A STUDY OF THE FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF FIFTH YEAR SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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SUMMARY

A STUDY OF THE FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF FIFTH YEAR SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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This thesis examines some of the factors which influence the development of school pupils' occupational aspirations. The main hypothesis is that occupational aspirations are the product of such influences as pupils' social class background, performance in school, peer group relationships and gender. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews with a sample of 180 fifth year secondary school pupils in two comprehensive schools in a Midlands town. Additional data was gathered from discussions with their teachers, parents and local employers. The data strongly supports the hypothesis.

It is contended that the theoretical model which underpins the work of much of the Careers Service is inappropriate. The largely American-derived Developmental Theory of Occupational Choice - which sees occupational choice in terms of a gradually unfolding, developing, pattern as the young person grows up - is inappropriate in a situation in which influential and deep-seated factors such as social class background, etc. have already played a very large part in moulding the occupational aspirations of young people.

The recent sharp increase in the level of youth unemployment has caused serious difficulties for the Careers Service, and some consider it to be experiencing a crisis. It is argued in this thesis that the increase in youth unemployment has not caused the alleged crisis in the Service, but has highlighted problems which have existed for a number of years. These problems have been present because the Careers Service has based its mode of operation upon a theoretical base which is inappropriate to the needs of many of its clients. If the Careers Service is to overcome its present difficulties, it must undertake a fundamental re-examination of how school pupils form their occupational aspirations. The thesis concludes with a series of recommendations as to how the Careers Service could improve the guidance it offers to its clients.

SOCIOLOGY - CAREERS - ASPIRATIONS - SCHOOL LEAVERS

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Norman Denzin (1971: 167) has argued that much sociological research is based on "biographically troubling issues" in that it arises out of problems experienced by people in their everyday lives and is often:

> "an attempt to offer public answers
> to what was personal and private."

To a large extent Denzin's comment can be applied to this research because it originated from the personal and private difficulties experienced by the author in attempting to reconcile the theory of the Careers Service (in which he worked) with what he observed the Careers Service to do in practice. The dominant theory of the Careers Service was, and still is, based upon the work of American psychologists who form what is known as the "Developmental School" of vocational theory (e.g. Ginzberg, 1951; Super, 1953).[1] Basically, this theory holds that as young people pass through their childhood and teenage years, so their occupational aspirations develop progressively. First they enter a "fantasy" stage in which their job ideas are based upon highly unrealistic possibilities, such as media projections of glamorous jobs, for example, film stars and sports men and women. Following this, they experience a "tentative" stage in which their preferred jobs take into account increasingly their talents and personalities. Finally, they enter the "realistic" stage, where many jobs are completely rejected as unsuitable and, where instead, they focus their attention on a limited range of occupations which match their

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1. Development Theory (and criticisms of it) are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

aptitudes, interests and abilities.

Developmental Theory implies that young people pay considerable attention to the development of their occupational aspirations and have at their disposal a detailed knowledge of a wide range of occupations. It also implies a substantial degree of control over the decisions as to which occupations they should enter. My experience as a Careers Officer since 1977, however, indicated that only a minority of school leavers fitted into this pattern. Many were familiar with only a narrow range of jobs and their occupational aspirations were both restricted and predictable. For instance, many girls wished to become secretaries or shop assistants, whilst many boys hoped to work as car mechanics or engineers. Others appeared to give very little thought to the job they would enter after leaving school and just seemed to drift into whatever job they could find.

The relevance of Developmental Theory has, in my experience, been questioned privately by several Careers Officers. Yet the Careers Service bases much of its practice and procedures upon it.[2.] The way in which the Careers Service is organised assumes that pupils do have considerable control over the decisions of which occupation to enter and, consequently, require expert guidance in order to make the best decision. This guidance is given by means of a 20/30 minute interview with a Careers Officer in their final year of compulsory education. The author feels, however, that this mode of operation has little

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2. The work of the "developmentalists" forms a large part of the content of the "Theory and Practice of Vocational Guidance" module which trainee Careers Officers are taught on the year-long Diploma in Careers Guidance Course. Although it is still not mandatory for Careers Officers to have undertaken this course, very few new entrants to the Careers Service bypass this course.

effect upon the vocational aspirations of young people because their contact with the Careers Service is too short and at too late a stage. By the time most pupils meet a Careers Officer, their choice of school subjects, and their performance in them, has reduced the number of occupational pathways open to them. The majority of careers guidance interviews consist merely of explaining to pupils that, in view of the subjects they are studying and their potential examination results (if any) they only have a limited number of jobs which they can enter. Thus it was felt that, first, the Careers Service has adopted a theoretical model of dubious relevance for many of its clients, and secondly, that its limited and late contact with young people has only a marginal effect upon the formation of their occupational aspirations. These were the considerations which led me to carry out the research project which is the subject of this thesis.

