that, it is of interest to see if parents believe that their children who have not had working experience can see the importance of these factors. This is important for those engaged in careers advisory work to remember for two reasons. In the first place much careers work rests on the assumption of ignorance by pupils (no doubt true in academic subjects) and does not explore a pupil's own knowledge; rarely in advisory interviews does the advisor spend time trying to establish a pupil's awareness of jobs. Secondly, and this is perhaps a contradiction, advisors quite frequently assert that parents have a strong influence and pupils know nothing about work. It would be instructive and a practical way to involve parents if they spent more time learning from the parents what they thought their children knew.

Experience in observing interviews and in reading pupil's accounts of industrial visits or work experience suggests pupils rarely know very much about even a few jobs, let alone a range of jobs. If parents understood their child's ignorance maybe they would themselves say more. On the face of it the response is reassuring, but experience in careers advisory work does not support the answer entirely. Table 24 gives replies to the question which

asked if parents believed their children did have an appreciation of factors which they considered helped holding a job.

Table 24 - Do you think pupils without working experience are able to see the importance of these points?

	<u>YES</u>		<u>NO</u>		<u>NO ANSWER</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Evesham	50.0%	53.8%	45.2%	39.4%	4.0%	7.5%
Knowle	46.8	57.6	46.8	42.3	6.1	-
Redditch	57.8	54.5	36.8	40.9	4.5	4.1
Overall	50.5	54.6	44.0	40.6	5.0	4.4

However, the items used in Question 9 would be items often talked about in careers lessons; they tend to be stressed in interviews and some, like "the importance of long term demand", could reflect current concern over unemployment. Thus, although Question 9 was introduced as containing items deriving from parental experience in work, they are, <sup>also</sup> of course, items which are common views.

Secondly, if a "yes" answer reflects preparedness for work then it is reassuring to see the highest percentage in the school from which the greatest number would go into work on reaching school-leaving age. This is useful to note and could suggest that parents of leavers make more effort to talk about work at home, or that among leavers at the statutory leaving age there is less apprehension and ignorance than among other pupils. On the other hand, at the school at Evesham from which the lowest number go into work at 16, there is the highest proportion of pupils thought by their parents to be unaware of the significance of these items. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as with staying on they have more time to acquire knowledge. But it does suggest that

when the decision to continue education is taken few, who will go on into higher education courses involving training, have given thought to this item. This is important to note because courses beyond 16 (to A level or other more vocational courses) can influence the form of higher education a pupil may hope to enter.



Question 11 asked "How can parents help their children learn about working life?" The question was left open to discover any practical activities parents thought open to them to arrange to help their children understand about careers. Altogether, the parents of 81 boys and 77 girls wrote a brief note here. Some of the replies were, in fact, covered by the suggestions about activities in the second part of the question, namely, parents said they would talk about their work or take their child to see their work.

Some parents wrote that one could not really help one's child in this way; a child could only learn from its own experience, or parents could only talk in general terms as jobs even with the same titles differed between firms. A few parents wrote that children will not take any notice of what parents tell them. However, these parents were few in number (8) and their replies went on to talk about the pupil's need for experience and the difficulty of getting children to heed their parents.

Obtaining experience or an appreciation of work is very important. Parents wrote of talking about their own jobs, the pitfalls or lost opportunities or activities which the job included. Some suggested encouraging their child to read careers literature, watch TV documentaries in which people at work would be seen or discuss current issues so that a child understood, for example, arguments in an industrial dispute. Replies showed the need to help understand the relationships in work, tolerance of others and taking of responsibility. Some parents said that they would arrange for their child to talk to people in a variety of jobs. A few parents would encourage and help their child to go to careers conventions or other activities in school.

The value of personal experience in work was underlined by reference to getting work experience and to an interestingly high regard for the value of part-time jobs. This last point arose mainly at Evesham as the figures below indicate. Part-time work (said by some to be hard to get) would help a child learn the responsibilities for money, getting on with other people, and discipline of hours at work. Some parents carried this view into the homes, suggesting

organised help on the house to help implant the work ethic. For example, one reply mentioned "work programmes in the home, preferably avoiding self-pacing". The use of part-time jobs to school pupils is generally overlooked; if an advisor in an interview asks about this, it is usually in a tone of only passing interest. Yet if pupils can learn about working life from school-based work experience, then surely they can also do so from part-time work which will normally be longer in duration and where, instead of following a special scheme, they are involved in everyday events of a job. For example, seeing how customers are handled or how a team of workers is organised. The following table lists the practical activities parents might investigate.

Table 25 - Suggested activities parents might try

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Visits to firms	4	5	1	3	2	2
Part-time work	12	7	8	3	1	3
Getting careers literature	-	3	1	-	-	-
Media	1	1	-	-	-	-
Interviewing people in work	-	1	1	1	-	-
Helping at home	1	2	2	3	-	-
Take to Careers events	1	-	-	-	-	2

When asked if they had talked about their own job parents replied as follows:

Table 26 - Did you talk about your own job with your child?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
<u>Father's Job</u> - Yes	41	32	29	25	18	15
No	-	4	2	-	1	4
No answer	1	2	1	1	-	3
<u>Mother's job</u> - Yes	26	26	22	18	14	20
No	1	2	2	-	2	-
No answer	15	10	8	8	3	1



The nature of discussion at home would seem, in part, to outline what parents do at work, but more particularly talk about relationships at work and such items as appeared in Question 9. Some people mentioned wanting their child to avoid the frustration which they had experienced, while others recalled their longer experience in employment on which they could draw to help their child understand the kind of career development that might occur in particular jobs.

Opportunities to see what parents may do may not be easy to gain, but, in fact, the majority of parents said they would like their child to visit their work and get a picture of what they did and where they did it. There are obvious differences between replies from mothers and fathers, because fewer mothers were working; these differences are clear in replies in the next two tables.

Table 27 - Could you show your job to your child?

<u>Father's Job</u>	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	35	26	23	20	13	13
No	6	6	6	4	5	6
No answer	1	6	3	2	1	3
<hr/>						
<u>Mother's Job</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	14	25	16	15	6	15
No	9	3	7	2	9	5
No answer	19	10	9	9	4	2

Table 28 - Would you like your child to do your job?

<u>Father's Job</u>	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	7	9	16	8	5	5
No	26	17	14	12	14	13
No answer	9	12	1	6	-	4

Table 29 continued

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
<u>Mother's Job</u>						
Yes	3	6	-	10	1	4
No	19	12	19	8	15	14
No answer	20	20	12	8	3	4

The table regarding seeing parents' work would suggest no difficulties about this. If requested, it seems it can be put into effect. It is apparent that a rather lesser number of boys would be given the opportunity of seeing their mother's job, or perhaps see the point of doing so as an aid to learning about work. This does not appear quite the same position as for girls. Naturally, with more non-working mothers than fathers, there will be a difference. However, when working mothers are considered less are thought of by boys as a possible model for work than are fathers by girls.

Turning to the question of whether parents would like their child to do the same job as themselves, it is clear that this is not the case. This may represent a frustration among parents with their own work; it could simply mean that there are now more opportunities and parents want them to spread their wings wider. It is often declared that following generations have improved opportunities and conditions. It may not really be the case with the pupils in this survey, many of whose parents left school in the 1950's when the country was moving to a period of expansion. These children, leaving from 1976 onwards do so in a period of restricted opportunity and lack of jobs.

Only one reply to Question 12 (from the parents of a girl in Redditch) said that they did not talk to their child about the latter's future. Six did not reply to the question, but in all the other replies parents said they did talk to their child about future plans.



When asked in the second part of the question whether they told their child what they would like him or her to take up, the majority said they would not; only at Redditch were answers evenly balanced.

Table 29 - Did you tell your child what you would like him/her to do?

	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>		<u>No Answer</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Evesham	35.1%	18.4	59.5	78.9	4.7	2.6
Knowle	28.1	38.4	65.6	53.8	6.2	7.6
Redditch	47.3	50.0	47.3	50.0	5.2	-

It is possible that parents at Evesham and Knowle knew there was a greater likelihood that their child would remain in full-time education. Certainly at Evesham there would be a greater assumption of remaining in the sixth form of what would still be to most families an 11-18 grammar school, and thus less urgency about mentioning specific jobs. Although the first part of the question was open, the second part, containing the phrase "what you would like him/her to do", suggested an actual situation - a job or a course. Many, whose children intended to remain in full-time education, may only have talked in more general terms about the future.

As support for the suggestion that people did not talk about specific jobs if they thought there was a likelihood of remaining in education, it is interesting to see if there is a connection between staying on or leaving school and incidence of parents telling their child what they would like them to do. This can only be done by comparing answers to the second part of the question with the destination of the pupil. It was not possible to get details of the destination of all pupils - this was checked in October 1976 after each careers office had attempted to ascertain where school leavers had gone. This procedure is done through enquiries to pupils, firms, colleges and schools, but not all pupils reply. In the past it has been possible to be sure of virtually all entrants for first employment or courses, the former

through the issue of N.I. cards; this is no longer possible, due to changes in the procedure of issuing all numbers.

When looking at whether parents told their child what they would like them to do, and the destination of the child, the following answers emerged:

Table 30 - Destination of child whose parents did declare a choice

	<u>Further Education</u>		<u>Work</u>		<u>Not Clear or Unknown</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Evesham (17 boys 8 girls)	15	6	2	1	-	1
Knowle (9 boys 10 girls)	4	7	4	2	1	1
Redditch(10 boys 12 girls)	3	3	6	9	1	-

Table 30a - Destination of child whose parents did not declare a choice

	<u>Further Education</u>		<u>Work</u>		<u>Not Clear or Unknown</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Evesham (25 boys 30 girls)	21	24	3	4	1	2
Knowle (23 boys 16 girls)	12	12	11	4	-	-
Redditch(9 boys 10 girls)	1	3	8	7	-	-

Table 31 - Destination of all boys and girls

<u>Destination</u>	<u>Did Tell</u>	<u>Did Not Tell</u>
Entrance to FE - 55 boys	22 (40%)	33 (60%)
55 girls	16 (29%)	39 (70.9%)
Entrance to work-34 boys	12 (35.2%)	22 (64.7%)
27 girls	12 (44.4%)	15 (55.5%)

It is interesting that in both groups more parents did not tell their child



their wishes. But there are differences between parents of boys and girls; there appears less attempt at direction amongst parents of girls, perhaps, because a greater number of the parents, as shown in Question 24, see a boy's career as more important than that of a girl.

Question 13 was left by the greatest number of respondents. When this was checked against the destination of the child, almost all of the pupils whose parents did not reply were found to have continued their education full-time and not taken up employment, and the differences between the schools can, therefore, be attributed to this fact. The smallest number of those not replying came from the school in which the greatest number went on to employment. Here they would have seen the question as more relevant to them than would parents in the other schools.

Table 32 - If he/she has entered work, did you try to help find him/her job?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	19.0	21.0	50.0	23.0	47.3	54.5
No	16.6	10.5	9.3	23.0	36.8	22.7
No answer	64.2	68.4	40.6	53.8	15.7	22.7

Looking at those who did help their child to find work, it is of interest to see if there is any link with the occupational level of the parents. Some research has shown a greater influence of the father in the family, and as many of the mothers in the survey were not in full time employment, the father's occupation has been taken as the base point for this item. In terms of the scale borrowed from D N Ashton the father's occupational level appears as follows in the next table.

Table 33 - Occupational level of fathers and help in finding the child a job

<u>FOL</u>	Fathers who helped their		Fathers who did not help their	
	<u>Son</u>	<u>Daughter</u>	<u>Son</u>	<u>Daughter</u>
0	9.1	15.3	5.9	-
1	15.1	23.0	47.0	6.6
2	33.0	30.7	23.5	33.3
3	42.4	30.7	23.5	60.0

With such small numbers in each category, it is not really possible to draw any conclusions as to whether some parents have any greater or lesser willingness or ability to help their children find work. There are other variables to consider. For example, availability of the work which pupils could find without needing assistance, frequency of contact with careers officers who may have been making efforts on pupils' behalf. However, there is some support for the view that parents in the highest group of occupations are more able to help their child in job-finding. The exception is for girls, when most of the parents who did not help came from the top occupational grouping. This may be due to taking father as the influence in the question; fathers may have felt less able to help their daughters because of social acceptance of different jobs for different sexes, which has already been mentioned.

Questions 14-16 were included because of the growing complexity of opportunities open to school leavers about which they may learn through careers lessons in schools, but about which their parents may know little or nothing. This knowledge gap could be a reason for pupils not wanting their parents to be involved in decisions relating to their future. They may think there is nothing the parent can do to help.

It is, however, necessary to remember that for some children permission from parents will be needed, for the boy or girl wishing to enter the armed services, for example. For others, grants to take courses may be dependent upon parental income and therefore parental willingness to support their



child. In both these examples, choice of course or career could not be entirely left to the child.

Earlier research would suggest children did take into account parents' views or parents' work when choosing their own career, either to ensure approval or because they felt they could obtain some help from their parents.

Table 34 - Do you think the choice of course or work should be left entirely to your child?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	35.7%	31.5	37.5	38.6	63.1	54.5
No	59.5	63.1	59.3	53.8	26.3	40.9
Yes/no	4.7	5.2	3.1	7.6	5.2	-
No answer					5.2	4.5

At Knowle and Evesham parents do not feel choice should be left entirely to their child. Some parents replied, adding remarks like "depends upon the child". At Redditch, on the other hand, a majority would leave choice entirely to their child. Here, also, is a greater number of indecisive answers. The differences in responses may link with replies to Question 10 and to confidence in the preparation of their child. It may also be lack of interest, although this is not supported by answers to questions regarding the frequency of talking to their child about future plans.

It may simply be a question of lack of knowledge. There could be some reflection of the job knowledge which parents have, and therefore Question 16 enquired how easy parents felt it was to know about careers present-day school-leavers can enter.

Table 35 - Do you think it is easy for parents to know about the careers school leavers can enter these days?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	42.8	60.5	46.8	69.2	47.3	54.5
No	50.0	34.2	40.6	23.0	47.3	40.9
Both		2.6	3.1			
No answer	7.1	2.6	9.3	7.6	5.2	4.5

These figures suggest that parents feel confident in their ability to know about current opportunities for younger people. This is encouraging if it also means that parents are a positive source of information and influence in the home and are able to assist their less informed child. Pupils can expect help in most cases. Overall, 45.1% of the boys' parents and 61.6% of the girls' parents feel it is easy to know about jobs. Some reservations were expressed in three cases, all girls. The reasons given for this were "only if one is sufficiently interested to seek information", "not as easy as in my day", "easier to know well-known, but not the less common and often more interesting careers". These are a small number of examples, but the fact that in each case they applied to girls may possibly mean that wider opportunities for girls are becoming a cause of the difficulties some parents face. These remarks are in contrast to the majority of parents being happy about knowledge of jobs for girls, as shown in the table above. Discussion about careers suggest that most parents see jobs as appropriate for a particular sex, only amongst the more academic groups is this not accepted, and this in a minority of cases. The greater number of "Yes" answers therefore, could suggest an awareness of a narrower, more easily thought of range of occupations.

The basis of knowledge could be the basis for action if the parents had disagreed with their child's choice. It is of interest to see the number of



parents who would try to persuade their child to change their mind, and Question 15 asked this.

There is a link to Question 14 in that attitude to leaving choice to the child is supported by attitude to intervention. At Evesham and Knowle where most parents do not think it should be left entirely to the child, there is also a majority who would intervene if they disagreed with the choice made; At Redditch the opposite is the case - with a difference between sex. At Redditch most boys would be left to choose and have least interference, while girls would be left to choose but an identical number of parents would intervene if they felt it was necessary.

What would cause a parent to try and persuade the child to change its mind? This drew replies that pointed to action if the job was thought too difficult to get to in terms of travel, had no prospects, had poor pay or working conditions. Many (17) mentioned being unhappy, which could be caused by a job being "too under-demanding", "could not support a family", "was not thought out very seriously". Most parents in this situation would discuss their view with the child, but other aids were considered, such as pointing to the range of jobs previous school leavers had entered, getting a teacher to talk to the child. Two parents said they would let their daughter do the job to learn about its unsuitability directly; in this they were echoing the view of the parents of a boy who said "the child should be left to do what it wants, if you try and make him change his mind he will become unhappy, and go against you". One parent wrote of the "parent seeking to offer advice and guidance, but if the child was unconvinced then they would allow her to go her own way". The parents of one girl may be said to sum up the views of many parents in their reply when they wrote that the reason they would act against the choice would be because of "their superior knowledge of what is a worthwhile career, the fact that a child can only have had short term views of careers, and that a child was frequently attracted by the so-called glamour of many jobs and unaware of the drawbacks". They expressed their view that they would discuss their

points and rely upon a good relationship and understanding within the family to ensure their views were heeded.

The replies are therefore similar to others received earlier about subject choice; emphasis is put upon discussion and reasoning. Very few parents indeed would insist upon a particular action; reliance upon their own wider knowledge and experience of life is given as the basis for the authority for any action under discussion and emphasises again the need for careers advisers to know the parents' occupations and views.