During the period in which the research proposal was in its formative stage, two possible areas seemed to be in need of detailed investigation. The first was the process of occupational entry, that is, the experiences faced by school leavers in attempting to obtain the occupations to which they aspired, or indeed, their experiences in obtaining alternative occupations should their initial applications prove unsuccessful. However, this was a matter with which the Careers Service was very familiar, being the organisation to which most young people turn for help with their "job hunting". The second area of interest was the factors involved in the development of pupils' occupational aspirations. This seemed more in need of investigation principally because this process takes place in the years prior to pupils' first encounter with a Careers Officer, and it can, consequently,

be argued that the Careers Service lacks a thorough understanding of this process. Indeed, the President of the Institute of Careers Officers reminded the Careers Service recently that:

> "Young people do not suddenly happen at 16 - they do have a period of existence before that and this should be recognised."
>
> White (1982: 10)

Despite the fact that there is a large academic literature on "occupational choice" (see Chapter 3), many Careers Officers are unfamiliar with it. In my experience, most Careers Officers are suspicious of academic writers because they have a basic sense of insecurity and are extremely sensitive to criticism by "outsiders" (see Chapter 1). Even though the focus of attention of many academic writers has now moved from research into occupational choice to research into young people's entry into the labour market, it seemed apparent that there was still a need for a practising Careers Officer, an "insider", to undertake a study of the factors behind pupils' occupational aspirations in the hope that Careers Officers would pay more attention to such a study.

The fieldwork for the research was carried out during the academic year 1979/80. At that time the author was employed as a Careers Officer in a Midland's town which is referred to in this thesis as the "Borough". The research was undertaken on a part-time basis with a proportion of my caseload of fifth year secondary pupils forming the main research sample. Chapter 2 contains detailed background information to the research. However, in the period between collecting the data and writing up the research much has changed in respect of both the youth labour market and the work of the Careers Service. The

employment situation facing school leavers in 1985 is very different to that which faced respondents in this study in 1980. Furthermore, the Careers Service today is under far more pressure than it was five years ago. Therefore, in order to place the research in context, it is essential to examine some of the changes which have occurred in the period between data collection and writing the final draft of this thesis. This is done in Chapter 1 which traces the dramatic change in the youth labour market from the perspective of the Careers Service. The contents of Chapter 1 are based upon the author's experience as a Careers Officer not just in the Borough, but also in two other Midlands' Careers Services in which he was subsequently employed.[3.]

Although some would argue that the massive increase in youth unemployment has fundamentally altered the way in which young people make the transition from school to the job market, others such as Roberts (1982) contend that traditional theories of occupational choice still apply. It is argued in Chapters 1 and 10 that the findings of this thesis are still extremely relevant to the work of the Careers Service in 1985 since they are primarily concerned with the way in

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3. The author worked in the Borough from 1977 to 1980. From 1980 to 1983 he worked as a Senior Careers Officer in the Careers Service of a large neighbouring city, first in a city centre Careers Office and then in a Careers Office in a suburb. In both instances his caseload was composed of large numbers of working class pupils, together with pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. This was in sharp contrast to the situation in the Borough (see Chapter 2). From 1983 to the present he has worked as a Senior Specialist Careers Officer in another Midlands city, with a caseload made up of both Sixth Form pupils and adults.

which young people develop their occupational aspirations. Even though some school leavers now follow different and often interrupted routes into the job market, the factors which influence the development of their occupational aspirations are still basically the same.

The Chapters in this thesis are organised in the following way. Chapter 1 contains a description of the work of the Careers Service and outlines the main ways in which this work has changed in response to the massive rise in youth unemployment during the last six years. Chapter 2 is composed of a description of the town in which the research was located, together with data on the schools from which the research sample was taken. It also contains a summary of the way in which the research design developed. Chapters 3 and 4 consist of the literature review and Chapter 5 provides an account of the research methodology. Chapters 6 to 9 are devoted to a study of the four main factors which were found to influence respondents' occupational aspirations. They are, social class background, school performance, peer group influence and gender. Finally Chapter 10 presents the main conclusions of the research, together with a series of recommendations on how the Careers Service might take these recommendations into account in order to improve the effectiveness of the help it offers to young people.

CHAPTER 1

THE CAREERS SERVICE IN CRISIS ?

1. Recent History of the Careers Service

Following the Employment and Training Act of 1973, Local Authorities are required to provide vocational guidance to all pupils reaching the statutory school leaving age. This responsibility is discharged through the Careers Service which is part of the Education Departments of Local Authorities.

The Careers Service has been in existence, in one form or another, for a considerable time, but the 1973 Act was responsible for the current structure. Formerly it was termed the Youth Employment Service and the new title was a reflection of a major change in direction. Whereas the Youth Employment Service was chiefly associated with the less academically able pupils (primarily in secondary modern schools), the new Careers Service's responsibility is for the full ability range in all state maintained schools. Furthermore, whilst the Youth Employment Service was seen by schools, parents, pupils and employers as principally a job finding agency, the new Careers Service offers a comprehensive vocational guidance service. Careers Officers are expected to be involved in the whole process of young people's vocational development. Thus, the role of the Careers Officer has been extended to include advice on school subjects and continued education beyond the statutory leaving age including University and Polytechnic entrance.

The Employment and Training Act of 1973 coincided with the important

major restructuring of local government in 1973/4. One of the intentions of this restructuring was to enhance the image of the "Town Halls" and to provide local government staff with a more professional image. The combination of both these events gave the Youth Employment Service the opportunity to transform itself into a fully-fledged Careers Service and, in order to justify it's claim to professional status, the Careers Service has developed a range of guidance techniques commensurate with its professional role. These include counselling, non-directive interviewing, computerised guidance and psychometric testing.

During the 1970s the main function of the Careers Service was the provision of vocational guidance to school pupils, given by means of careers interviews during pupils' last year of compulsory education. The purpose of these interviews was to discuss the range of occupational, educational and training opportunities open to pupils, and at the end of the interviews, Careers Officers were expected to make appropriate recommendations to their clients. In addition to interviewing clients at school, Careers Officers were also expected to visit employers to obtain information on different types of occupations, and to seek out possible vacancies. They were also expected to carry out follow-up interviews with young unemployed school leavers.

Within most Careers Services a significant separation of functions exists between Careers Officers and Employment Assistants. Whilst Careers Officers are responsible for providing vocational guidance, Employment Assistants are responsible for placing school leavers into employment by matching their occupational wishes against the job vacancies held at the Careers Office. On the front of each school leavers file is usually written a list of recommended occupations

arrived at following the interview between the Careers Officer and school leaver. In theory, Employment Assistants are only permitted to send young people after vacancies which are in accordance with Careers Officers' recommendations. They are not supposed to use their discretion and show clients vacancies outside of the recommended range. If a school leaver expresses an interest in a type of occupation which has not been recommended by the Careers Officer, Employment Assistants are expected to arrange a follow-up interview with a Careers Officer even if the school leaver's "new" occupational wish is closely related to the original one, e.g. shop assistant to waitress. In practice this is a difficult procedure to justify and is a potential source of conflict between Careers Officers and Employment Assistants. Many Employment Assistants submit school leavers for any "suitable" vacancies and some Careers Officers "turn a blind eye" to this. However, this rigid demarcation of duties vividly illustrates two important points. First, Careers Officers are keen to distinguish between the professional activity of vocational guidance for which they are responsible, and the more mechanical task of arranging job interviews for school leavers. This latter activity is seen as a non professional duty which can "safely" be left to Employment Assistants. Secondly, it shows that Careers Officers grossly exaggerate the importance of a lot of what they do by calling it "vocational guidance". For instance, is it really necessary that only trained professionals explain to school leavers the differences between working as a shop assistant and working as a waitress ? Both these issues are discussed in detail below.

2. The Current Position

Since 1979 when the research began and the data was collected, much has changed in respect of both the youth labour market and the work of the Careers Service. In 1979 the unemployment rate amongst school leavers in the Borough was approximately 5%, but by 1982 it had risen to 25%, a fivefold increase. In 1984 over 45% of the Borough's school leavers were unable to find permanent employment and entered Youth Training Schemes. The Borough, as is discussed in Chapter 2, was not as badly affected by the rise in youth unemployment as were many other parts of the country where the unemployment rate amongst school leavers rose to much higher levels than this, and where few school leavers had a chance of obtaining permanent employment in real jobs as opposed to government training schemes.[1.] One effect of the continuing high level of unemployment amongst young people is the great pressure which has been put upon the Careers Service (Hurst, 1983: 7; Thomas, 1983: 12). Indeed some would go as far as to claim that the Careers Service is currently experiencing a crisis and must rapidly adapt to the new employment situation if it is to continue to make an effective contribution to the needs of school leavers (White, 1982: 6-16, Coates, 1983: 15-22).

The current problems faced by the Careers Service over recent years were strikingly apparent in the Presidential Address given by Mrs P White to the Annual Conference of the Institute of Careers Officers,

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1. From 1978 to 1983 the main government training scheme was the Youth Opportunities Programme which offered school leavers six months work experience. This was replaced in 1983 by the Youth Training Scheme which provides school leavers with 12 months of both "on" and "off the job" training.