The pattern of replies to Question 17 is very similar for parents of boys and girls of each of the three schools, following table shows:

Table 36 - If you disagreed with your child's choice would you try to persuade him/her to change?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	59.5	57.8	59.3	57.6	31.5	54.5
No	21.4	23.6	34.3	42.3	57.8	36.3
Both		3.5			5.2	
No answer	19.0	15.7	6.2		5.2	9.0

Turning now to the source of job information among parents, Question 17 asked where parents would turn for this information.

Table 37 - Where parents found out about courses and work.

Sources are listed in order of number of mentions by parents.

<u>Source</u>	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Talk to friends	4	4	4	4	5	4
Visit careers office	3	3	3	3	3	3
Use Public Library	7	7	7	5	7	7
Pick up ideas from media	5	5	5	6	4	5
Go and see teachers	2	2	2	1	2	2
Arrange to see someone in job	6	6	6	7	6	6
Attend careers talk or convention	1	1	1	2	1	1



Only at Evesham were two other sources mentioned; the parents of one boy had been to a private vocational guidance agency and of another boy to the principal of the local College of Further Education for information. The parents of five children (2 boys at Redditch, 1 boy and 2 girls at Knowle) did not answer and the parents of one girl at Redditch mentioned the girl herself as their main source of information.

Most parents mentioned more than one source of information. The average number of sources was for boys, 2.9 and for girls 2.8. A number only mentioned one source of information, and as these might have been particularly important, they are listed separately here:

Table 38 - Those who mentioned only one item, in order of frequency

	<u>Parents of</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Careers talks and conventions	6	3
Teachers	1	3
Careers office	1	3
Person in job	2	
Friends		2
Media	1	
	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>

The importance given in this list to the careers talks and conventions is of interest. The talks they would have been offered would have been occasions at school when short talks would have been given by staff at a parents' evening, or, perhaps once a year, a forum when a careers officer, school staff and perhaps a few employers might have spoken in general terms about local opportunities.

Careers conventions are held every other year in each school. These are occasions when anything from 15 to 40 representatives of employers and

further education are available on a market-stall arrangement. Parents and pupils can go to as many or as few stands as they wish and obtain information from people practising in different fields of work. They can be very crowded occasions making conversation difficult and brief because of the number of enquirers. Some surveys in schools have shown pupils go to only two or three stands and do not take full opportunity to gather a broad spectrum of information. They are, however, by reason of size major activities in the presentation of careers information and the importance put upon them by parents is of interest. To advisers, conventions are often felt to be the most time-consuming and not the most productive careers advice activity. This is often put down to lack of preparation by pupils to use the occasion, but representatives, whatever their misgivings, do seem keen to talk to parents, believing them better able to use the opportunity than young people. There is certainly interest by parents in careers information sessions and staff in careers advisory work, or concerned with programmes for parent/teacher contact should bear this in mind and look at the form of events planned.

Looking at other items, the next most significant source mentioned is that of teachers and the careers office. Use of what may be termed the informal sources - media, friends and library, all have equally mixed recall. It is encouraging to those professionally occupied in careers work to see that they and the activities they organise mentioned most frequently. However, they often suggest to pupils and parents the value of using other contacts. The media can give the impression of jobs through news items, plays and documentaries. Contacting people in particular work may be possible; it is of interest that this facility is not used in any one school more than another. It might have been thought that at Evesham where a higher proportion of parents were in jobs where one might expect it to be easier to make contacts, more would have used this approach. Perhaps they did not because they knew their child planned to continue education full time. The replies at Knowle, where there is the greatest mixture of occupational levels, are perhaps the most interesting on informal links and thus differs from the other two schools.



These remarks relate to the small number of parents (22) who mentioned only one source. Turning to the total response to the means of learning about jobs, talking to people in the job appears as a major source of information open to pupils. This may mean an employer seen with a view to a job, it may be a neighbour or relation who happens to be doing a certain job in which a child is interested. The degree of objectivity in the information given will, no doubt, vary greatly as also could awareness of current methods and requirements for entry. The importance of these informal contacts in the community should be recognised by advisers. A major difference in this information source compared to the professional advisers could be that the latter is more au fait with current recruitment, or is able to suggest similar careers.

The importance accorded to the media is useful to see. Many programmes, not just documentary programmes, show people in work. The degree of accuracy or exaggeration for the programme's effect may distort a real picture of a job, a short scene, for example, in a play, condense action that really is much slower and less attractive or glamorous. The continuing interest by viewers and listeners in programmes about farming life, hospitals, business or the law, and even less fashionable careers like prison service, show the public capacity to be presented with a great deal of job based drama from which some may be attracted to think seriously of a career.

Finally, a ~~farther~~ source of information is that from the public libraries. These do contain careers information and staff do deal with a range of enquiries for help. It is a matter of concern, however, that visits to libraries often show out of date careers information; economies mean librarians do not automatically re-order new editions of fact-containing books, and so inaccurate information is borrowed. Staff may not realise the risk of this; their approach may be to have a comprehensive collection of careers literature and they need help from members of the Careers Service who regularly use data to ensure the library stock is accurate. It would be hoped that, as employees within the same local authority service, co-operation to make sure good literature is kept in public libraries takes place.

Parents and Advisory Interviews

Question 18 marks the beginning of Stage 3 of the questionnaire. This question contained an error in being given as a double question. The information sought was whether parents attended interviews, and then, how they had felt about the occasion. The question did not say these were interviews with teachers or careers officer and the child, but it was the latter which was in mind. The mistake in the question was to ask at the same time if they were invited, and did they attend. A few parents added separate answers - that is, they replied that they had been invited, and then said whether or not they had attended.

It is the practice in all three schools for all fifth formers to be interviewed by the careers officer. Sometimes teachers attend these interviews. Members of the public often mix up the two titles assuming careers officers are teachers or that careers teachers are careers officers. Teachers, however, rarely interview all parents. It is therefore possible that some of the replies to the first part of the question meant an interview with the head teacher or a conversation at an evening event.

Table 39 - Were you invited to an interview with a teacher and did you go?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	69.0%	71.0	65.6	84.6	73.6	68.1
No	21.4	18.4	6.2	7.6	10.5	13.6
No answer	9.5	10.5	28.1	7.6	15.7	18.1

An indication of possible confusion is shown in the Evesham replies to the rest of this question. At Evesham parents are, in fact, not invited to the interviews pupils have with the careers officer, yet 50% of the parents of boys and 55.2% of girls replied they were invited; they might have been thinking of meeting the careers officer at an evening careers event or this may underline the confusion of function and title of careers officer and teacher.



Table 39a - Were you invited to interviews with the careers officer and did you go?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	50.0%	55.2	68.7	65.3	78.9	77.2
No	38.0	26.3	18.7	23.0	5.2	18.1
No answer	11.9	18.4	12.5	11.5	15.7	4.5

Table 39b - Were you invited to an interview with the careers officer and teacher together, and did you go?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	16.6%	7.8	12.5	15.3	21.0	18.1
No	59.2	50.0	37.5	50.0	31.5	50.0
No answer	23.8	42.1	50.0	34.6	47.3	31.8

In all three tables, the number of people answering "yes" is highest at Redditch. It is likely that this links with the fact noted earlier that parents take greater interest in the last year of school because it is in that year that decisions are taken which may have a major effect upon the lives of their child and of the family as a whole.

#### Parents' View of the Careers Interview

The example given in the appendices of the letters inviting parents to an interview with the careers officer says little about the purpose of the interview. It is fairly typical that such letters and other letters from schools to parents about events organised for parents to meet staff only outline the purpose in general terms. It may be that pupils are told before the interviews of the purpose and what they might expect, but little is said to parents. It is assumed the pupil briefs the parent.

When observing interviews, it is not unusual for the parent to be welcomed and then all conversation to be directed to the child. Some careers officers admit

to a fear of parents in case the parent tries to talk all the time!

Question 19 sought to discover if parents knew why they have been invited, often at expense to themselves. A number of people did not reply; those who had not attended could not do so, but some who seemingly from the answers to Question 18 had not attended, did reply to this question.

Table 40 - Why do you think you were invited to the interview?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Listen to adviser's suggestion	57.8	59.3	83.8	69.5	55.5	80.9
Say what you thought child could do	39.4	56.2	29.0	34.7	50.0	42.8
Help adviser get fuller picture	42.1	53.1	51.6	69.5	50.0	66.6

Interviewers will sometimes start the interview by explaining they are not going to tell pupils what they should do, but simply discuss ideas and see if any help is needed. This form of explanation may, in fact, have been in the respondent's minds when replying to the question. Parents may interpret this as direct advice about future action or purely for discussion. The replies seem to suggest that parents expected a clear line of guidance from the adviser and that the main parental function was to contribute some information to help the adviser obtain a fuller picture or reach some sort of decision or assessment of the pupils. Replies could, of course, also be a comment upon the style of the interviewer. It may be that, for example, in Redditch the parent was most interested in hearing about local jobs and the careers adviser or teacher obliged, or the interviewers, in their approach, suggested that this was the main thing to consider.

Twenty-three parents added further comments, some of which related to the purpose of the interview and some of which obviously derived from their experience. Amongst these replies were three who assumed it was customary



or a "statutory duty of the local education authority". One parent wrote he thought it was to gain the parents' interest in school, and six expressed comments indicating they thought the interview was an opportunity to be told about progress in school and how this related to entry to work.

One parent who attended wrote that she kept out of the interview which was "with and mainly for the child"; another thought it useful to hear how their child reacted to a stranger - it helped the parent to know how the pupil might behave when applying to an employer; and two parents said that they felt their presence was to show their interest and support for their child, one adding they felt they "helped to keep the interview going". One reply referred to the view that "children are almost punch-drunk with the wonderful number of openings and are scared of making a final decision". These parents were keen to attend any session to be informed so as to help their child.

Some comments recorded impressions of careers officers trying to push certain careers or persuade students away from certain areas of work, "they did not encouraged Polytechnic applications" and "they mentioned teaching only as a last resort". It was said that teachers knew little about work and do little more than pass out literature and careers officers seemed "to try and persuade children to take up careers they thought they should have".

The replies did not have any regular pattern apart from the second reason offered being the one least considered. There might be some link to replies to Question 16 and the following table explores this. The connections insofar as they exist are only marginal. In the case of girls whose parents found difficulty in knowing about jobs, it appears they wished to contribute suggestions most - perhaps a danger, perhaps a reflection of feeling that there is only a narrow range of careers open to girls about which they need to learn. Of more value to the interview would be a link between feeling easy in knowing about work, and the more general third item "to help the adviser to learn more about the child". This would seem to suggest information and an atmosphere which could be helpful to the child.

Table 41 - Link between reaction to purpose of interview and confidence in job knowledge

	<u>Did feel it easy to know jobs</u>		<u>Did not feel it easy to know jobs</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Listen	45.4	31.8	50.0	40.0
Say what thought	22.7	22.7	20.8	30.0
Help adviser	31.8	45.4	29.1	30.0
Number who replied	22	22	24	10

Question 20 was introduced to see how parents felt about the interview. The interviews with a careers officer would generally be during the day and this can be a problem inhibiting parental attendance if there are younger children to look after or if both parents are working. In an attempt to find out how much they considered they had been brought into any career discussion the question did not specify whether the contact was with a teacher or careers officer. The point of the question was to see if they considered in whichever contact they had that they had been able to contribute or play a part.

Recollection of the occasion would, no doubt, mean that a parent would consider a particular time. A number of comments indicated parents were thinking about a careers officer, for example "the careers officer mumbled and we could not hear him", "I would like to know that the careers officer does with all the notes taken down". In all three schools, if parents were invited to an interview dealing with their child's career, then it was with the careers officer; in none did a subject or careers teacher invite a whole year group of parents to see him individually. Replies to this question are inevitably a comment on the way the interview was conducted.

Table 42 - Extent to which parents felt they were brought into the interview

<u>Extent</u>	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Much	52.6	40.4	37.5	30.7	63.1	45.4
Little	21.0	30.9	46.8	57.6	36.8	31.8
Enough	2.6	-	-	-	-	-
No answer	23.6	28.5	15.6	11.5	-	22.7



There is quite a variation here. If those answering "much" are considered, this could relate to circumstance and technique of interviewer. At Evesham, parents are not invited to interviews when the careers officer sees the pupils, but they do visit the careers office on occasions and they do see the school and Careers Service staff at parents' evenings at the school. In these situations it would be expected that they would be asked what they wanted to learn, and so could feel sure any views they had would be considered. At Knowle, the careers officer was criticised by some for mumbling; he, himself, felt parents were over ambitious and not very helpful or realistic at interviews - he may, therefore, not have tried to involve them in the discussion with the child. At Redditch, both careers officer and school staff did not seem afraid of parental activity and, although commenting that, at times, parents could be difficult because they attempted to talk over or on behalf of the child, welcomed as close a contact as could be achieved. On balance, a small majority felt they were much involved. This is encouraging, but still leaves the issue of the extent to which the occasion was considered satisfactory.

Attendance and involvement in an interview does not necessarily mean parents' views are successfully noted or learned. The situation and technique of the interview may encourage an open response or it may not. When meeting a teacher or careers officer for the first time, the parent may not be sure how far his own views may be mentioned. If the adviser is to learn something of the strength of view and potential influence within the home, he needs to make the parent welcome and through question and response encourage the parent to confide views or ask questions, and so realise the occasion, though concerning the child, does not exclude the parents.

The following table shows whether parents thought the interviewer discovered their views or not:

Table 43 - Do you think the interviewer(s) found out your views?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	57.1	68.4	59.3	69.2	84.2	72.7
No	11.9	7.8	21.8	19.2	5.2	4.5
No answer	30.9	23.6	18.7	11.5	10.5	22.7

When asked what sort of information the interviewer could have obtained and which was not learnt, a number of parents made remarks about details of home background, home life, family situation, interest, child's personality, temperament and the psychological reasons for the child's likes and dislikes. It seemed important to parents that these domestic points should be known to help the adviser obtain a clearer picture of the interviewee and that such a fuller picture was needed if the adviser was then to attempt to outline relevant careers. There would be no disagreement no doubt from the adviser - these are just the sort of issues that he or she would claim to be seeking during contacts with pupils and parents. These points were made by twenty parents; not a large number, but a significant proportion of those who replied thus felt they were areas of knowledge they considered important which were overlooked by the adviser.

Some parents commented on the interview adversely; for example, the interviewer did not seem interested or "talked at us, gradually we were able to communicate to the officials". One parent at Redditch thought the intention of the interview was good but got lost on the way to implementation because of the volume of work the adviser had. And a parent in Knowle wrote that he did "not feel the school pay attention to what parents say or think" while the "CO suggests but does not do and often suggestions are ludicrous". The parents of a boy in Evesham, obviously referring to a general parent/teacher evening, wrote "we did not have enough time because so many other parents were there too. I think it would be better if more time were given to individuals". Four parents referred to the lack of time for the interviewer



to get to know pupils or parents, others referred to the room being too crowded to allow easy conversation.

It appears that advisers need to ask themselves why they invite parents at all, and, if they do, whether they are able to offer the time to let parents and pupils take part. Interviews are often timed to last 20 - 30 minutes and they may not be repeated. Is it really possible in that time for all parties to understand and communicate with each other? Should the adviser arrange to see parents and pupil separately? Should more be done in preparation so that pupil, parent and adviser come to the interview with information about each other? The experiments to establish some form of referral system for pupil interviewing contain preparatory work with, in some schemes, some self-analysis by pupils. This information, if provided in time to the careers officer, could mean he had more opportunity to consider possible useful information, perhaps noting discrepancies between ambitions and school level or ideas about work and points felt by the pupil to be important to them. Frequently, the careers officer has little or no time to anticipate interviews. He is often also in a situation of not being in control of any pre-interview work, if it is done at all, as this is carried out by teaching staff whose understanding of the philosophy of careers work may not be the same as that of the adviser. It often appeared the case on visiting schools that teachers told pupils the careers officer would tell them what they could do, only for the pupil then to be interviewed by someone not attempting to do that, but trying to help the pupil to a personal and non-externally directed choice.

#### Actual Parental Involvement

In the discussion on relevant British research, mention was made of the fact that pupils may not want their parents to come to school. For example, at careers advisory interviews pupils may feel better informed than their parents and not want their parents to come; indeed, parents, themselves, may feel uninformed and not consider they have much to contribute. Answers to earlier

questions have shown the importance of family consultation and, where this is frequent, parents may feel this is sufficient and not see the need to attend school events.

The following table shows answers to Question 22 which asked if parents thought pupils wanted their parents to be involved.

Table 44 - Do you think pupils want their parents to be involved?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	90.4%	84.2	75.0	69.2	78.9	63.6
No	4.7	5.2	15.6	15.3	21.0	31.8
Yes/No	2.3	2.6	-	7.6	-	4.5

Some additional comments contained suggestions that attendance could depend upon the mood of the day - obviously parents were thinking of the particular occasion of the interview rather than overall involvement; two parents said they thought it depended upon the child, one going further and saying that they would get involved in their "son's case" but it seemed not in their daughter's.

The replies show an overwhelming belief that children do want their parents involved and some of the additional comments given to Question 19 are relevant to consider here, namely those answers which referred to providing support for the child or showing interest in the child's plans.