1982 (White, 1982: 6-16). The President recalled how, during the early 1980s, there was a gradual retreat from school work by Careers Officers as they were called on to spend more time with the unemployed school leavers and less time with fifth form pupils prior to leaving school. Many Careers Officers, the President stated, were reluctant to do this since they regarded interviewing pupils whilst they were still at school as the most important part of their job. They considered the initial school interview as the foundation upon which subsequent contact with the Careers Service should be based. However, just as Careers Officers were beginning to appreciate the need for this change and were gradually withdrawing from schools to concentrate on working with the unemployed, they were then told to increase the time they spent in schools in order to interview every school leaver. This was because the introduction of the new Youth Training Scheme, from 1983 onwards, meant that each pupil now required adequate preparation for their "choice" of the most appropriate training scheme. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Careers Officers did not know whether they were "coming or going".[2]

The pressure (both physical and psychological)[3] of working with the young unemployed has created immense problems for Careers Officers,

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2. This is a phrase I have heard Careers Officers use on countless occasions to describe the sudden turnaround in Careers Service Policy.

3. As youth unemployment has risen, so the pressure on Careers Officers have similarly increased. This was caused both by having to help more unemployed school leavers which was physically tiring since more interviews had to be fitted into the day and because of the strain that was placed on the relationship between Careers Officers and clients. Even though it has been noted that most unemployed young people are satisfied with the help given to them by Careers Officers (e.g. Roberts et al, 1982: 9) not all young people show such understanding in their face to face dealings with Careers Officers. Clients' feelings of frustration and disappointment are often "taken out" on Careers Officers who have no suitable jobs to offer them.

many of whom have suffered from a lowering of their morale and a disillusionment with the government pressures to alleviate the effects of youth unemployment (Hirsch, 1982: 33-39). The scale of the youth unemployment problem is well known to most people, but the following statistics, reported by the Honorary Secretary of the Institute of Careers Officers, illustrate vividly the impact which the increase in unemployment has had upon the Careers Service. Since 1974 the number of young people registered for employment at Careers Offices has increased by 9600%, yet the total establishment of the Careers Service, including those posts which have been funded by the Department of Employment to help with the increase in young unemployed, has risen by only 45% (Hurst, 1983: 6). There is, consequently, a body of opinion which feels that in the light of the situation described above, the Careers Service must break away from its traditional pattern of work and adapt to the new circumstances. Many Careers Officers, however, are not sure in which direction to change, whilst others feel that planning for change is futile since the Careers Service is powerless to influence this change. They believe that some other body, such as the Manpower Services Commission, will take responsibility for defining the changes which need to take place (Pearce, 1983: 21). This clearly illustrates the degree to which many Careers Officers have lost confidence in their work since the advent of massive youth unemployment.

Yet the current discussion of a crisis in the Careers Service implies that the Service was in a sound condition before the increase in unemployment. This, I believe, was not the case, and it is argued in this thesis that the current crisis in the Careers Service has roots which go back to the early 1970s, to a time where school

leavers were in demand by employers as a source of labour. All that large scale unemployment has done is to highlight the inadequacies of the Careers Service, inadequacies that were disguised to a large extent in the days of better employment prospects when school leavers generally obtained work irrespective of the help given to them by the Careers Service (see Maizels, 1970: 89-122). To put it simply, the crisis in the Careers Service has arisen because it has based its method of working upon a theoretical model that is inapporpriate to the needs of many of its clients. This theoretical model has its origins in the work of several American development psychologists and it is termed the 'Developmental Theory'.

The Developmental Theory and the Careers Service's 'Mistaken Role'

Developmental Theory, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, has proved extremely popular amongst Careers Officers because it suggests that young people's occupational aspirations develop gradually as they mature; and for this development to proceed satisfactorily, vocational guidance is required at certain key stages. Furthermore, Developmental Theory emphasises the way in which young people choose which occupations to enter on the basis of their ambitions, interests and abilities. Thus, it depicts them as having considerable control over the occupations they eventually enter. If young people's occupations are determined by choice rather than circumstances there is obviously a need for careers guidance so that they make the best choice. Developmental Theory has, therefore, become extremely popular with the Careers Service as it lends support to the importance of its work. Furthermore it provides it with a theoretical foundation, another aid to professional status.

Commentators from outside of the Careers Service such as Roberts (1976) believe that Developmental Theory is not particularly appropriate to the needs of young people in the U.K. He argues that the adoption of this theory has resulted in the Careers Service taking on a "mistaken role" (1976: 28). This "mistaken role" is the result of the:

> "largely uncritical assimilation of certain American theories of occupational choice, particularly versions stressing the developmental nature of individual's choices and their relationship to their general psychological maturation. A generation of Careers Officers came to see their roles as non-directive counsellors, working alongside and often inside schools, enabling clients to extend their self-knowledge, become competent decision-makers and thereby programmed to eventually make their own satisfying ways into the world of work. Any rigorous inspection quickly demonstrates that whatever it's relevance in America, this type of theory is not a useful basis to build a careers service in Britain, principally because it grossly exaggerates the importance of individual's choices. In the real world, as opposed to careers counselling sessions, the majority of young people and adults do not choose jobs in any meaningful sense. They simply take what is available from amongst a range of occupations they would find acceptable."
>
> (1976: 28)

Developmental Theory has its merits and has some relevance for certain groups of young people (see Chapter 10). However, it is inappropriate for the majority of the Careers Service's clients. Yet the view has grown up amongst many Careers Officers that it is possible to help school leavers obtain the best possible job open to them and consequently they place considerable emphasis upon choice of occupation. On the other hand, Careers Officers tend to pay insufficient attention to the limitations upon occupational choice such as social structure

and the nature of local opportunities. Hence the Careers Service focuses too much of its attention on vocational guidance interviews and does not place enough emphasis upon other aspects of its work, such as obtaining job market information, developing links with employers, placing young people into employment and giving practical advice on job seeking skills, such as how to give a good account of oneself at a selection interview. Many of these tasks are seen by Careers Officers as "sub-professional".

During the period before the increase in youth unemployment, the consequences of the Careers Service's "mistaken role" were not so apparent. Jobs were more abundant and many school leavers used sources other than the Careers Service for advice and assistance in getting jobs. These included family, friends and other contacts in the neighbourhood (Carter, 1966, Maizels 1970). The Careers Service, however, had its critics even then. For instance, Ball and Ball (1979: 77-84) attacked the Careers Service for not being receptive to the needs of its clients. They argued that the Careers Service attempted to fit clients to the needs of the Service and not vice versa as it should have been. Indeed, these authors have gone so far as to claim that the Careers Service is an obstacle to the real employment needs of its clients.[4.]

One particular aspect of the work of the Careers Service which has

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4. It should be noted that not all commentators have been critical of the Careers Service. For instance a study by Cherry (1974) concluded by stating that the advice given by Careers Officers is basically sound and a help to young people in obtaining and retaining their first job.

received considerable criticism is the school careers interview. Many Careers Services operate a policy of "blanket interviewing", that is, giving each fifth year pupil a 20/30 minute careers interview irrespective of whether they need one. Ball and Ball (1979) found that many pupils thought these interviews were a waste of time, a view expressed by many of the pupils that I have interviewed during my time in the Careers Service.

In addition to external criticism, the policy of "blanket interviewing" has been attacked by a few people within the Careers Service. Collins (1981: 3) has stated that the "superficial mass interviewing of thousands of pupils" is the "Achilles heel of the Careers Service". This is because a "one-off careers interview" has little effect upon the "immaturity of a normal 14-16 year old". (It is interesting to note that although the Careers Service attaches great importance to the vocational development of pupils, it nevertheless attempts to facilitate this development by a single interview.)

White (1982: 8) is another who has expressed doubts about the usefulness of this policy of mass interviewing pupils in their last year of statutory education:

> "I still cannot believe that isolated so called vocational guidance interviews given in the last year of school can have the necessary impact to ensure the decisions are sound, and I believe the delivery of the Service in school must change."

In spite of the increase in youth unemployment and criticism from both outside and within the profession, many Careers Officers are reluctant to make major changes to the way in which they do their job.

To some extent I believe this is due to the type of staff recruited to the Careers Service. Ford (1973:36) has stated that many Careers Officers are

> "upgraded local government clerical officers promoted because of their clerical and administrative ... ability."

And although the majority, (82% in 1984) of current recruits to the Careers Service are graduates, White (1982: 12) believes that the Careers Service does not attract recruits with dynamic and enterprising personalities. Furthermore, Careers Officers work as part of local government bureaucracy in an atmosphere more conducive to stability than change. Thus by nature of their background, personality and environment, many Careers Officers are not particularly sensitive to the fact that recent economic events make former Careers Service practices and procedures obsolete.[5.]

Another reason why Careers Officers are reluctant to change their role is that Developmental Theory has been a great asset to them in their attempts to obtain widespread recognition as a professional service. The Careers Service has a keen interest in securing professional status in order to increase the autonomy which it has over its operation, fend off encroachment from "competitive" organisations such as the M.S.C. and school Careers Teachers, and to improve its conditions of service. Indeed, much of the recent history of the Careers Service can be interpreted as its continued attempt to consolidate its claim for professional status.

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5. Careers Officers are not the only occupational group of whom this could be said.

Many Careers Officers are insecure and fear that their work is constantly being challenged by other organisations with an interest in the employment of school leavers (Peck and Collins, 1973). To some extent this is understandable because the Careers Service does not have autonomy over its operation. This autonomy is currently restricted because many of the important decisions affecting the Careers Service are made by people working outside it. At national level these include officials in the Department of Employment and the M.S.C. At local level, Directors of Education, Councillors and Head Teachers have considerable powers to influence the way in which the Careers Service works. Hence a prevalant view within the Careers Service is that public recognition of it as a profession will assist it in securing its position as the principal organisation concerned with vocational guidance to school pupils (Peck and Collins 1973).