Earlier evidence has suggested that fathers provide a stronger model to their children regarding work, and that their level of occupation is more significant as an influence than the occupational level of the mother. It would have been interesting to have got each parent to complete a questionnaire and then to have compared views and interaction. By using a postal method this could not be controlled and therefore was not done. However, it is valuable to try and find out which parents might be most involved. The next table shows answers



to this question.

Table 45 - Which parent was most involved

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Father	11.9	10.5	18.7	3.8	15.7	4.5
Mother	9.5	18.4	25.0	26.9	21.0	36.3
Equal	73.8	65.7	53.0	57.6	63.1	59.0
No answer	4.7	5.2	3.1	11.5	-	-

From this one should not assume that the mother is the greater influence purely because she is more likely to attend any careers events. She may not be the sole full time worker in the family, or if working, she may be the parent whose earning power is the lesser, so it is cheaper and easier for the mother to take time off. It could be of interest to try to pursue any differences between mother attending events and having greater chance to be personally involved, and the father less available, but because of being fully employed a more obvious model for a child to look at.

The majority of families have equal involvement by parents. This might mean that both parents attend every offered opportunity to learn about careers, or that both parents talked to their child at home. With the exception of parents of boys at Evesham, the mother is the most frequently mentioned person when comparing individual parents. This could suggest that, in replying to the question, the respondents had interviews and not general talk at home, in mind because it is more likely that the mother attended the pupils' interviews with a careers officer. There is also some linkage between mother and daughter, shown by the lesser number of fathers replying that they were involved with their daughter's discussions. At Evesham the small number of answers regarding either parent may, in fact, mean that all opportunities were in the home and in non-working time, and so less likely that a choice between parents had to be made.

General Views of Parents about Career Choice

The final section of the questionnaire asked some general questions. Question 24 asked whether parents thought the issue of job choice was the same for both boys and girls. It is possible that this might affect the degree of interest that parents had in their children's plans. The question has possibly the widest spread of type of reply and the additional comments are of interest. The number replying that there is a difference does not suggest support for a strict segregation, or that girls or boys are less or more important, although it does appear from some of the additional comments that the plans for girls are considered less important than for boys.

If parents do believe there are differences then it is for the adviser to acknowledge this. Perhaps because of recent legislation, advisers feel they have got to stress equality and frown on opposite views. Change in this respect will, no doubt, be slow, and advisers would be sensible to accept a parent's 'reactionary' views and work within any contacts they have to try to alter them so that a freer outlook is allowed to a pupil, if this would be in the pupil's interest.

Table 46 - Is the business of job choice the same for a girl as a boy?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	66.6	57.8	50.0	46.1	68.4	72.7
No	28.5	36.8	46.8	46.1	21.0	27.2
No answer	2.3	2.6	3.1	7.6	10.5	-

Additional comments revolved around particular features. Of these, the position of the boy as potential breadwinner was mentioned by 25 parents although amongst these were a few (all parents of girls) whose replies suggested that, although perhaps not the main breadwinner supporting the family, the girl could expect that position or certainly one where her earnings would be a major part of the family income. Only one parent (a teacher) said that the "wife's



work was less important and was for extras in the home".

A few parents pointed to physical differences and working conditions as the basis for their view that the situation was different between the sexes. This applied to jobs a male or a female might not be able to do. Seven parents said they thought there were differences in interests which separated the sexes; this was described by one parent as "psychological differences" and detailed in another reply (from a senior local government officer) to be "technical work is invariably a boy occupation, whereas from experience, girls are better equipped where mundane clerical work of a repetitive nature is involved".

A number of parents referred to recent legislation regarding equal opportunities, but said it would be some time before society saw equal opportunity in practice. A sales manager, replying about his son, wrote "whilst the principle and problems are now correlating more closely for girls and boys, the field of choice is still narrow for girls and I believe their sights are set lower as a consequence".

The fact that a girl's working life could be broken by marriage and motherhood was mentioned by 14 parents, some saying that obtaining a long term career was less important than obtaining any job, even without prospects. This was partly linked to the issue of length of training. The parents of one girl (father a senior electronics engineer and mother a part-time factory worker), wrote "if a girl is not having a break in her career for marriage and child bearing, the choice is the same. With a break, training prior to marriage may be obsolete after the break". The attractions of marriage can foreshorten the occupational plans of a girl and the importance of getting a basic qualification which, perhaps, can be used for entry to vocational training at any stage is stressed. Boys are not faced with this situation.

Table 47 - Do you think pupils are old enough to be able to make up their minds on their career?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	50.0	31.5	46.8	46.1	73.6	59.0
Yes/no	2.3	5.2	9.3	-	-	-
No	40.4	52.6	37.5	50.0	21.0	27.2
Maybe	2.3	2.6	3.1	-	-	4.5
No answer	4.7	7.8	3.1	3.8	5.2	4.5

There is a significant difference in attitude between parents at Redditch and at the other two schools. At Redditch the majority clearly feel that pupils are old enough to make up their own minds. This may be because parents' perception of the range of work a school leaver may enter may be more limited than at Knowle and Evesham. The limits may, in fact, be the range of jobs in the locality. These will be easier to see or learn about than professions entered in years to come after further education, as is envisaged by a greater proportion of the Knowle and Evesham parents. If this is so, it is of interest to the careers adviser to reflect whether he should concentrate on the problem pupils in these circumstances, and not try too hard to involve parents.

The answer to Question 25 needs, however, to be linked to those of Question 26 and indeed, also to Question 10. To this last question, answers from parents of pupils at all schools gave a marginally higher number who thought pupils understood the nature of features which helped settlement into work as important. Yet in Question 26 a heavy majority do not feel that pupils know enough about either working life, or the variety of jobs that may be open, when in their last year of statutory education they have to make decisions about careers. This is shown in the following table:



Table 48 - Do you think pupils know enough about various jobs?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	26.1	26.3	18.7	23.0	36.8	27.2
No	69.0	71.0	81.5	76.9	63.1	63.6
No answer	4.7	2.6	-	-	-	9.0

It therefore appears that parents generally think that their child is old enough, but that they do not know enough. Willis and Thomson and Wetherall refer to the timing of decisions about school-leaving; this would suggest for many that two years before school-leaving is the crucial period when decisions are taken, and attitudes begin to harden for, or against, schooling. Do parents feel that even at that stage children know enough to make decisions which arise when they are asked to start their future planning? Are parents aware that it is so early that the attitudes become set?

Question 26 was in two parts. Taking the first part regarding knowledge of various jobs, it appears only a quarter of the parents thought their children did know enough about working life. Despite this, most parents had declared in Question 25 that pupils were old enough to make up their mind about their future. This suggests that the pupil is old enough but ill-informed to make such a decision. It also suggests that children could not have absorbed sufficient information from their parents to have a view of working life.

There is evidence (Hayes<sup>191</sup>) that knowing the implications of doing a job and its situation are as important to settlement in a job, as having the appropriate qualifications. The implications of the replies in the following table is that, not only should more be done in school to help pupils learn about occupations, but more particularly about the role of an employee - in other words, information about what it is like to do a job and not just what to do in a job. Advisers and careers literature need to note this also.

Table 48a - Do you think pupils know enough about working life?

	<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Yes	2.3	7.8	9.3	-	10.5	13.6
No	90.4	86.8	87.5	100.0	78.9	77.2
No answer	7.1	5.2	3.1	-	10.5	9.0

It is thought that inter-generational influence might reflect the attitudes of the parents themselves. In a small survey of 60 careers officers it had been found that many talked to their parents about their work despite the fact that many were entering a level of work very different from that of their parents, and about which, few parents would be expected to know much. The following table has been combined to show a combined figure of parents of boys and girls at each of the three schools and an overall percentage.

Table 49 - Do you think your parents influenced you about your work when you left school?

	<u>Evesham</u>	<u>Knowle</u>	<u>Redditch</u>	<u>Overall</u>
Yes	55.0	68.9	58.8	60.3
No	38.7	31.0	36.5	35.7
No answer	6.3	.1	4.7	4.0

It appears from this that a majority thought that their parents did influence their own decisions. Overall, 35.7% did not think their parents had influenced them when they left school. How far this has affected their own behaviour in relation to their child's job choice is difficult to say. 60.3% said it had affected their attitude, but the nature of this was not pursued; it could be a large separate area for investigation. To some it might be a desire to operate differently by taking a more active or perhaps less active part when dealing with their children.



SECTION 11 - CASE STUDIESInterview with Mr and Mrs Blake and their daughter

Mr Blake is a partner in an engineering company, Mrs Blake a solicitor in the legal department of a local authority. Jane is their only child and, at the time of the interview, had just started her lower 6th form course in a comprehensive school. The family live in a modernised house about 200 years old on the outskirts of a small town, it is well furnished and comfortable. Mr and Mrs Blake had completed a questionnaire in one of the pilot studies when their daughter was in the 5th form at the same school. Jane arrived about three quarters of the way through the interview.

Parent/child discussion

When asked who had completed the questionnaire, Mr Blake replied that he had done this as this was the usual way of doing things in the family, and then got his wife to comment. He thought there was not much difference in the contact that each had had with Jane about her future, although his wife was more anxious, due, he thought, to personality difference, and, perhaps, a feeling on her part that there was not a lot of time for Jane to make up her mind about her career. Both parents work, which Mr Blake thought made it easier for them to chat about Jane's plans. For example, with regard to Jane's knowledge of jobs Mr Blake felt his wife was more inclined to talk about what she did at work, and Jane would have a clearer idea of her mother's occupation than of his. He did not like to talk about his work when he was at home and was "glad to be rid of it", although he did say that, at times, he would discuss a particular issue at work, for example, arguments in a strike, or bring home some item the firm was designing and manufacturing. In subsequent conversation, Mr Blake appeared as the one to have done any searchings for careers literature on Jane's behalf.

Jane thought that in her choice of university after A Levels she was influenced by the home atmosphere which was in favour of continued education. She was also taking, in her 'A' level course, at least one subject under



pressure from her father. She had originally chosen biology, and would have been interested in taking French or German and, possibly, chemistry, but her father had suggested biology, chemistry and, because of its importance as a support to science subjects, mathematics, and these she was now taking.

#### Parent/school contact

Jane had first attended a private girls grammar school in Derby where the parents had found staff had laid down the laws on the role the parents were expected to take in school, ie: they will attend parents' evenings to discuss their daughters' progress. Mr Blake had resented this, particularly as he was paying for the education! Both parents said they found the school defensive when approached by them, for example, when they had asked for more work for their daughter. On moving, they inspected the two available comprehensive schools and chose one because it offered traditional, as opposed to modern, mathematics. They did not dislike the modern maths, but Jane was more used to traditional teaching methods. They also knew the headmaster of this school. They found contact with the school easy and responsive and would not hesitate to contact staff if they had a problem about Jane's work.

#### Subject choice in 3rd year

This had revolved around the wish that Jane should do academic subjects. Mr Blake also was keen that she should do individual science subjects, rather than an integrated science course which he, and he was supported by his wife, saw as a soft option avoiding the fundamentals of the sciences; "craft based things" were avoided because both parents felt they were aiming higher than just entry to craft level in commerce or industry. Both parents had looked into some information regarding requirements for university entrance and this was the level they hoped for Jane.

#### Subject choice in 5th year and 6th form

As already mentioned, the parents, especially Mr Blake, looked to the linking of such subjects and felt that biology and modern languages would be



a risky combination. Father had dissuaded Jane from French and German by saying that this could only lead to teaching which she was definitely not interested in and then, on finding that she had some interest in agriculture, had got careers information about the Agriculture Advisory Service and, from this, had formed the ideas of biology, chemistry and mathematics.

### Career Development

Both parents looked ahead at 3rd year and 5th year stage, thinking of ability, but also their own ambitions for Jane. Jane, herself, was very unclear, her father thought that this was part of her difficulty, and feeling of lack of purpose in school - "she has very little idea beyond the 6th and finds it difficult to know what careers are really like". They could talk to Jane about engineering and legal work. I asked how many other jobs they could describe and the mother mentioned teaching. Mr Blake mentioned accountancy, industrial finance, engineering design and production, architecture, medicine, local government and, as he was what he described as a "reasonably well informed middle class person" he would know people from whom to get further information. Mr Blake thought that any intelligent alert teenager as Jane was could pick up ideas of life style from friends. What was hard to describe or observe was the actual feeling of the jobs. Mr Blake thought that Jane could probably describe her mother's work, but not his, because he did not talk much about it at home. She had apparently made an early declaration "I am not going to be an engineer nor a lawyer, it makes the pair of you so bloody miserable", and Mrs Blake would not recommend law as it was too over-subscribed and, in private practice, presented an unequal opportunity for women.

Neither parent thought Jane looked very far ahead. Yet Jane was worried about not having a goal or ambition. "We are trying to inject some sense of direction in line with her abilities, and as you see, have tended to prevent a disproportionate amount of her ability on things like French, music, divinity, biology", was her father's comment. Jane said she would



have liked to have taken French because she enjoyed it, and was good at it, but her father suggested maths as more useful to biology and chemistry. She and Mr Blake had checked the Compendium of University requirements to learn this.

Had Jane talked to anyone? The French teacher had pressed her to take French; a few friends were helpful, only two girls were taking chemistry and most of her friends were in the Arts subjects. From school she had had "just a sheet of paper" linking continuation of subjects. She had not talked to others, and quoted the careers officer who, in a talk, had advised them not to be too influenced by relations and friends as they could now be out-of-date. Jane had always assumed that she would go into the sixth form. She thought girls did talk to their parents, others did not expect much help - it depended upon personality and circumstance.

#### Comment

Jane's influence had been from concerned parents, willing and able to make any contacts needed regarding work or career questions, although, because of its attitude, it would have been more difficult to consult the first school Jane attended. There were advantages in the home, and a concentration of interest by both parents, both of whom were in work which allowed time and facility to contact employers for information if they wished to do so. Despite these advantages, Jane had no clear idea about her future, due, perhaps, to immaturity and lack of experience, but also, perhaps, to the fact that she knew she could, if capable, remain in education. Yet each decision about subjects could affect the career entered eventually. The parents were clear in their ambitions for their child; fortunately, Jane seemed to have the academic ability to meet these hopes.

#### Interview with Mrs Evans regarding son Michael who left Comprehensive School in 1975

The family live in a house in the residential suburb on the edge of a large city. They moved there about a year ago, shortly after Michael left a



comprehensive school in a small town approximately 15 miles away. Michael is the fourth child, and only boy in the family, 2 years younger than the youngest of his three sisters. After leaving school he started work in a local hotel as a trainee manager. Mr Evans did not take part in the conversation; he has been unemployed and an invalid for some years, having formerly been a self-employed salesman. Mrs Evans, who works in an Employment Office, appears to do all the planning and working within the family. Michael now lives in at his work, visiting home about once a week.

#### Parent/child discussion

Mr Evans worked as a salesman and this took him away from home a great deal so that, according to his wife, he had little contact with any of the children, and all responsibility for talking about their plans with them, or with their friends or with teachers devolved upon the mother. He had had a nervous breakdown and became unemployed while Michael was still at school. Mrs Evans said that she had felt with the elder two children that there had been no need to go and see the school because they had always been "academic types" and she had been confident of their ability to cope with school; however, with the third daughter and Michael there had been greater difficulties, for neither had been able to settle very well in school.

Mrs Evans thought that her conversations with Michael about his job choice had largely been to find out what he thought he would like to do, rather than to make positive suggestions. She felt that his job choice had been more accidental than planned. When he had decided to go to the hotel, the main thing that she had talked about was the unsocial hours. She did not think they had talked about any other jobs to any extent. For a short time Michael had thought about being an electrician. She thought he had been influenced by visiting a careers convention, which she had also attended, when he had talked to one or two representatives. She mentioned the Electricity Board and the Royal Air Force.



Parent/school contact

This had been confined to attendance at careers evenings and interviews with the careers officer when Mrs Evans had been present. Afterwards, she said she had talked to Michael about the poor impression she thought he had created at the interview. She had not, herself, taken part in the interview nor thought that she should.

With regard to information from the school, she felt that she had never really known how Michael had coped in class. She had made a point of going up to the Middle School when he had been there, to complain on occasions, but the only time that she had gone to see the High School had been when he had first moved from Middle School and she felt he had been put in too low a stream. The reply that she had received had been that "there are great numbers of very bright children in this school". She had not been very interested to know this and did not think this had answered her request to have him transferred. Thereafter, she did not go to school. Sometimes she looked at his school books, but she had not learnt very much from them and she looked upon reason for contact with school as really only to go and defend one's children, or to be told particular information. Parents evenings had been held, but she thought these were not much help in that you "hang around for three hours and then have five minutes with the teacher". She thought that several parents did not attend these occasions because they were not very helpful. She agreed with a friend of hers who, on contact with school, had said "we don't bother unless they (the children) seem unhappy, otherwise it is a complete waste of time".

The school had appeared rather remote, though direct contact had been kept with certain teachers often because they lived nearby, and because she knew and trusted certain teachers, having seen the care and help they had given to the older children. She thought a Parent Teachers Association might be helpful, but was not sure that she would ever have time or interest to go to that sort of occasion. Such an Association had been started after Michael



had left school when there had also been the arrival of a new headmaster. Mrs Evans resented school reports and a teacher's comment that Michael was a stubborn and not very co-operative boy in class, and not motivated to work hard. She felt he had a reading blockage which had caused frustration, and a good determined streak in him which teachers did not like, but called stubbornness!