The Careers Service has been handicapped in its claim for professional status by many factors including short and inadequate training (Cook, 1975) association with low ability pupils (Walton, 1981) and the large female membership of the service (see Lortie, 1969). To overcome these handicaps, the Careers Service has used Developmental Theory to support its claim as the profession best equipped to provide vocational guidance. For, this theory not only portrays school leavers as having considerable control over their occupational destinies, but also implies that they need professional counsellors who are familiar with this process of developing occupational aspirations, to provide expert guidance at the key stages in their occupational development.

3. The Crisis in the Careers Service

At the present time it seems that the Careers Service has lost its overall direction. As was argued above, many Careers Officers are disillusioned and feel that they can do little to halt the drift. They are waiting for somebody else to point the way forward. On the other hand, there are others who advocate a proactive rather than a reactive role. For instance, Hirsch (1982: 38-39) believes that the Careers Service cannot merely sit back passively and administer government schemes to alleviate youth unemployment:

> ".. there comes a point when we cannot think only in terms of bailing out more and more water and it becomes necessary to consider how we are going to plug the leak. Given the level of unemployment today, there is a limit to how much we can compensate young people's employment disadvantages by providing them with experience of training ...
> ... It has not been in the nature of the Careers Service to campaign for a change in the government's macro-economic policies. But just as a builder cannot do his job without bricks and mortar, a Careers Officer can achieve little without jobs."

Hirsch believes that the Careers Service should become an effective political pressure group acting on behalf of young people by challenging what he considers to be the government's inadequate response to youth unemployment. This view was shared by an editorial of "Careers Adviser" a periodical distributed to all Careers Officers.[6].

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6. "Careers Adviser" is published by Dominion Press and contains articles on a wide range of career-related matters such as Y.T.S. courses, Polytechnic courses, careers in Banking etc.

> "We cannot, of course, ignore present realities. The Careers Service is trying valiantly to mitigate the misery for so many young unemployed people. But when Lord Gowrie can congratulate the Service for being an important part of the national manpower machinery, surely the time has come to call a halt. For we can see the insidious way the Careers Service has been sucked into the government policy of creating unemployment to curb inflation. Careers Officers should be agents of a free society but they are at present little more than official government hench men busily tidying away the young unemployed under the plush fitted carpet of the Youth Opportunities Programme, thereby concealing the true size of the unemployment problem"
>
> Careers Adviser (1981:3)

This radicalisation of part of the Careers Service was sharply attacked by Peter Morrison, Minister of State for Employment, when addressing the 1983 Annual Conference of the Institute of Careers Officers. He warned that many of those in authority had come to regard the Careers Service as dangerous "social engineers" who were either incapable or unwilling to help employers by encouraging young people to take up opportunities on offer on the government training schemes. The Minister also warned that the Rayner Review into the operational efficiency of the Careers Service would be particularly interested in the Service's contribution to the Youth Training Scheme. Later in his address, the Minister suggested that the Careers service should pay less attention to vocational guidance and more to placing young people into schemes, as this was the criterion by which parents, young people and employers judged the Service. (Careers Bulletin, 1983: 20-21).

Such an attack inevitably provoked an angry response from Careers

Officers, although this was delayed until after the Minister had departed. For example, a letter to the Careers Journal, the Institute's regular periodical, criticised the Minister for trying to involve the Careers Service in "the exploitation of young people as cheap labour". This author further claimed that the Minister had deliberately distorted the honest attempts of the Careers Service to interpret the world of work to young people as "social engineering". He concluded,

> "Faced with this dilemma (do as you are told or risk cuts in your services) our instincts are to keep our heads down in the hope that we will survive. I am firmly of the opinion that we will not survive this way or, that if we do, the work left to us will not be worth doing. We need to restate the philosophy of the Careers Service clearly and boldly and show how it diverges from Morrison's short term views."
>
> Barker (1984: 33)

Most Careers Officers, however, are not keen to take up such a challenging posture. As was stated above, many feel that they are in an insecure position and fear that their responsibilities could quite easily be "hived off" to the M.S.C., school Careers Teachers, or the managing agencies which have recently been created to provide training opportunities within the Youth Training Scheme. Consequently, many senior figures in the Careers Service are of the opinion that it is wiser to co-operate with the administration of the Youth Training Scheme in the hope that reforms to it can be made from the inside (White, 1982: 6-16; Coates, 1983; 15-22, Hurst, 1983: 6-12).

Thus the Careers Service in 1985 has several strands of opinion within it. First, there is the radical approach which directly challenges the government policies on youth unemployment and which advocates

withdrawal of co-operation in connection with the Youth Training Scheme. Secondly, there are those who feel that the way forward is to co-operate with the administration of the Youth Training Scheme and to amend Careers Service procedures to achieve this end. But there is also a third tendency held by many less vocal Careers Officers which is only apparent to those who have day to day contact with the Careers Service. This perspective acknowledges that there is an unemployment problem which has created a new situation, but as far as possible these people feel that it is best to carry on as before in the hope that things will get better. Many of this latter group of Careers Officers simply continue with the same policies and procedures which are generally as ineffective today as they were before the rise in youth unemployment.