#### Subject choice in 3rd year

This had been left to Michael entirely - there had been little element of choice, probably because he was in a low academic form. She said that English and mathematics were the only subjects that she thought were really important because they were needed in all jobs.

#### Career choice in 5th year

This was made in the last two or three months by Michael. It is likely it had provisionally been made earlier. He had three periods of work experience in the last year at school; in a hotel, on a farm and finally, in a firm of agricultural engineers. He did not like the second job which he thought too smelly, the third period he was ill, but in the first period he got on well, and was offered, firstly, a weekend job while at school, and then a full time job. Mrs Evans thought it a satisfying job because he was learning quite a lot. She did not think he had bothered too much about preparation but thought 'fate' would sort things out. She had left the getting of a job to him. Possibly she would have intervened or tried to help if she had not realised that he liked the part-time job and was hoping to get a full time job at the same place. She thought she should leave him to plough his own furrow.

#### Comment

There appeared little or no overt influence had been put upon Michael. A general view that "we all have our own lives to lead" prevailed. Mrs Evans was concerned that Michael should be happy, a view she had expressed regarding the elder children. If they knew what they wanted to do then she left it to them. She had not felt much need to talk about working nor take



part in school discussions, except when non-academic matters arose for example, the defence of her children against cheeky people. She did not think much had been offered by the school, in the way of help, but was not too bothered about that.

#### Interview with Mr Lucas regarding his daughter

Mr Lucas lives in a private house in a city suburb a few minutes from the school which his daughter, Ann, attended.

#### Parents view of school and schooling

Mr Lucas works in a factory where one of his jobs is to share in the allocation of new young workers to their initial jobs. This was done by sifting through their application forms and by using a simple test to check handwriting, spelling and basic arithmetic. He was disappointed at the standard amongst school-leavers. He knew they had to use English and arithmetic, and so he **watched out for this. It also made** him look at this in his own daughter's work. He believed that if you could do these subjects satisfactorily, then others could follow. He also thought progress in them governed the sort of job you could get. He thought essay writing and practice in letter writing were of particular importance.

After the two basic subjects, he then chose subjects useful to a girl, like cooking, as they were the "girls things in the home too". Humanities and sciences came lower down the priority list.

He, or his wife, had always tried to go to school when invited. He had not got a lot of faith in teachers, saying that when they agreed to do something they did not usually do it. On one occasion he had been told not to help Ann with arithmetic, learning tables at secondary school age, because the teacher had her own methods and they (the parents) should not interfere. Although disappointed by this attitude and by teachers' attitude to discipline in school, he found staff generally willing to meet parents and their written reports accurate and not glossy. On the behaviour issue to



to which he returned quite a lot in the interview, he was concerned that school-leavers got into ways of talking to older people which were not accepted in industry, and this caused trouble when they left school.

#### Views about transition to work

Mr Lucas said they did not talk about their jobs much at home, although he had sometimes explained to Ann what sort of office machines they had. He thought she should like office work. When he looked at what happened to new arrivals at work he thought they were not prepared for the standards there, accuracy in spelling in letters, or in measuring things seemed not to have been checked in school where there had been more concern for understanding the topic. Similarly, casualness with older people caused trouble. People at work expected a youngster to do what they were asked when asked and not to have to get involved in conversations about the matter - this was particularly so in jobs involving team-work. He thought schools were slack about this and did not prepare children as well as they could for the change to working life. He did concede that this seeming slackness and matiness by teachers might be the case with children like Ann who were older pupils, but then he thought the pupils should be reminded that when they left school they were no longer the older members of the community.

#### How did Ann learn about work?

He thought she had got some leaflets from 'the education authority' but was vague as to where anyone could go to find out about a job. An aunt who was a nurse had talked to Ann about her own job. He, himself, had no strong views apart from a preference for office work which I think he had because he thought he could get her into the firm in which he worked. He would not stop her taking up a job which he might think unsuitable. She 'has to learn' was his philosophy.

#### Comment

Mr Lucas was concerned about his daughter's future. He saw his role as breadwinner in the house and supporter for whatever she should do. Going



through school was a stage everyone faced, and one had to make the best of it. He hoped the school would help her make the best of her ability. He did wonder if size, about 2,000 pupils, was a reason for vandalism and bad behaviour in school, but apart from registering his protest when he felt affected he could not think there was much, or anything, a parent could, or should, do. He thought morale in school was low generally, and contact with parents not put as a high priority. He was mainly concerned at the different standards in matters like accuracy and discipline between school and work, and thought these contained the seeds of future trouble for school-leavers who in his firm, for example, would be expected to work more accurately and to do so when they were told to by their elders or superiors.

#### Interview with Careers Officer regarding contact with Parents

##### Role of parents as seen by the careers officer

Most parents have a very positive and helpful influence upon their child and can support their child and help the CO or teacher because of the knowledge they have of their child. This information is generally factual. However, many do not seem to know how to communicate this, nor appreciate that advisers wish to learn from parents. When they do try to describe their child, they often cannot do so objectively. If a careers adviser is to get a 'rounded picture' of a pupil he wants not just to know the good points, a parent will normally only want to talk about these to give a favourable impression of their child. He had found that parents were often worried about their inability to talk matters over with their child, and did not realise this was an issue common to other families. Sometimes their involvement and concern for their own child did not allow them to realise that problems such as these were common to other families.

The CO had found that while parents want to come to advisory interviews arranged for their child, they often said little. The CO had to make definite moves to bring the parent into a conversation, and to chat in



general terms to them. This, he thought, was one of the weaknesses among many new, young COs. Not only did they have no experience under tuition of conducting interviews with children when parents (or teachers) were also present, but they were apprehensive about talking to parents because they felt insufficiently informed about jobs. He thought parents often wanted just to hear about jobs, and an easy opening was to chat about where they worked themselves and lead on to talk about job knowledge of the child, but newer staff seemed to want to avoid doing this.

In Coventry, where he worked, parents' attitudes to work was influenced by regard for getting apprenticeships and the ultimate granting of the Freedom of the City to skilled craftsmen. The CO thought few boys were bothered by this, partly, he thought, because so many in the city had the honour. To make sure their sons got into apprenticeships, parents were keen that their children took the right subjects in school, namely engineering drawing, maths, physics to help them move into engineering work.

#### The value of parents to the CO

When the CO heard from parents about the ideas they had for their children it gave him an understanding of what could have been talked about at home. If no attempts were made to find out about any earlier conversations when he thought this isolated the interview, and made it look as though this was the only time when careers were to be talked about, rather than a part of a longer process of making decisions about work. When there were several contacts he found it much easier to talk to parents about, what was, after all, a family matter in which he as an outsider was, or could be seen to be, almost an interferer. Talking about future plans often meant touching on personal issues and obviously it was easier to do this if participants were known to each other.

He found it very important to see parents more than once in cases where there were likely to be difficulties about employment. He had found this over the



position of handicapped children where there was usually the need to plan to see someone several times. Contact with parents also helped him to plan follow-up interviews with pupils who might need more help than other children, from the careers service.

#### Expectations parents had of the work of the CO

This was said to be placing of school-leavers. This is not the prime function as far as many COs are concerned. This meant that, if they were to be accepted by the parents as someone who would have some use, they had to explain why they were looking at wider aspects and interests, and not purely asking what someone wanted to be. When parents understood why COs sought to learn more about personality and environment they were themselves more willing to express their views of their children. There were times in interviews when the CO appeared the only channel of communication between parent and child, sometimes at loggerheads about their future plans.

#### Course for parents

This was started in a new comprehensive school attended by Roman Catholic children from all over the city. The fact that it was a denominational school meant that there was less social cohesion among the parents when compared with a neighbourhood school. On the other hand, it meant it was a school deliberately chosen by parents for their children, and they were therefore particularly interested in what went on in it. Many parents were unhappy about the amount of contact that they had with teachers; and the headmaster was unhappy about the idea that parents looked as though they wanted to control what went on in the school.

One or two staff joined with the CO in suggesting they invite parents to come to a series of meetings to improve links. The excuse was to meet a non-teacher, the careers officer, and talk about the future employment of their children. The plan was to present information about courses and occupations and encourage parents to use the careers service, and to ask the careers teachers for help and information.



At first the head was opposed to the idea, but as he realised the depth of ignorance many had, and their interest in just seeing what went on in a comprehensive school he changed his mind. Questions led from what can pupils do on leaving school to what do they do now to prepare them for life after school. Staff talked about why an option system was necessary to sort out what courses pupils did, the meaning of different types of examination courses, and how these were related to further education and jobs. The CO introduced the topic of settlement into work, the range of jobs, the reasons why it appeared to him some young people did not get work or had difficulty in settling down. This, he found, led to a lot of personal reminiscences as people talked about young people they saw coming in to work, and then to how they thought their own children would react. Quite a few were surprised to learn that their own inability to get through to their child, or their ignorance about jobs for school leavers was common to other parents.

After the first year the course was opened to parents of the fourth year group only, as this meant they were all concerned with potential leavers. Hitherto, it had been more general, although most attending had had children in the top year group. Although it seemed well received it could only touch the edge of the market with about 40 children represented out of a year group six times that size.

#### Comment

The CO seemed rather ambivalent about the degree to which he thought what the parents said was helpful or not. He was keen to meet parents and let them hear what he had to say to a child, and to hear from them what they had in mind. However, he seemed to doubt the value of what they had to say in many cases.

He was convinced of the need to break from a pattern of being a service to young people only, and believed that to help young people first one had to

ensure that the environment for discussion at home was as well informed as one could hope for. This was one of his main reasons for wanting to meet parents on their terms or in less formal situations than an interview. He thought it was for senior staff in the Careers Service to work to organise the Service so that it was making ground with adults, for example, discussions about community needs rather than only appearing to talk about jobs; or planning the office provision so that it could be a walk-in service, rather than the traditional local government appearance. In contacting parents his aim as a CO should be to try to find out the stage in thinking and the amount of information already in the home and then try and offer the appropriate service, not necessarily the same to each child and family.



SECTION 12 - RELATION OF RESULTS TO HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1 - Parents in different occupational levels will be concerned about different school subjects.

The answers received do not support this hypothesis. In fact, there is a close similarity in choice of subjects between parents in each occupational group when the figures of the occupations held by fathers are put together.

Table 50 - Number of times parents marked school subjects as important

FOL		M	FL	B	CH	RK	E	A	HE	CR	L	G	PH	MU	TD	H
	Evesham	12	7	3	3	1	14	0	2	0	0	2	4	1	0	2
1	Knowle	8	4	5	3	1	8	1	4	1	0	2	4	0	3	4
	Redditch	15	9	3	4	1	15	2	5	4	0	4	8	1	6	4
	Evesham	21	4	5	4	2	21	0	2	3	4	7	8	1	1	6
2	Knowle	23	9	8	5	2	16	2	3	3	0	8	3	1	2	8
	Redditch	11	7	2	0	0	13	2	5	2	0	1	4	2	1	6
	Evesham	35	30	15	15	8	35	3	4	3	3	13	15	5	1	13
3	Knowle	28	19	11	8	1	30	7	4	4	3	10	5	5	2	14
	Redditch	8	6	1	2	3	9	2	3	2	0	3	3	0	3	3

Code: M =	Maths	H =	Home Economics
FL =	Foreign Languages	CR =	Craft
B =	Biology	L =	Latin
CH =	Chemistry	G =	Geography
RK =	Religious Knowledge	PH =	Physics
E =	English	MU =	Music
A =	Art	TD =	Technical Drawing
		H =	History

On average, pupils take 7/8 subjects in their curriculum and it is of interest to look at the subjects which do not get included in the list of the first eight topics mentioned. It is possible that several subjects are not included because they are minority interest subjects, and parents, thinking of their own child when they completed the form, disregarded these and concentrated upon majority interest subjects. Some subjects receive a low rating, no doubt, because only small number are able to take

them, for example, music and art or Latin, but there are other subjects at the lower end of the list which would be on offer to all pupils, for example, history, geography, chemistry, physics and technical drawing.

When replies for the top eight subjects are considered within each group by sex of child there is no real difference in the selection of subjects for boys or girls. This is shown in the list below. This, of itself, is interesting as it is fairly generally the case in school that the option scheme is drawn up with alternatives given for boys and girls. Thus, physics may be an alternative to biology, technical drawing for domestic science. Staffing and planning is based upon assumed demand, and would not allow for the unexpected! There could, in many schools be logistical difficulties if all pupils chose the same subjects. This is precisely what parents appear to want, and there is no doubt that future careers would not be seriously at risk if pupils did not take certain practical subjects while at school.

#### List of Most Favoured Subjects

	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
1	Maths	English
2	English	Maths
3	Foreign Languages	
4	Physics	History
5	Chemistry	Biology
6	Biology	Physics
7	Geography	Geography
8	History	Chemistry

The questions relating to this hypothesis concerned actual subjects. A further question which could be explored would be attitude to length of full-time education. There may be differences as parents see people with post-school qualifications unable to find work, and, as a result of this, some parents who formerly would have encouraged their child to continue beyond the statutory leaving age may revise their views.



Hypothesis 2 - Parents have insufficient knowledge of school subjects to be able to take an active role

The high incidence of discussion with their children and their children's teachers would seem to suggest no hanging back by parents who replied from practical experience. As Question 6 showed parents do not avoid talking to their children about subject choice, or giving their views on the subjects to be taken.

What parents may talk about in these discussions must be considered as well as the time available to allow these conversations with staff at school to be anything more than a very brief contact. If the answers to Question 19 are a true account of parental attitude to interviews then many, no doubt, wanted to hear teachers' advice and views and the discussion with teaching staff would revolve around learning what subjects were available or recommended. In other words, parents would be acquiring knowledge rather than offering suggestions.

If this is linked to the remarks made by some parents in interviews that there is little that can be done, because there are not alternative schools or they appreciate the schools cannot offer a totally different range to each pupil, then it would suggest that action to enforce their wishes or make alternative suggestions to those made by the school are only remote possibilities in parents' minds. This is not to suggest lack of information about subjects, but more an awareness of the reality of the situation. However keen they might be for a child to take a particular course, parents do not have the power to insist upon it.

It is conceivable that parents could bring pressure in a school if sufficient numbers had similar problems. Parents do not seem to see their power to affect a school by seeking out parents with like problems to band together. They are concerned with one child at a time and rarely see themselves as having any corporate strength as parents of a year group in



an institution. Their separate, and therefore weak, position is reinforced by the fact that parents only ever meet school teachers en masse at invitations by the school, when the school has summoned them or invited them to particular functions. Some parents may only attend these functions in the final year of a child's schooling, and not be interested in extending their contact to try to work as a group on a particular issue, especially if the child is leaving school and there are no younger children to follow.

This would suggest it is awareness of their position as a weak one rather than lack of knowledge that would prohibit action. Even if parents have knowledge of subjects, few would have the objective knowledge of their child to be able to assess what it might be wise to undertake and, even if they did, it is unlikely that parents would know of similar concern by enough parents to try to create any pressure for change.

Hypothesis 3 - When choosing subjects parents consider future use, but expect their children to have more short term objectives.

Questions concerning this issue did not ask pupils themselves what they thought. The attempt was to see how far parents felt they knew their child's thinking. It could have been answered by a small number of people suggesting parents did not know this, in fact all but three answered the question.

Replies from parents do not support the hypothesis that one point might be more important than any other except at Redditch, where future use received the highest support. However, this does not mean that parents at other schools did not consider future use of subjects; their interest in attending possible sessions when teachers or careers staff might provide information about careers is evidence of that. It does mean that future use was not an over-riding consideration when discussing choice. It is possible that the parents were more aware of the importance of pursuing subjects in general to an advanced level as possible, and that this was



the important key to future plans rather than linking certain subjects to particular careers, and this could explain the higher number of replies regarding ability and interest.

Turning to parents' views of their child's basis for choice, the influence of peers and of teachers is considered small when compared with the other items, namely ability, interest for future use. Here, as with parents' replies, 'future use' emerges as the least thought of item, with the exception of boys at Evesham where it is equal to ability. A higher score is recorded for interest in subjects, especially at Evesham. This is mentioned in some replies as being important for success, for if you are interested then it is thought that you are more likely to succeed. Interest in a subject can change, sometimes because of changes among friends, or their subject choice, or among teachers which is why these two points were included. Subject interest can be, in fact, a short term basis for choice. The responses would suggest this part of the hypothesis is confirmed, and that parents and children do have different priorities.

What may be useful to consider is the relationship of ability and interest. If parents do believe the one supports the other, then the two points might have been expected to appear with an equally high marking. This only really is the case for parental replies at Evesham, and for parents' views of the child's criteria at Redditch. Otherwise there are marked differences in the numbers of replies given, which suggests parents consider these items as separate and separable.

Hypothesis 4 - Parents may think they can only help their children to know about the jobs they themselves hold, and not realise they can also help form views about work in general.

If, as appears, there is considerable discussion about work at home and parents do talk about, or show, their own jobs to their children, then it might be expected that parents would have answered later in the survey that they did consider their child had enough information about working life.



In fact, as Question 26(b) shows, this is not the case.

Does this suggest that, in the answers parents thought of some form of formal teaching about leaving school? The lack of this is a commonly held criticism from parents and employers. On the other hand, does it really mean that, despite the earlier claims to have explained their views fully, this is not, in fact, the case? It would appear that parents consider their child old enough but uninformed to make important decisions and this is after any help that they, as parents, or others, for example, careers service staff, may have given. It is a comment, perhaps, on the total inadequacy of this help that parents are thus included too.

To many people, careers advisory work is the purveying of careers information. In answer to Question 14 approximately half of the parents contacted did not find it easy to know about jobs available to school leavers. This could be one reason why they said pupils leave with insufficient factual information about careers - it is, in fact, a reflection of their inability to help with information. It should not be so difficult for parents to talk about their own working experiences, but this might be a source for bias since it is essentially limited, and if level is different from the children's potential via better education, it could be of little value. In the survey an emphasis was put less upon careers information and factual details about which it is very easy to get out of date, but more upon the social relationships of working life. Perhaps parents are unwilling really to talk about their working experiences and all the discussions which the replies suggest take place concerning decisions about jobs are at a rather superficial rather than a detailed level. There is, perhaps, a reserve about talking about personal careers, especially if it has not been a happy and successful working life.

It would appear that the view that parents can only help regarding their own occupations is the case. Parents do not think pupils appreciate



working life sufficiently and yet they are a party to this. Perhaps parents cannot talk about other jobs because they do not know enough to be able to pass on the details. It is likely that they adopt the generally held view of careers work as revolving around information regarding jobs and the finding of jobs and, as they know little about information and do not have access to vacancies, they feel they have little to communicate. Working life is something that they could, in fact, talk about but do not, because of not seeing this as relevant, or because they do not wish to expose themselves. From this it emerges the hypothesis is correct, the end result being that, through lack of help from any service or source, pupils leave school inadequately prepared.

Hypothesis 5 - The ease with which parents can gather job information varies between occupational levels.

Looking firstly at those who were not in work, there is an equal division between those who found it easy or found it difficult to find out about work for their pupils. The same situation exists among parents in the group 1 jobs where 17 people replies "Yes" or "No" to the question. The only noticeable difference is one between schools with more people at Knowle expressing difficulty than at either of the other schools.

Table 51 - To show whether or not parents found it easy to know about careers, divided between occupational groups and schools.

<u>Occupational Level</u>	0		1		2		3		<u>No answer</u>
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	
Evesham	0	0	8	6	17	8	16	10	16
Knowle	2	1	1	4	10	4	20	10	4
Redditch (not working)	2	2	8	7	6	5	5	4	2

Moving to the group 2 occupational level, although there is little difference at Redditch, when all these schools are added together many more parents find it easy to find careers information. It is the top occupational group that there are some interesting features among the replies. Whereas at Redditch



there is a slight advantage in favour of finding it easier to find information, at Knowle and Evesham there is a clear majority who find it easy to get information. This is the group from which pupils will be most likely to go on to careers in the same potential category after 6th form and further study. It is often stated by school and careers staff that children of parents in the higher occupational groups have an advantage of help and advice at home. This is borne out in the replies.

Among the replies were a number of comments from parents saying that, if parents were interested enough then they could get any information needed. Some at Evesham also said that it was "easier", meaning perhaps, that either more information was available or that experience with older children had helped them in their actions with younger members of the family.

The points mentioned earlier are really notes of extension to the main theme. It appears that there are not greater difficulties according to occupational level of parents, perhaps a greater acknowledgement of the potential area of difficulty among those in lower occupations. The total scores give a majority of parents overall finding it relatively easy to obtain careers information, but this majority is reached by the figures at Knowle where the majority in favour of an affirmative answer was much greater than at either of the other two schools. This difference is caused by greater confidence among group 2 parents. There is no suggestions from the school or replies that this group, more than any other, used careers help rather more frequently than other parents. It could be that these parents anticipated a certain acceptable group of jobs they wanted their children to go into, and therefore felt more secure because they had got some knowledge of jobs in this group. It could be that the children here went to a narrower range in jobs than from other schools, though this is not easy to accept when the range of work in Solihull and nearby Birmingham is taken into account.



Hypothesis 6 - Parents may not be clear as to their role in advice viz-a-viz careers staff, nor how those professionally occupied in careers seek to use parents.

There is certainly interest in taking action to help find employment as replies to Question 13 show, and, as Question 16 has indicated, a confidence among parents as to job knowledge. If this is translated into help in finding jobs, then it would seem that parents can assist their children and do so in a way that is productive, not only talking about jobs but actually finding vacancies and assisting them in the application procedures.

There is an interesting contrast here to Question 19. If parents do know and want to help, then in Question 19 they seem to hang back and avoid making overt suggestions when attending their child's careers advisory interviews or meetings with teaching staff. Interviewers and teachers would be helped if they knew parents views or contacts which they had in mind and which might be used to help in placing a child in employment. It is interesting to conjecture whether parents say little because they feel they are not expected to say very much, or not given opportunity to make their views known.

Replies would suggest parents wish to help their children but do so apart from the 'official' contacts. When confidence in job knowledge and expressing views at interviews are contrasted, then those who do feel they have information seem to offer less than those who say they feel less sure about information. Perhaps the situation is that some parents think they could only help by mentioning particular careers about which they hope to receive more information which would confirm their views as to suitability rather than making suggestions about the sort of skills which they think their children have to offer. Parents appear to be less confident about seeming to assess their child's qualities and personality.

It appears parents are happier at the job placing stage than at the general discussion which takes place earlier than this and do not contribute to this to a large extent.



Hypothesis 7 - The parents' knowledge of their child is not sufficiently gathered by careers teachers and officers.

When the answers to Question 20 are considered, it appears that, overall, more parents felt they could not answer the question as they did not feel sufficiently brought into the interview. Even so, the replies to the following question show that they were satisfied that their views were learnt by the interviewer (by telepathy!). The situation of the interview may not have been ideal, and many parents commented on this, but parents were satisfied that they were understood by the interviewer. This is, therefore, to say that the hypothesis is not proved.

There are differences in the answers from the three schools, and the hypothesis should be tested by each set of replies. At Evesham parents only have contact voluntarily and they may, therefore, be expected to ensure that their views are learnt, even though most say that they were not easily brought into the discussion. At Knowle the attitude of the careers officer and the reaction expressed by some parents could be the reasons why there was little development and contact here. At Redditch, however, where both the school and the careers service are keen to meet and to learn parents' views, and where parents are encouraged to attend interviews and school events, although there is still a large number of people who do not feel brought sufficiently into the discussion, a clear majority were satisfied that their views were passed on.

Hypothesis 8 - Views about the importance of work for girls will vary with occupational level of parents and with whether or not the mother works outside the home.

An examination of the tables for those who thought there was a difference does bring out a number of features. The suggestion is that people within different occupational groups will view the issue of quality of opportunity for boys and girls differently. Altogether, 60.8% of parents felt that the business of job choice was the same, compared with 35.2% who did not and 4% who did not reply to the question.



When the different occupational groups are considered, then as expected, there is a greater percentage of affirmative replies in each group, the gap between "Yes" and "No" answers widen considerably as one goes up the occupational scale, from 8.5% in group 1 to 37.5% in group 3. Similarly, among the overall answers, the largest group response among the replies came from group 3 parents whose replies made up 30.1% of the total stating that the business of job choice is the same for both boys and girls.

Turning to the second part of the hypothesis, namely the influence of working mothers, in all groups there is a large difference in response with more working mothers answering "Yes" than non-working mothers. When the number of replies saying that there is no difference is considered then, with the exception of mothers in group 1, the totals are very similar and those answering do not seem to be affected by experience of work.

Table 52 - To show parents' views about the equality of job opportunity, divided between occupational group of father, and whether or not mother worked.

<u>FOL</u>	<u>YES</u>		<u>NO</u>	
	<u>Mother working</u>	<u>Mother unemployed</u>	<u>Mother working</u>	<u>Mother unemployed</u>
0	1	3	2	2
1	18	4	13	4
2	30	6	13	12
3	37	17	14	12

It would appear that both parts of the hypothesis are proved. There is a difference of view according to occupational level, the difference being that the higher the occupational level of the father, the more likely it is that parents can see the issue of job choice as the same for both boys and girls. Further, the influence of working upon mothers is to increase the "Yes" factor. There is an element of conjecture in this, in that those who work may be more likely to reply in this way, perhaps in a defensive manner.



Hypothesis 9 - Parental influence is bound up with general family communication and willingness to get involved in events provided by schools.

This was, perhaps, too general a point to attempt to answer in the survey and the manner of research, based as it was largely upon a postal questionnaire, did not lend itself to probing the intra-family communications.

Evidence from the survey points to a willingness to attend careers evenings and interviews, to talk to teachers, discuss plans with pupils. Although some parents replied that their children would take little notice these days of their parents' views, this did not appear to deter parents from making their views known. Pupils would, thus, become aware of ideas being put forward, even if they may ignore them in practice. From the American research, it would seem that young people often choose work which is in line with their parents' views, just as they choose friends who are acceptable to their parents. It is possible that some pupils accepted parental views, or knew of them without a formal expression of agreement. Evidence of this would come from the occupations entered by pupils. For those who did not leave school but who continued to further exams, then it will be some time before there can be any comparison of job entered, although it is fair to say that, of most who do remain in school to take academic courses, then a high proportion will go into professional level work, and thus be similar to the level of their parents if this is their occupational level. It is as interesting to notice the jobs entered by those who left at the statutory school leaving stage, they would be expected to go into local firms for jobs known to the family and more likely to see some similar links. The figures in the tables would appear to support the views expressed that, in the accounts of British and American research, namely, that children do follow the same level of work as their parents; but there is encouragement to attain a higher level of work when this possibility exists.

It is not possible to say whether children subsequently enter the grade 3 levels of work. It is a surmise that those who went on to further education are



likely, after 'A' level or other courses, to enter occupations at this level.

The largest single group entering work at what appears to be the same level is at Redditch and this is amongst the lowest grade of jobs. At the same time, 30% of children of parents in grade 1 are continuing their education full time. The continuance from the lower level jobs being held by parents may thus mean that in a school-leaving year almost one third of potential leavers could move into higher level occupations if, after school, they take up work requiring qualifications which have been obtained through staying on.

Table 52 - Destination of school leavers, divided by schools and occupational level of father.

		<u>Evesham</u>		<u>Knowle</u>		<u>Redditch</u>	
		<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
<u>FOL - Group 1</u>	1	2	1	2	0	4	6
	2	1	1	0	1	3	1
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
	FE	9	3	1	1	4	2
	Total	12	5	3	2	11	9
<u>Group 2</u>	1	3	0	0	0	0	3
	2	0	2	3	0	3	1
	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
	FE	8	10	8	5	2	1
	Total	12	12	11	5	5	5
<u>Group 3</u>	1	0	0	3	1	1	1
	2	1	0	1	2	2	1
	3	0	0	2	0	0	0
	FE	12	20	0	12	2	3
	Total	18	20	16	15	5	5

NB: These figures excluded any whose destination could not be traced.

PART 4

CONCLUSIONS



SECTION 13 - SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONIntroduction

The survey has shown that parents seek to influence and help their children through showing support and giving encouragement. This is reflected in their attendance at school functions, their interest in finding out information which might help with regard to occupational choice in particular, their willingness to talk about their jobs and their interest in activities like careers conventions where they and their children can learn useful careers information.

Although parents would not hang back from disclosing their views about possible jobs, they would not wish to enforce them. They believe most pupils leave school inadequately informed, yet also believe they are old enough to enter work. What appears to be needed is more time in school to prepare pupils for working life.

How this can be achieved in what is generally a full time-table is not easy to see, but more could be done by careers advisory staff to utilise time available now and schools should give more resources to careers work. It is surely important to the County that its young workers should be prepared to make the transition from school to work as smoothly as possible and time in the school curriculum is needed to allow for this to happen.

At the same time, if more attention was given by advisory staff to evaluate job experience and knowledge surrounding the pupil in the home, this would help the pupil and involve the parent more directly in advice to his child. Parents appear willing to meet advisory staff but a less than equal part is played by them in the general careers advisory work and little is done to find out what kind of influence parents could bring to bear upon a pupil.



The nature of the influence emerges as support and encouragement. If better informed, it is possible that the willingness of parents to be constructive if they can and not leave all action to the professional advisers, could be translated into positive action on behalf of their children. Careers advisory staff need to accept that the family is their client and not just the boy or girl and so raise their work to influence the pupil's home environment.

#### Value of Information provided by schools

At each of the three schools, information is given in written form to parents about subject choice and this is repeated for those who attend special meetings. Despite this, almost a quarter of the parents of girls at Evesham and a large number of Redditch parents did not recall it (page 89, Table 7). Maybe they forgot it. Maybe a negative reply means that they did not find it useful. Inevitably the replies call into question the suitability and adequacy of the information and the means of passing it on. Attendance at parents meetings at Redditch is only about 40% of a year group and so, for the majority, the written word is the sole aid offered. Of necessity this can only be a brief document outlining the scheme. It is doubtful, therefore, if many parents have the requisite information to play anything other than a passive part in any discussions.

Looking firstly at the written information provided, see example given at Appendix (a), could this be more than just a letter of invitation to meet school staff and listing details of the courses available from which parents and their children are to choose? Experience in schools suggests that few parents are interested to read very much information sent to them by schools, indeed, at one school in Long Eaton which produced a well-written 30 page brochure outlining each course, it was found that few parents read it although a number said they were glad to know the teachers would go to such trouble and assumed the children understood it.



What does appear to be useful to help parents, would be a document which explained the course being offered, for example, GCE, CSE and non-examination courses; subjects offered in each course; an indication of courses that could follow at 16 at school or further education college; and some attempt to show possible links of school subjects with jobs and vocational courses.

This last point is not easy with the enormous list of jobs open to young people. To assist parents, however, it should be possible to give a guide to work entry at 16 or 18 and, perhaps even beyond this. This would not need to be in any great detail, but should endeavour to show the continuing link between school and work courses. Finally, at this stage it is essential to give people information about sources of careers information.

While it may be right to emphasise the choice of subjects at this stage should not be solely governed by career plans, the interest in future use, shown for example in Table 16, should not be overlooked. Parents should be told to consult the careers advisory staff freely and to continue to do so. Too often the presence of careers advisory staff at subject choice occasions is either not accepted as necessary, or played down out of a fear that, if post-school life is allowed to be mentioned, then interest in, and concentration upon, school work will decline.

Secondly, parents appear ready to talk, but frequently find it hard to do so at parents' meetings, the reason being the lack of time. Events when parents know they have a particular appointment are appreciated and more effort needs to be given to this type of occasion. It would also be easier for parents if they could talk to one teacher, rather than spend the evening queuing to talk to perhaps eight staff. There is value in talking to specialist staff with a particular concern, but the practice of talking to all subject staff means that, on such occasions, parents rarely can get an overall view. There would be value in parents being able to talk to a teacher briefed with information from his colleagues in all subjects and able to see himself, the different



strengths and weaknesses of a pupil.

### Views about school subjects

The list of subjects used in Question 3 could, perhaps, be termed a conservative one. In the day to day work of the Careers Service, it is apparent that some parents do not understand new subjects like Integrated Studies, Humanities, Design for Living, and, like employers, are suspicious of courses in subjects which, from their title, do not appear to be of any academic merit - a recent example would be a CSE course in Pop Music.

Within a subject, parents do not know what is being taught, or what basic skills may be covered and encouraged by what sounds like an irrelevant title. Sometimes, titles of subjects used in one school do not mean the same in another school. For these reasons it was decided to keep to the 'safe' subjects and thus avoid confusion. Differences in subjects between schools is another of the points containing seed for confusion in communication between parents and school. If subjects mean different things between schools, then the pupil has the potential difficulty of explaining it to parents and also to employers. Some rationalisation would help. Less examination boards with freedom to legislate for parts of the country would also assist in codifying both title and content of subjects taught in schools.

Experience would suggest that much of the confusion which has arisen since a wider curriculum came about was accompanied by a laudatory move in schools not to reduce standards, but to encourage pupils to achieve a higher and wider education through the creation of broader-based subjects or subjects with a strong element of practical application. These motives are not generally seen in the clamour about school standards.

It is interesting to record the rather narrow subject interest of parents. Only three subjects receive more than 50% support from parents, see Table 10. These are English, Maths and foreign languages. There is no doubt of the importance of English and Maths in themselves and as aids to successful work



in other subjects, but it is almost as though these are the only subjects really grasped by parents. They are the subjects constantly given publicity in the media because of the lack of ability by school-leavers and, in the arguments about changing standards of ability among pupils these days. If the subjects are to be used effectively, then it is through their application in other subjects that they become useful. This linkage and the value of other subjects on their own and as a means of outlet of the two basic subjects need to be emphasised to parents and to employers.

What may be termed scientific or technical subjects have only mixed support. There appears to be a sex division between biology and physics, with the former ignored by boys' parents when they are asked to mention their 'top' four subjects. The low accord given to craft subjects is of concern, not to just teachers of the subjects, but to any who are seeking to arrange a curriculum which is wide and embraces different strands of ways of learning. No doubt parents who answered the question with their child in mind may not have seen much point in these subjects, but overall one would have expected to find that the value of experience in such subjects would have received some recognition as a means of measuring aptitudes for certain occupations.