Conclusion

The causes of the crisis in the Careers Service cannot be traced entirely to today's level of high unemployment, but stem from its adoption of an inappropriate theoretical model, the main purpose of which appears to be the reinforcement of the Careers Service's desire for professional status rather than to cater for the real needs of its clients. If the Careers Service is to rediscover its direction, it is not sufficient for it to undertake just minor changes. It must return to basics and undertake a far reaching examination of such fundamental issues as the operation of the youth labour market, the influences upon young people's occupational aspirations and the part the Careers Service can expect to play in this process by merely offering pupils a 20/30 minute interview in their final year of secondary education. In particular, the Careers Service should recognise that there are different groups of young people who follow

different routes into the labour market and who require different types of help from the Careers Service. (This point is discussed in detail in Chapter 10).

Although this thesis is based upon empirical data collected in 1979/80, its findings are still relevant to the work of the Careers Service today. For before the Careers Service can successfully plan ahead and find its new direction, it must first look back and learn from its past mistakes. This research shows that the Careers Service was not playing a very effective role even prior to the increase in youth unemployment. It is argued here that Careers Service practices and procedures do not take sufficient account of the way in which school pupils occupational aspirations are influenced by such factors as social class, education, gender, peer groups and the local opportunity structure. It failed to do this principally because it believed that Developmental Theory alone provided the most useful theoretical base upon which to build a Careers Service. Even then, it purported to offer vocational guidance within a developmental framework by offering a single interview at a very late stage in this process. Thus, the Careers Service needs to re-examine the way in which young people in the U.K. make occupational decisions and then structure its operation to take account of their needs. To some extent the Careers Service has always had serious shortcomings, but it took the massive rise in youth unemployment to transform its "mistaken role" into a crisis.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this chapter is to provide essential background information to the research. It contains a description of the Borough, the Midlands town in which the research was carried out, together with data on the secondary school system within the Borough and the Careers Service. The chapter also presents an account of how the research hypothesis was formulated and how it was decided to base the research in two schools, Manor and City. Detailed descriptions of these schools are also included.

1. The Borough

The Borough is an autonomous Metropolitan District situated on the edge of a large Midlands industrial connurbation. It has experienced considerable growth during the past 20 years, but still manages to retain a pleasant residential atmosphere. In spite of having a population of nearly 200,000 and a large shopping centre at its heart, the Borough is still known amongst its residents as the "village". For although it is bordered on one side by a large city, it is surrounded elsewhere by farmland, and within a mile and a half of its shopping centre are to be found two large parks.

Although offering many employment opportunities within its boundaries, a large proportion of its inhabitants travel daily from the Borough to work in the large neighbouring City. The range of employment in the Borough consists mainly of commercial and retail work, together with light engineering and automobile assembly. The Borough also contains a large shopping centre which includes many of the nationally

known multiple chain stores. The regional head offices of two nationalised industries are also situated within the Borough and administrative and financial occupations are also available at the local head offices of several large financial institutions. There is no heavy industry within the Borough, although light engineering and assembly work is available on two industrial estates and at a large vehicle assembly plant. The latter has been a major employer for more than thirty years.

The Borough achieved metropolitan status in 1974 at the time of large scale local government re-organisation. It fought hard to achieve such autonomous status especially since there were rumours that it might be incorporated into the large neighbouring city. In order to substantiate its claim to become a metropolitan area it was forced to enlarge its boundaries to include a large new council estate which was built as an overspill area from the city. This estate was physically separate from the Borough and its population had closer links with the city than with the Borough. In fact, it failed to become fully integrated into the life of the Borough in anything other than an administrative sense. Most of the population of the traditional Borough appeared to simply disregard its existence. The research is only concerned with the older and established part of the Borough.

In contrast to the neighbouring city which contains a substantial West Indian and Asian population, the Borough is predominantly White. At the time of the research there were only a handful of Black or Asian pupils in its schools and many of the latter were the children of professional parents. (The situation has remained unchanged since then) Thus, it was impossible to take ethnic background into account

when examining respondents' socio-economic background.

The Borough is one of the more affluent areas in the Midlands, and compared to the surrounding area, it has a greater proportion of middle class families, car owners and detached houses.[1] At the time when the fieldwork was carried out, the overall unemployment rate in the Borough was 6%, compared to 15% in the surrounding area. Although school leavers realised that jobs were becoming increasingly more difficult to obtain, interviews with them indicated that the vast majority considered their chances of obtaining permanent employment as good.