#### Mystique of choice of subject

Where there is no alternative school to transfer a child to, it is all the more important that parents and pupils should be given some understanding as to how the options are organised. From talking to teachers it appears that they believe a wide spread of subjects reflects strength within the school and is aided by the size of the school. It is argued that, in a small school it is not really possible to offer all that a child should expect or experience. The subjects devised to meet the varying development of the pupils may mean that the basic skills are taught in varying guises and, of course, this does increase the work for teachers devising courses. Maybe a narrower, but more recognisable range of titles and subjects would aid



understanding. Although, for example, some parents may feel it is a good idea to let their child do a Motor Maintenance course, this may be because they feel understanding of cars is useful and relevant but they may see it as something of a leisure course, rather than a way of teaching maths or physics.

Perhaps schools should look at two issues. One is the narrower range of interest shown by parents when compared with teachers. This was first shown in the Schools Council Enquiry 1 (see page 22), and is reflected in answers to Question 2. The second is the need to explain the positive features of a narrower range of topics. From personal experience we often hear of those in small sixth forms, or groups taking a minority interest, being unaware of their academic level because of the lack of competition. If schools explained to parents the need to build up viable numbers for particular courses, optimum use of staff, better library and resource material, then parents would better see the rationale behind the options system. The survey answers suggest a favouring of a narrower range of subjects so this should not be a difficult point to put to parents - it is perhaps teachers who have for some years sought to widen ideas about subjects who will find it hard to accept.

#### Learning about work

It has not been possible to discover enough about the nature of conversation between parents and pupils regarding the choice of subjects or career. Maybe this could be learnt more from a specific survey of the topic, or from the greater use of the interview for eliciting information. This is in a sense disappointing, because it was this lacuna which largely prompted the research. There is constant reiteration of the need to talk in the family, but in answers about school subjects, it appears that parents replied on the basis of what their child was taking, rather than, as hoped, in a more general way about the value of certain subjects as embracing different ways of learning. This seems to suggest that parents viewed the home discussion as starting from the point of what the child might say he or she wants to do, rather than



any attempt to talk about what sort of subjects a child ought to pursue to aid intellectual growth. It is talk of practicalities, rather than principles.

This is repeated in the second section of the questionnaire which deals with occupation choice (page 106 onwards). Here, although most parents feel their children do not know enough about working life, they seem to do little to help fill the gap. Either they do try but the child's lack of practical experience means he or she cannot appreciate or benefit from this advice, or the parental contribution is just insufficient. Although the survey has shown there are topics which parents think are important for their children to know, it has not shown whether parents really do attempt to discuss such matters with their child. Parents say that they try to make their views known, but teenagers are not willing to listen. Talk about work is in response to any request from the child, rather than initiated to try to provide a framework of points which a child might then use when looking at careers information. Parents put much stress on the value of practical experience in work as the best source of help to a pupil. Careers Advisers would agree with this. What might surprise the advisers is the interest parents show in part-time work as an aid to the pupil, (see Table 24). Such work is usually seen by pupils and advisers as purely for pocket money. If advisers are keen to develop formal work experience schemes and class activities like business games, then they would do well to talk about any part-time work pupils have as opportunities for the pupil to see work relationships and demands.

In many schools, pupils are involved in work experience, generally planned so that they spend one week in a job, or in several jobs, lasting one week each. This cannot, because of time available, really enable a pupil to gain the feeling of long term work, but it can be very valuable in allowing the pupil to meet workers, experience a change of routine from normal school, and learn a certain amount about working life from experience and observation.



It is rarely possible to obtain among local employers enough places to take all pupils who could benefit from the opportunity. This survey showed considerable interest by parents in the idea of allowing pupils the chance to taste work in this way.

This interest appeared in replies from all three schools and from parents of pupils of all academic abilities. This suggests that they see it as relevant to all pupils. When looking at schemes of work experience in schools, it is interesting to find that it is rare for this to be provided for pupils of all groups. Sometimes the higher academic potential pupils are given some opportunity after examinations have finished, but it is rare for them to have several comparative periods of work, or for this experience to be discussed in class. It is argued that they can ill afford to miss a few days of school work, or that parents of pupils taking examination courses would not like it. On this latter point, the survey suggests the opposite to be the case.

#### Parents and careers education

There is an obvious readiness, shown in Tables 25 and 26, on the part of parents to talk about their own work, and a willingness to try to show this to their children. Parents appear to agree that their children can only really appreciate work by doing it themselves, or through visits to work situations. Experience in careers work has, at times, led to a situation in which a parent or other employer has been well able to talk about his or her work, but has not always been able to talk at the level of the pupils. They may need prompting to remind them to talk about their views of starting in the job, or what it feels to change a job or be given a post of responsibility for the first time. To help parents get over these points, rather than just describe the tasks of the job, which can often be put in a leaflet, is something careers staff should try to introduce in courses for parents, or when meeting parents and talking about how they may take part in the discussions about future plans.



One of the reasons for the enquiry was to discover if the information about employment given by, and available from, parental knowledge varied between occupational groups. This was to try and compare the situation of children and the range of jobs, and therefore, the quantity of information they could hope to pick up at home. It is thought that children from people in higher level jobs have an advantage in terms of contacts which their parents might have access to, in helping them find a job, or talk about a line of action. There is, in fact, in these results only a little difference in the selection of items in Question 9 which parents believe are important to be known by pupils, and the same amount of ignorance thought to exist in pupils' minds, whatever the occupational level at home. In Question 11, the opportunity to visit parents' work is mentioned as common to all groups. This had not been expected, at the outset I had expected greater difficulty among people in lower level jobs to arrange this.

When this grading by occupation was applied to choice of school subjects, there was very little difference again in preferences. It had been thought that people in jobs requiring some form of academic or vocational training might have strong feelings about school subjects. At times in interviews, one has heard parents pour scorn on the value of subjects like religious education, craft or music because they do not appear to have much academic value, or are not accepted for entry to training by certain professional bodies. The survey has endorsed this but not in any way to give different views between occupational levels.

Participation by parents in careers work and careers interviews is something which arouses varying views among careers staff. It is similar to the fear of external interference or control, sometimes expressed by teachers when asked about parental interest in school and action initiated by associations of teachers and parents. This is often opposed by teachers on the grounds that such associations want to run the school. Case Study D includes a



reference to a course for parents which was viewed with misgiving by the head teacher. When he realised that parents really wanted to know what went on in a school rather than dictate what should go on, his views altered. The survey shows a clear interest in school activities even though many parents do not feel the need to attend them each year. However, replies to questions about the purpose of those visits, given in Table 40, suggest an expectation of going to listen to information or take advice, rather than to take an active part in the educational and occupational planning of their own children. This is, at times, due to the manner of the interview. It appears it can also be due to lack of knowledge to enable a parent to feel confident about taking an active part. Sometimes it seems a preference to hang back and leave discussion to the child and the adviser. Sometimes it appeared to be the timing and place of interview or contact which inhibited discussion. Little, if anything, was ever said to parents to explain the purpose of inviting them to these sessions so that, to some parents, it seemed a statutory obligation by the school or Careers Service to invite participation.

#### Occupational equality and causes

The movement towards equality of opportunity is supported by legislation and therefore by those employed in the bodies set up by law to give careers advice. The need to make clear that all can apply equally for different jobs is not generally doubted, but parents do see boys and girls as differently orientated for various reasons, but particularly by having different interests and physical qualities, and from these points they assume a greater difference in work interests than may be advisers think is correct. Advisers need to be aware of this when discussing careers which may be suitable. Their task, when faced by someone who is surprised by a reply that a job mentioned would be more suitable for a girl or boy and not the boy or girl at the interview, should be less to say that such barriers no longer exist in work today and more to discuss the pupil and the job to discover why someone may think the two are incompatible. It may lead to a change in attitude. This, however, is not the



prime aim of the discussion, that remains still the search for a suitable avenue for the pupil to pursue.

The survey shows a strong view that the man of the house is the breadwinner and, because his career will last longer his work is more important than that of a woman, see pages 140 et seq. The cost of living and the high incidence of marriage break-up would suggest that it is equally important for girls to qualify and work. A girl's work was seen by many in the survey as being useful for extras in the home. To be practical a more long term view is needed by many parents.

In the Careers Service there is perhaps a difficulty in appearing to preach the message of equality, because although the majority of advisers are female, most senior posts are held by males. There is perhaps a vested interest to work for equal opportunity in all jobs and hope for it in one's own! Among careers teachers in schools it is common, where there is a team of staff, for the head of the department to be a man. This, of course, is the case throughout school staffing but there is an additional issue among careers teachers. Pastoral care in schools is normally divided by sex and this overlaps into careers work with a danger that men or women concentrate upon knowing about certain areas of work. While this can be a good use of time available, it is frequently the case that the division is done upon the traditional ideas of what are called girls' and boys' jobs. An example often found, is for a woman member of staff to be responsible for information about entry to teaching, and this seems to have come about because more girls than boys in mixed schools apply to the profession. To pupils it can be that they then see a job as suitable for a girl or boy because a woman or man is the person to whom they go for advice.

#### Parents and advisory interviews

The emphasis upon the written word as the principal means of communication between school, careers service and parents has already been discussed.



Insofar as only a minority of parents may attend events organised for them, the tone and content of such communications is very important. In the survey, some parents spoke of the value of school reports. It is worth considering that in many cases more time will have been put into writing these remarks than parents may in total receive in conversations at a parents meeting. This is because of the pressure of numbers of people wanting to talk to each teacher.

When considering interviews with careers officers, it appears from the survey that there are misunderstandings as to the purpose of the interview, the relationship of the adviser to the school and the reason why parents are invited to be present (Tables 40 and 41). Letters often merely notify the parent that their child is to have an interview but do not suggest that, if he can attend, a parent will be asked to take part and help both child, and an adviser, by introducing his own views and information. If the invitation included a short questionnaire asking the parent for his views or any information about domestic background which might affect career plans, or any contacts they wished to pursue on the child's behalf, then this, if returned before the interview, would enable the careers officer to plan the interview to better effect and where the parent was unable to come to the interview, the adviser would have some insight into any family discussions and ideas. An example is given in Appendix (C).

The letter should not just deal with information about the child but should also explain how the adviser would use any information and outline the purpose of the interview as a part of the process of moving from school to work rather than the only occasion when the transition and choice of work will be discussed.

To most parents it is necessary to introduce the idea that vocational choice is not something which can be dealt with in a one-off occasion, but is a process during which it is hoped that a pupil will be able to determine his future plans.



Under the provision of the Education and Training Act (1974) a short written summary of any guidance given to a pupil is to be provided either when the pupil leaves school or to summarise points mentioned in an interview. The summary is written for the pupil but will provide a useful reminder to pupil and to parent if shown to the parent. The provision which has still to be enacted is considered to be of value to the pupil who will frequently forget some of the details mentioned at an interview and to the parent by outlining the content of an interview or interviews he may not have been able to attend in person. Many careers officers do now write a note about the interview and find it is helpful as a link between interviews.

Finally, many parents no doubt wonder if they should attend the pupil's interview. They may feel they do not wish to get in the way of the child. Parents should be encouraged to see the interview as an occasion when an important family matter is being considered and, therefore, they cannot stand by. They should be encouraged to look upon the information in school and careers office as part of the community resource and as members entitled to use it to the full. The careers officer, unlike a careers teacher, is not a member of the school but works in a service open to people of all ages and is seeking not just to work with the pupils but with the family, employers and all who may be concerned with entry to, and settlement in, work. The more that careers officers can deal with employers and parents, the more they will be able to influence the environment in which a young person is growing and through which the young person is moving.

#### Sources of information in the community

The survey has shown an awareness of the existence of help regarding careers from libraries and the media. These results give rise to particular comments on such sources of help to parents (see Table 37 on page 126). The first concerns the use of public libraries, an obvious place where members of the public should expect information. The Library Association produces for its



members and the general public, a leaflet listing priced publications about careers, but as an association is not qualified to comment upon the value of particular items. In 1972 the Institute of Careers Officers published 'Books about Careers' which gave a grading of readability and relevance of content to help teachers, librarians and any other people concerned with careers work which titles were worth stocking. The comments were written by practising careers officers and teachers who had read widely in careers literature. A supplement to this appeared two years later to bring the position up to date, but nothing further has been produced which lists publications and comments on their use as sources of help to thereader wishing to learn about a particular career.

The local Careers Service could provide a useful service if it discussed careers books with librarians in the same way that they frequently advise careers teachers, faced with little time for their careers work and the need to maintain an up to date careers library. Sadly, this rarely appears to happen and, even in an authority where the Information Officer of the Careers Service is a trained librarian, her former colleagues do not think of discussing careers books with her before purchasing. Perhaps neither the library staff nor the Careers Service staff realise the place accorded to the careers section as an aid to parents.

Secondly, many parents refer to help a friend or employer can give. Sometimes it can be easier for a parent to involve a third party in chatting about a job, even their own job. A child may be more receptive to someone outside the family. This informal source of help (or <sup>hindrance</sup> if the person is out of date or heavily biased for or against a particular job or firm) is often overlooked by professional staff and is important for them to bear in mind. It underlines again the need for advisers to talk to parents and pupils about any jobs known about, or which the family may have contacts in so giving the adviser a picture of all possible information sources and information in the home.



At one school in Staffordshire, the school and careers officer were setting up two services to help the school's career work. One asked employers how they could help pupils; the other invited parents to share in the careers work. They were asked if they would be willing to talk to individuals or small groups of pupils about their own job, or whether they could show the job to a pupil for example. It was hoped to capitalise on the interest in the school where the parent had children and, perhaps, if they were also employers, they recruited young people. This appeared a valuable way of tapping community knowledge and time.

The third point is the reference to the careers officer or teacher as the only source of information by some of the respondents (page 127). Already the lack of recognition of differences in functions and, therefore, perhaps also of staff has been mentioned. There is in most towns a Careers Office, often confused with the Job Centre or Unemployment Benefit Office. It is in part to clear up such potential misunderstanding that careers officers try to clarify their role and service when talking to parents and to explain to them that there is in the community a service which is available for advice not just to school leavers but for any issues that arise in the settling in to work and changing of work by young people and, since the 1974 Employment and Training Act, of people of any age.

Turning now to the action of careers officers at interviews, it is pleasing to learn, in Tables 42 and 43, that parents felt they were brought into conversations sufficiently well. Observation of many interviews would have suggested that, after the courtesies of welcoming a parent, many careers officers then allotted the parent a passive, listening role. This is said to be because the client is the pupil, or because there is insufficient time to engage the parent in discussion also. If staff do really believe the home to be the greatest single influence, then more time should be spent learning about the nature of this influence. When parents say they are satisfied, it may be that they expect little involvement, indeed answers to the question



asking why they thought they were invited show that many expected to be told what might result rather than share in the discussion.

To involve and help parents more, two activities could be considered. One is for the Careers Service to devote more time to what may be termed the accidental source of information, namely information about work for young people which parents might meet in their local paper. Job finding at present is difficult and is a news item. Where papers and local radio have been involved in schemes to publicise young people seeking work, or the need to notify any vacancies, such schemes have often been of use. Sometimes an independent information service will be easier for a parent to use to get information. Staff in careers work in certain areas have operated enquiry columns in papers and been keen to give time to ensure information and aid to parents is not confined to formal links and people having to come to offices for help but is readily seen as part of community help.

The second activity is in giving more time to direct contact with parents. This may be for some, through courses held in school or such places as adult education centres. It may be through arranging interview times when parents can see advisers apart from their children. The Careers Service tends to see pupils as their main clientele; perhaps they should widen their horizon to embrace the whole community. The willingness expressed by parents to get involved in careers discussions with their children is surely indicative that they would be glad of the opportunities to learn accurate information or assist professional staff who are trying to help pupils prepare for work. Careers advisers need to see that they cannot deal with a pupil in isolation from their family.

Whatever method is used to increase contact with parents, there are inevitable implications for the work load of careers officers. If the Service was staffed upon the size of the community, and not just upon the school leaving population, then it could be in a stronger position to help all age groups and be more



available to anyone, particularly parents of young people, as a support and advice centre when needed.

SECTION 14 - RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The period in secondary education when pupils choose subjects for the last two years of statutory education is the first time when they and their parents have any active involvement in deciding what a pupil is going to study. Parents are invited to take part but appear to have to do so on limited information. There is need to examine the process of parental involvement so as to enable parents to obtain an overall view of the teachers' opinions of the academic capacity and potential of their child. More meetings with parents when less members of a year group will be invited, thus giving more time for discussion are held. In addition, school staff should look at the way information about a pupil is gathered and held by staff with the aim of allowing a smaller group of staff to have overall information. These may be house tutors or form or year tutors depending upon the organisation of the school. This would enable parents to obtain a more precise total view than at present gleaned through conversations with a number of staff each only seeing a pupil in a particular subject. By being better informed, parents will have greater capacity to help their children in the home discussions.
  
- 2 In addition to reconsidering the way information is collated and given to parents, school staff should review the nature of the written information which is provided. Although this needs to be brief if it is to be read, it should explain differences between levels of course, and the value of linking subjects which can support each other through using similar intellectual skills should be mentioned. Where new courses are being offered then there is a need to outline the content. The survey has shown an interest in a very narrow range of subjects and parents need reminding through information provided, that other subjects do



employ the basic skills of arithmetic and English. By this means a better appreciation of the value of taking a range of subjects could be encouraged, and parents give encouragement to their children doing certain subjects because they accepted and understood the reasoning behind advice to follow the course.

- 3 Parental interest in future use of school subjects, even at the third year stage of secondary schooling, should be acknowledged by school staff and careers information made easily available for reference when subjects are being chosen in the third year.
- 4 The Careers Service should be involved automatically in discussions with parents, who need also <sup>to</sup> be encouraged to talk to staff and to their children about future plans. It would serve to emphasise that occupational choice is a long process involving more than just job information. It would also be useful to parents to be able to look at information about courses beyond 16 and, indeed in Higher Education, to appreciate how choices at the third year stage may have a bearing upon more advanced vocational or academic courses.
- 5 Parents show belief in the value of work experience and in part-time job experience. Rarely do advisers spend time talking about these. Careers officers should seek in their interviews to find out what a pupil has learnt from any work which could be an influence in his or her view of employment, responsibility in work and standards expected by employers.
- 6 School and careers staff need to explore the possibility of more extensive use of work experience schemes as part of the school curriculum. This is to give pupils a chance to see a job in which they may have expressed an interest or to see and work in different jobs which are within their capacity so assisting them in the process of occupational choice. The present employment position may make it difficult to increase such opportunities and it may be hard to find more openings

for pupils, but every effort should be made to extend the use of work experience in careers education.

- 7 If work experience is organised, there is a need to make sure that this opportunity is used in class work so that it is integrated into the subjects done in school. This should not only be through careers lessons, but subject teachers should be appraised of the work demands of jobs done by pupils and effort made to link school and work life by using the work experience not as a separate extra to the school course, but as a part of the course. Thus it should be possible to use examples from the work place before and after someone has had a period of work experience in technical or scientific subjects and to use examples of work relationships and situations in classwork about personal relationships and moral issues.
- 8 Careers advisers and teachers would find their understanding of the influences upon a pupil widened if they asked about jobs done by people at home or known to them. This is not to suggest that the pupils will wish to follow the parents' jobs, but purely to suggest that there is a lot of often untapped information in the home. In addition, advisory staff would have a better understanding of the occupational pressure which may be brought to bear upon pupils who cannot be seen in isolation from home environment.
- 9 Careers advisory staff should examine methods of involving parents through courses or special interviews. This action might be to arrange separate interviews for parents when pupils are not present. A second method could be to repeat the careers education given to pupils through courses or events organised for parents. Careers Conventions looked upon by some parents as of especial use are one means of achieving this. Another method could be to try to use local radio or newspapers more.



- 10 Careers officers need to review their practice of considering pupils as their main clientele and give more time to interviewing parents. This will allow parents to receive information. It will also emphasise that a pupil's choice is influenced by the home and will affect the home. It will increase the adviser's knowledge of home circumstances.
- 11 Careers advisory staff will have to be increased if more time is to be devoted to interviewing members of the family separately.
- 12 Parents need to be given more precise explanation of the purpose of advisory interviews with pupils and a written summary should be provided, briefly stating what has been discussed and the reasons for the suggestions, if any, made by an adviser. This will, if retained by the pupil or shown to the parents, improve understanding between family and adviser.
- 13 Parents' interest in seeking careers information from such sources as public libraries warrants attention. Liaison between staff of the Careers Service who are regularly reading and using careers books, and the Library Service should be improved so that these two parts of the same local authority can improve their service to the public.
- 14 Parental involvement in careers advisory work in schools should be encouraged where possible. Their occupational expertise should be used and parents' links with schools through having children in a school should be used as a means of encouraging them to join in any careers information sessions for which they are qualified; or accept visits to their place of work by pupils seeking job information.

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Appendices

- (a) Example of the kind of letter sent by many schools to parents of 3rd year pupils.
- (b) Example of letter sent by careers officer inviting parents to the pupil's interviews in the 5th year at schools. This one specifically gives the parents an opportunity to decide if the child is to be interviewed, or not.
- (c) Example of letter and questionnaire sent by careers service to parents of 5th year pupils. In this case parents' views are solicited to help understand the nature of discussion in the home.
- (d) Example of short course organised for parents in Sheffield.
- (e) Example of short course organised for parents in Redbridge.
- (f) Programme of video-recordings made by ILEA for use with parents.
- (g) Letter sent to parents accompanying questionnaire.
- (h) Questionnaire used in Main Survey.
- (j) Letter sent to those who did not reply to first letter.
- (k) List of jobs held by parents who responded to questionnaires.
- (l) University of Melbourne Work Quiz.
- (m) Minnesota Job Description Questionnaire.

UPTON HOUSE SCHOOL

Appendix (a)

Homerton Row,  
London, E9 6EB.

22nd April 1975

Dear Parents,

When your son goes into the fourth year at this school next September, he will be able to choose some of the subjects he will study. I am sure you will agree that the choice of these subjects is very important, because they will affect the career he will take up when he leaves school. You will find a list of the subjects on the attached form. Your son will also bring a form home with him, and I hope that you and he will be able to discuss his choice of subjects.

In order to explain the choice system to you, and to give you the opportunity of asking for further information about the form and the choices, we should like to invite you to a parents' evening at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 30th April, we very much hope that you will be able to join us on that evening. Perhaps you would be good enough to indicate on the attached form whether or not you can come.

After this, your son will be able to make his choice of subjects, and to talk to his Housemaster, to his House Tutor, to Mr. Mathias and Mr. Windle the Deputy Headmasters, or to Mr. Gowlett who deals with Careers.

If you cannot come to the meeting on the 30th April, and if you have any queries about any aspect of the choice of your son's subjects, please contact your son's Housemaster.

With my very best wishes,

Yours sincerely

R. D. Bayfield,  
Headmaster

---

Please detach and ask your son to return this form to his House Tutor.

NAME OF BOY: \_\_\_\_\_

HOUSE \_\_\_\_\_

I shall/shall not\* be able to come to the parents' evening on Wednesday, 30th April.

SIGNED

(Parent/Guardian)

\* Please delete whichever does not apply.



DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

SOUTH DERBYSHIRE CAREERS SERVICE

Telephone  
Burton on Trent 213431

Careers Office  
Midland Road  
Swadlincote  
Burton on Trent

Dear Parent

The Careers Service, which is part of the Education Service, exists to give every possible assistance to young people in the important business of choosing a suitable career. In attempting to make this assistance as effective as possible, the offices in the Careers Service work in close co-operation with schools, in particular with the Careers Teachers within the schools.

The usual procedure has been for arrangements to be made for each young person to have an interview with a Careers Officer at some point within their 5th year. Experience is leading us to question whether in every case, the individual interview is necessary or the most appropriate way of giving advice particularly at the 5th year stage. It is becoming obvious that a number of parents and pupils have some difficulty in seeing the relevance of an interview at this time in their school life, in particular when further full-time education is envisaged.

Therefore, after careful thought and discussion it is proposed that we invite you, as parents, to consider whether you feel your child would benefit from an interview at this time, and to complete the tear off reply slip at the bottom of the page and return it to school as soon as possible.

I would take this opportunity of emphasising the fact that the Careers Officers are ready to meet and talk with young people and their parents if required at any time throughout the school year. Any such request can be made either through the Careers Teacher or direct to the Careers Office.

Yours sincerely

BARRY D COTTON  
Senior Careers Officer

---

I wish/I do not wish my son/daughter to be interviewed by a Careers Officer during this present academic year.

Signed .....

Dear Parent

Your son/daughter will be eligible to leave school at Easter/summer and Careers Officers will be visiting the school during the school year to interview any pupils, whether or not they are leaving school, who need careers guidance, information or help in obtaining employment. To help Careers Officers plan their programme, they need to know who will need help and what kind of help they need. Parents have the greatest influence on pupils' career thinking and know better than anyone else how far their sons/daughters have progressed in making career decisions. I am, therefore, writing to ask whether you would be good enough to complete for me the enclosed questionnaire. With the information you provide, Careers Officers will be able to allocate more time to the pupils who really need it. If you show that an interview would be helpful, I shall arrange one at school within the next few months, and you will also be given the opportunity to see the Careers Officer. I should make it clear, too, that although you may state on this questionnaire that an interview will not be necessary, you or your son/daughter can ask for an interview at any time.

I should be obliged if you would return the completed questionnaire within seven days to me/to the school.

Yours faithfully

Principal/Area Careers Officer



NAME:

ADDRESS:

SCHOOL:

CLASS:

1. When do you expect your son/daughter to leave school? .....
2. Has your son/daughter **some** definite plan or aim for further study (including Sixth Form studies) of employment? ..... YES/NO
3. If so, state briefly what job or further study he/she has in mind  
.....  
.....  
.....
4. Does your son/daughter need further information on any particular jobs or courses of study he/she has been considering eg closing date for application, availability of openings, general information on the work/course? .....  
.....YES/NO...
5. If so, state briefly what information is needed?
6. Please tick (/) whichever of these statements applies:-
  - (a) My son/daughter is undecided on what he/she would like to do.
  - (b) My son/daughter has some ideas on what he/she would like to do but would like to discuss these ideas with the Careers Officer.
  - (c) I think it would be helpful for my son/daughter to have an interview.
  - (d) I would like to have an interview with you myself.
  - (e) I do not think it will be necessary for my son/daughter to have an interview at this stage.
7. If your son/daughter is leaving school this year, will he/she require any help in finding suitable employment?  

YES/NO
8. Please add any other comments you would like to make:-



Session 1

Vocational Guidance

- 1) What is vocational guidance? JTP
- 2) Structure of Sheffield Careers Office SW
- 3) Services offered. SW
- Break
- 4) Discussion Groups.
- 5) General Session.
- 6) Specimen Careers Programme. JTP/SW

Session 2

Factors Affecting Careers Choice.

- 1) Factors affecting careers choice SW
  - a) Seven point plan.
  - b) Different people who influence
- 2) Film: "A Job to Decide".
- 3) Tools of the Trade JTP
  - a) Vocational guidance interview and relevant paper work.
  - b) Psychometric & other tests.
- Break
- 4) Discussion Groups
- 5) General Session.
- 6) A parent describes his children's careers guidance experiences.

Session 3

The Educational System.

- 1) Organisation of Sheffield schools - Careers Teacher.
- 2) Public Examination System. JTP
- 3) 16+ choice. SW
- 4) 18+ choice. AS/JP
- Break
- 5) Discussion Groups.
- 6) General Session.



Session 4.

Local & National Job/  
Career Opportunities

- 1) Local job opportunities                      SW
  - a) Careers Office annual report and statistics.
  - b) Levels of entry.
  - c) Application procedures - the employers viewpoint.                      JTP
- 2) National job opportunities.                      AS/JP  
  
Break
- 3) Discussion Groups.
- 4) General Session.

Review of Course.

- 1) Financial awards to students.  
- Representative staff awards branch.
- 2) Review & assessment of the course.                      JTP/SW  
  
Break
- 3) Open forum:  
Panel of speakers comprising:  
  
Personnel Officer, Headteacher, Further & Higher Education representatives, School Careers Staff and Careers Officers.
- 4) Closure of course

SHEFFIELD CAREERS SERVICE

YOU  
YOUR CHILD  
A CAREER

Help for Parents who wish to  
improve their knowledge of the  
vocational guidance process.



These evening sessions are intended for pupils from the fourth year and upwards in any secondary school.

PARENTS  
ARE PARTICULARLY WELCOME  
on their own,  
or accompanied by a  
son or daughter.

There is no charge

The provisional programme is shown inside this leaflet; but changes may have to be made at the last moment if films are not received.

Enquiries about the programme can be made at any time to any of the Careers Offices listed on the back.

These meetings can only provide general information: more confidential interviews can be arranged during office hours.

#### BARKINGSIDE

Forest Road (Fairlop Boys' School)  
Hainault: ILFORD IG6 3HB

Telephone: 500 1241

#### ILFORD

Cleveland Road (Junior School)  
ILFORD IG1 IEW

Telephone: 553 2938

#### WOODFORD

Community Services Centre  
(Gates Corner)  
120 High Road  
SOUTH WOODFORD E18 2QS

Telephone: 505 4728

#### HOURS

Monday to Friday

9 am to 1 pm

and

2 pm to 5 pm

Late evenings till 7.30 p.m.:-

Barkingside - Tuesday

Ilford - Wednesday

Woodford - Thursday

#### Appendix (e)

#### CAREERS FILMS

#### AND DISCUSSION

A series of evening sessions in November  
December 1975

at

Gilbert Miles Secondary  
School

and

Seven Kings High School

and

Woodford Careers Office

LONDON BOROUGH OF REDBRIDGE

CAREERS SERVICE



MONDAYS 7.45 pm	TUESDAYS 7.45 pm	WEDNESDAYS 7.45 pm
at Woodford Careers Office (address overleaf)	at Gilbert Miles Secondary School Mayfield Road, Dagenham	at Seven Kings High School Ley Street, Ilford
NOVEMBER 3RD  Films: When They Leave School What Are They Doing at College? - a general introduction to the choice of work and further education	NOVEMBER 4TH  Films: When They Leave School What Are They Doing at College? - a general introduction to the choice of work and further education	The information on Wednesday evenings will be useful in the main for pupils expecting to obtain GCE at 'A' level.  NOVEMBER 5TH  Films: A Job to Decide On Campus - a general introduction to the choice of work and higher education
NOVEMBER 10TH  Films: A Vital Communication - an outline of work with Post Office Telephones Springboard to Success - opportunities for Certified Accountants Slides: The Receptionist	NOVEMBER 11TH  Films: A Vital Communication - an outline of work with Post Office Telephones Springboard To Success - opportunities for Certified Accountants Slides: Office Work For Girls Sound-Tape: Hear About Us Clerical work in the Civil Service	NOVEMBER 12TH  Films: Administrator's World Chartered Secretary Springboard to Success Certified Accountants Personnel People Personnel Management
NOVEMBER 17TH  Films: Graphics  Slides: Engineering Crafts	NOVEMBER 18TH  Films: Graphics - a background to the printing industry Slides: Engineering Crafts	NOVEMBER 19TH  Films: Building A Career - technician and management training in building Design and The Engineer - the work of designing three engineering projects Slides: Professional Printing - the role of the printing graduate
NOVEMBER 24TH  Films: People Who Like People - careers in the catering and hotel industry Model Girl - the experiences of a fashion model Supermarket	NOVEMBER 25TH  Films: Animal Technician Model Girl Supermarket - three telerecordings from the BBC series "Going To Work"	NOVEMBER 26TH  Films: People Who Like People - careers in the catering and hotel industry Your Police And You - some human problems confronting policemen The Young Managers - in various sections of the distributive industry
DECEMBER 1ST  Films: It's One Way of Helping	DECEMBER 2ND  Films: It's One Way of Helping	DECEMBER 3RD  Films: Decision By Accident



# Programme 1

## THE NEED FOR CAREERS GUIDANCE

Looks at popular views on the importance or otherwise of careers guidance and the sources of influence on the choice of a career. Is a job simply a way of earning a living, or does it influence the way we live? Can we identify the main sources of influence on young people's choice of career and having identified them, list them in order of importance, e.g.

- Parents
- Relatives (older brothers, sisters, Uncle Jim, etc.)
- Teachers
- Careers Officers
- Employers (recruitment propaganda)
- Newspapers and TV
- Books and pamphlets, etc.

Note that any definite statement as to the correct order of importance is likely to be wrong. There is in fact no correct order, but recent research surprisingly enough indicates that parents are still the major source of influence. Whether this is so in the negative as well as in the positive sense is examined in a later programme on the role of parents in vocational guidance.

Most information about jobs and careers seems to be concerned with entry qualifications, training, wages, salary, prospects, condition of work, attractions, challenges, etc. Is this what young people really want to know? Some recent research indicates that the psycho social aspects of work are in fact more important, less well-known, and seldom publicised. How do we answer questions from young people like: "What does it feel like to do a job like that?" as well as "will I be able to do it?". Who can help them decide, and how?

# Programme 2

## THE CAREERS SERVICE

Looks at the professional help available from the I.L.E.A. Careers Service and attempts to answer the questions: Who are these careers officers, what are their qualifications and training, what kind of service are they able to give, and are there

## TRANSMISSION TIMES: SPRING TERM 1975

Maximum length of programme 25 minutes

All on channel 2

Programme	Preview	Transmissions			
	Monday 18.15	Monday 20.10	Tuesday 19.30	Wednesday 20.05	Thursday 19.30
The Need for Careers Guidance	6th Jan.	13th Jan.	14th Jan.	15th Jan.	16th Jan.
The Careers Service	13th Jan.	20th Jan.	21st Jan.	22nd Jan.	23rd Jan.
The School	20th Jan.	27th Jan.	28th Jan.	29th Jan.	30th Jan.
The Employer	27th Jan.	3rd Feb.	4th Feb.	5th Feb.	6th Feb.
The Parents' Role	3rd Feb.	10th Feb.	11th Feb.	12th Feb.	13th Feb.
Higher Education	10th Feb.	17th Feb.	18th Feb.	19th Feb.	20th Feb.



changes in view? The main provisions of the new Employment and Training of 1973 will be mentioned and their implications for Inner London. The tutor need to be aware of the relevant sections of the act, particularly those affecting Careers Service. Speculation about the application of the act should be avoided. Discussion of the guidance needs of all students irrespective of age could be a natural follow-up subject for discussion. Areas of specialism by careers officers could be mentioned, e.g., in work with graduates and postgraduates (e.g., as polytechnic), with students on advanced courses at schools or colleges, with the younger clients of the present youth employment service and the physically handicapped. Mention should also be made of the careers officer's guidance methods, and the tools of the trade, e.g., collection of personal data, occupational interest guides and psychometric tests could be explained briefly.

wise to leave it all to the experts? No careers officer would claim to be the expert, but would expect the co-operation of teachers or tutors, parents and employers in providing help.

## Programme 3

### THE SCHOOL

starts at the help available from school. Careers guidance is a development process, should begin in the latter years of secondary education, and logically should be continued after the end of full-time education as part of what many enlightened employers now term "Career Development".

Parents have a duty to make themselves conversant with the arrangements made for careers education in their children's secondary schools; what is done? how? when? — arrangements will differ of course according to the individual school. In this programme the Authority's Careers Guidance Adviser, Miss Avent, and the careers teacher will stress basic points for follow-up discussion. The organisation and purposes of a programme of careers education; the importance of a 3rd year of study at the subject options stage when secondary school courses are chosen; school examinations; public examinations and their relationship to entry into employment; the significance of "staying on" and choice of 6th form and/or further studies. It may be useful as a follow-up to continue discussion of the role of the careers teacher. It would also prove useful to run through the gamut of CSE, 'O' and 'A' levels, City and Guilds certificates, Ordinary and Higher National certificates and Diplomas, CNAAs and university degrees and professional qualifications; as a preliminary to discussion of whether these "pieces of paper" are all that employers are interested in.

## Programme 4

### THE EMPLOYER

The main theme of this programme is that, for vocational guidance to be worthwhile it must be accompanied with help to the individual in implementing career plans. Inevitably the latter will depend on and demand a knowledge of the whole range and extent of the opportunities available. Using Inner London as an example the programme begins by illustrating the need to be aware of the continual changes in the employment situation, it goes on to explore selection for employment and what employers expect. What does a personnel training officer look for during an interview? The programme will also look at the present pattern of training, links between training and further education and career development. Particular mention is made of the need for widening the range of opportunities for women and girls.

A natural follow-up to this programme would be for a local careers officer to be available to brief parents on the current employment situation affecting young people.

## Programme 5

### THE PARENTS' ROLE

Illustrations of the dominant, indifferent, and supportive parent are intended to lead to a discussion of the role of the parents as partners with teacher and careers officer in the careers guidance process. The varying parental attitudes could be elicited from the group in the light of their own experience, tabulated and discussed. The need for parents themselves to be informed and knowledgeable about where and when to seek help is mentioned in the programme, and could be followed up by compiling a list of sources of information. Copies of the usual hand-outs should be obtained from the local careers office and made available.

## Programme 6

### HIGHER EDUCATION

This is seen as an optional programme and is designed with parents of sixth formers in mind, but it could equally be shown to parents of prospective sixth formers.



After a brief look at the branches of higher education open after 'A' levels, two careers advisers, one from the Inner London polytechnics and one from the University of London, are questioned about the needs of students at this level for vocational guidance. Have parents a relevant role to play? The programme includes with a discussion on the employment of graduates and refers to "sandwich training", professional/postgraduate training, articles of pupillage, etc. For programme 4, it will be essential to have a careers officer present to join the discussion following this programme and preferably this time a careers officer who specialises in work with students on advanced courses at school, college or polytechnic.

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CYEE Careers Bulletin Research Supplement No. 5

"Theories of Vocational Choice"  
CYEE Careers Bulletin Supplement No. 7

"Careers Education in the 1970s"  
Schools Council Working Paper No. 40

"Counselling and Guidance — The Pastoral Care of Secondary School pupils"  
ILEA pamphlet

List of CYEE 'Choice of Career' pamphlets  
ILEA Guide to Further Education

DES pamphlets "After 'A' levels"  
"What next after 'A' levels"  
and "Signposts to Higher Education"

Employment and Training Government Proposals HMSO Command No. 5250  
and 'Employment and Training Act 1973' — HMSO

NB: A set of Five transparencies for use with an overhead projector to illustrate aspects of developmental vocational guidance as teaching points in group discussion with parents (Programmes 1, 2 and 3) is available to course tutors from the Deputy Principal Careers Officer, 9 Carmelite Street, E.C.4

The following diagrams may serve as an aide-mémoire to Tutors during discussions following the programmes. Diagrams need not be used in numerical order but at the tutor's discretion depending on the programmes used and subsequent points raised by parents.



Appendix (g)

Bromsgrove 74461

37 Warwick Avenue  
Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire

17th June 1976

Dear

I am writing to ask for your help in some research I am doing as a part-time student at Aston University. I am trying to find out how far parents may get involved when their children are choosing school subjects and careers, how easy it is for parents to help their children and what kinds of things parents feel are important for their children to consider.

For your information I work in the careers field, though not locally, and am involved in the training of careers officers and teachers. Although there is a fair amount of evidence that pupils talk to their parents about their plans there is little about the kind of contribution they make. I hope my research will help to fill in the picture.

I am writing to parents of some children who have just completed the fifth year in schools in Evesham, Redditch and Solihull. Not all of course are going into work this year but all will have had to make recent decisions about courses or careers. It would be very helpful to me if you could complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the pre-paid envelope. If there are any parts you do not understand or anything you would like to discuss please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

I look forward to receiving your reply and hope that you will find the topic interesting. Your reply will of course be treated confidentially and will only be seen by me. I should be grateful if you could return it by June 28th.

Yours sincerely

MICHAEL COOPER

CAN WE START IN THE THIRD YEAR AT SCHOOL

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This would be when your son/daughter had to chose school subjects

PLEASE RING YOUR ANSWER

1. Were you invited by the school to take part? Yes No
- Were you given any information as to how subjects could be chosen? Yes No
- Was anything arranged at school for parents to learn about future work at this stage? eg. a parents evening. Yes No
- If so, did you go? Yes No
2. Here is a list of subjects usually covered in school. Do you think some are more important than others? Yes No

If you do could you underline them please

- |           |                     |         |
|-----------|---------------------|---------|
| maths     | a foreign language  | biology |
| chemistry | religious knowledge | english |
| art       | home economics      | craft   |
| latin     | geography           | physics |
| music     | technical drawing   | history |

3. If any of the subjects you underlined had not been suggested by the school what would you do?

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If any of the subjects you think less important had been suggested by the school what would you do?

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Did you find it easy to know about subjects done in school?

Yes No



5. When considering choice of subjects could you tick which of these points you mainly had in mind?

Your child's ability in the subject

being interested in the subject

how useful the subject might be to work


If you had any other points in mind would you like to mention them here

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6. Did you tell your child how you felt about subjects? Yes No

7. What do you think your child thought about when choosing subjects? Please tick any of the following points.

- ability
- interest
- future career
- friends choice
- teacher


If you think there might have been other points could you mention them here

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8. What would you have done if you had disagreed with the choice your child made

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12. Did you talk to your child about his/her future? Yes No

At any stage did you tell your child what you would like him/her to do? Yes No

13. If he/she has entered work did you try to help find him/her a job? Yes No  
(you may be involved in this process at present)

14. Do you think the choice of course or work should be left entirely to your child? Yes No

15. If you had disagreed with your child's choice would you try to persuade him/her to change? Yes No

If so, could you say what would make you do this

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How would you have gone about this?

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16. Do you think it easy for parents to know about the things school-leavers can enter these days? Yes No

17. How did you find out about courses and work so that you can help your son/daughter? Please Tick

talk to friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
visit careers office	<input type="checkbox"/>
use of the public library	<input type="checkbox"/>
pick up ideas from radio, press	<input type="checkbox"/>
go and see teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
arrange to see someone in a job	<input type="checkbox"/>
attend careers talks or conventions	<input type="checkbox"/>

CAN I NOW ASK YOU ABOUT THE PROCESS WHEN YOUR CHILD HAD TO MAKE DECISIONS

18. In the fifth year were you invited to an interview and did you go?

interview with teacher Yes No

interview with careers officer Yes No

interview with both together Yes No

19. Why do you think you were invited? Please tick

to listen to the adviser's suggestions

to say what you thought your child might do

to help the adviser get a fuller picture of your child


If you think there were other reasons could you mention them here

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

20. If you have attended an interview did you think you were brought into the discussion Please tick

much

a little


21. Do you think the interviewer(s) found out your views? Yes No

If not, what sort of things did you feel they could have learnt from you to help them get to know your child?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22. Do you think pupils want their parents to be involved? Yes No

23. Which parent was most involved? Please tick

father

mother

equal




~~FINALLY SOME GENERAL QUESTIONS~~

24. Do you think the business of job choice is the same for a girl as for a boy? Yes No

If not, can you say one or two things about the different issues?

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25. Do you think pupils are old enough to be able to make up their minds on their own? Yes No

26. When pupils make up their minds do you think they know enough about

various jobs Yes No

working life Yes No

27. Do you think your own parents influenced you about your work when you left school? Yes No

Would you think this experience has affected the way you got involved over your child's choice? Yes No

28. Could you say what jobs you do now please?

father \_\_\_\_\_

mother \_\_\_\_\_

(Would you please give actual job eg. 'centre lathe operator' not 'engineer' or 'shop manager' not 'manager')

What is your son/daughter doing now?

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Thank you very much for your help.

Although questionnaires are very useful for collecting information from a lot of people they do have their disadvantages; if you think any important items have been left out or if you found any parts difficult to answer and you would like to add any further points I should be grateful if you would do so here.

Appendix (j)

37 Warwick Avenue  
Bromsgrove  
WORCESTERSHIRE

Bromsgrove 74461

July 1976

Dear

You may remember I wrote in June asking for your help in a research project I am doing at Aston University. It may be that the questionnaire I sent has been mislaid or I did not give enough time for a reply. I am therefore writing again to ask if you would mind filling up the form and enclose another copy with a pre-paid label.

If in fact you think the topic is better talked about rather than dealt with by a form I would be able to come and discuss it with you. It can be that additional points not fully covered by the form can be talked about. If you would prefer an interview please let me know.

As I said in my last letter I am writing to parents of some children who have just completed the fifth year in schools - Evesham, Redditch and Solihull. I work in the careers field though not locally, and am involved in the training of careers officers and teachers. Although there is a fair amount of evidence that pupils talk to their parents about their plans there is little about the kind of contribution parents make. I hope my research will help to fill in the picture.

If you have recently sent the earlier questionnaire please ignore this reminder. I look forward to hearing from you. If you could return the form and let me know about a possible interview by or soon after I should be most grateful.

Yours sincerely

MICHAEL COLPER



List of jobs held by parents who responded to questionnaire.

Grouped according to Ashton's three categories.

<u>GROUP 1</u>	electrical wireman farmworker sub-post mistress stock picker shorthand typist machine operator cleaner furnaceman compress tester post office clerk railway worker store-keeper packer school ancillary	bar person electrical fitter part time assistant postman order clerk market trader driver/gardener tea lady capstan operator dabmarker sewage plant operative brewery process worker factory worker school librarian	HGV driver vending machine operator cook shop assistant surgeon's fork lift needle maker truck driver needle assembler control clerk furrier's machinist armature winder accounts clerk domestic help market gardener doctor's receptionist
<u>GROUP 2</u>	school cook office manager timber yard manager trained engineer shop supervisor jeweller service engineer bricklayer garage proprietor local government officer home nursing auxiliary aircraft engineer proprietor engineering works	handicapped child supervisor special purpose machine setter highway foreman foreman decorator cook supervisor warehouse manager sheet metal worker toolroom planner precision grinder secretary elec. board supervisor director small company	shop owner civil servant welder shop manager painter/decorator transport manager skilled grinder master carpenter school secretary master printer meal supervisor head waiter production controller
<u>GROUP 3</u>	technical instructor customs and excise officer  policeman representative sales manager insurance manager press photographer quality engineer accountant hospital administrator advertising manager	management consultant prison officer  plant manager publisher surveyor metalurgist chartered engineer farm bailiff bank official matron commercial artist	CFE lecturer assistant education officer social worker dentist civil servant (male) personnel manager civil engineer archdeacon police sergeant architect pharmacist

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE: DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY: FOLLOW-UP STUDY

WORK QUIZ

This questionnaire has been developed in an attempt to assess the ways in which people value work. It is not concerned with respondents' satisfaction with specific job factors, but rather with what they want from their jobs and how work fits in with the rest of their lives.

As a result of factor analysis and some additional "logical keying", 5 scales have been identified and are currently being examined in detail. At this stage the scientific status of these scales is tentative and, therefore, they must not be used for any practical purposes. But counsellors are welcome to use the Work Quiz as a means of getting their clients to think and as a basis for discussion. Research workers are free to use the Work Quiz providing that they send any findings to the author and acknowledge its source in any publication.

The Work Quiz has been developed by the author as a part of Professor S.B. Hammond's Follow-up Study. A few of the items are from Lodahl and Kesner (The definition of and measurement of job involvement. J. Appl. Psychol., 1965, 49, 24-33); but most of them were "brained stormed" by the author and D. J. Plooij.

K. F. Taylor,  
Department of Psychology,  
University of Melbourne,  
PARKVILLE. Vic. 3052

January, 1970



WORK QUIZ

Here are some statements about work.

Read each one carefully:-

If you agree with it, underline the first few words, if you agree very strongly, then underline twice.

If you disagree with it, cross through the first few words, if you particularly disagree, then cross through twice. If you don't feel one way or the other, just leave it.

Remember it is what you think that matters, there are no right or wrong answers.

Please fill in:-

Name .....

Age .....

Page No. (1)

1. It is important to be in a job where everybody gets promotion sooner or later. 07
2. I would like to work in the same line as others in my family, 08
3. It is important that I feel my job is of real value to me and to society. 09
4. I much prefer to work with a well-established and respected organisation. 10
5. It is very important that my pay allows for a high standard of living. 11
6. I expect my job to provide me with the major satisfaction in my life. 12
7. I don't really mind what kind of work I do, as long as it keeps me going. 13
8. I like a job where you never have to flog yourself. 14
9. Even when what I do is good enough, I feel uneasy if I think I could have done better. 15
10. I feel I haven't got much "say" in the choice of a job. 16
11. Pensions, social and medical benefits and good holidays are very much the sort of thing that makes a job attractive to me. 17
12. I don't mind my job, it seems as good as any other. 18
13. I don't mind giving up my own time to get a job finished. 19
14. In my opinion it is best to have a job where everyone can relax from time to time. 20
15. A lot of my friends get on with their work without thinking too much about it, and that seems the best way to me. 21
16. I wouldn't work if I didn't have to. 22



17. I want a job that really gets the best out of me. 23
18. I like work where I can carry on doing the sort of things I enjoyed doing as a youngster. 24
19. I want my job to be challenging. 25
20. If a job is really interesting, I don't mind if it doesn't bring in a lot of money. 26
21. I want to be very much personally involved in my work. 27
22. I am not interested in any job I would have to think about when the day's work is done. 28
23. I like to work for somebody who will encourage any amount of initiative. 29
24. The only important thing about a job is to work in pleasant surroundings with friendly people. 30
25. I have known for a long time what I am going to do. 31
26. I want a job that leaves me plenty of time for leisure. 32
27. I like to have a fair bit of say in my work, but I would hate to be in charge. 33
28. However good it was, I wouldn't accept a job that took me away from home. 34
29. I want to work where I can have a lot of responsibilities. 35
30. I chose my job mainly on my parents' advice. 36
31. I am really a perfectionist about my job. 37
32. It is important to be in a job which other people respect. 38
33. I much prefer to be my own boss. 39

Minnesota Job Description Questionnaire

These factors are important to me in a job:

- |    |   |        |
|----|---|--------|
| 1  | I could do something that makes use of my abilities.          | YES/NO |
| 2  | The job could give me a feeling of accomplishment.            | YES/NO |
| 3  | I could be busy all the time.                                 | YES/NO |
| 4  | The job would provide an opportunity for advancement.         | YES/NO |
| 5  | I could tell people what to do.                               | YES/NO |
| 6  | The company would administer its policy fairly.               | YES/NO |
| 7  | My pay would compare well with that of other workers.         | YES/NO |
| 8  | My co-workers would be easy to make friends with.             | YES/NO |
| 9  | I could try out some of my own ideas.                         | YES/NO |
| 10 | I could work along in the job.                                | YES/NO |
| 11 | I could do the work without feeling that it is morally wrong. | YES/NO |
| 12 | I could get recognition for the work I do.                    | YES/NO |
| 13 | I could make decisions on my own.                             | YES/NO |
| 14 | The job would provide for steady employment.                  | YES/NO |
| 15 | I could do things for other people.                           | YES/NO |
| 16 | I could be "somebody" in the community.                       | YES/NO |
| 17 | My boss would back up the work.                               | YES/NO |
| 18 | My boss would train the workers well.                         | YES/NO |
| 19 | I could do something different every day.                     | YES/NO |
| 20 | The job would have good working conditions.                   | YES/NO |
| 21 | I could plan my work with little supervision.                 | YES/NO |