Secondary Education Provision within the Borough

At the time of the research, a comprehensive secondary education system had been in operation for five years. Prior to the introduction of this comprehensive system, the secondary education provision within the Borough had been based upon three single sex age 11 to 18 grammar schools, an 11 to 18 technical school, and several secondary modern schools which were called "High Schools". Following comprehensive re-organisation, the Borough's secondary education provision consisted of 11 mixed comprehensive schools which educated pupils from 11 to 16 years plus a Sixth Form College and a Technical College which offered courses to pupils wishing to remain within education beyond the statutory school leaving age. Each of the comprehensive schools drew its pupils from a local catchment area as is illustrated in Figure 2.1. Allocation to comprehensive schools was based on residence within these catchment areas. Each comprehensive school offered a wide range of academic and non-academic subjects and were

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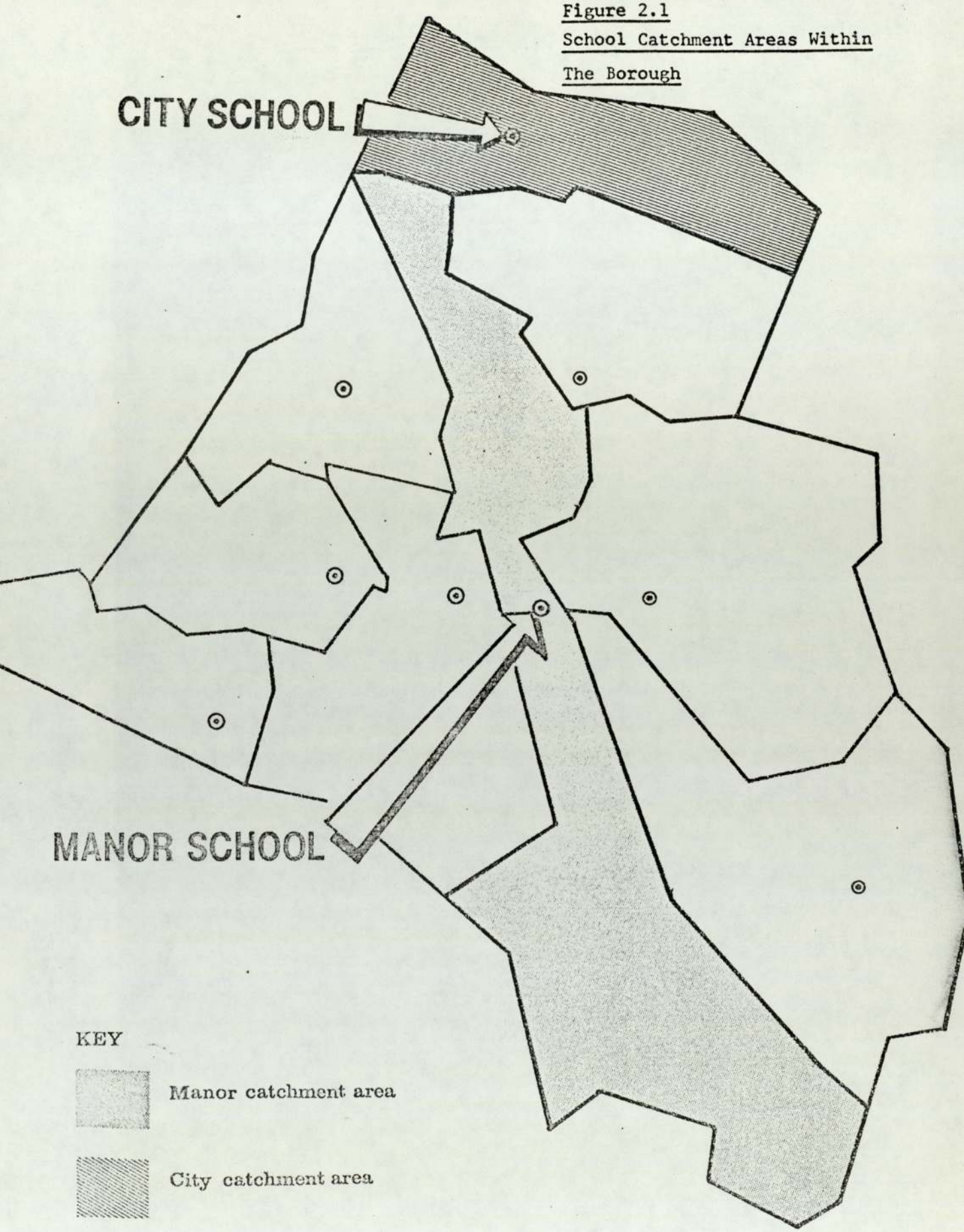
1. Data obtained from the 1981 Census.

Figure 2.1
School Catchment Areas Within The Borough



officially of equal status. However, owing to the differences in the social composition of their catchment areas, coupled with the fact that many of them retained their pre-comprehensive image and large numbers of their pre-comprehensive staff, a "pecking order" of comprehensive schools soon developed within the Borough. Parents, pupils and employers came to regard the former grammar schools which were located exclusively in affluent middle class areas as academically and socially superior to those comprehensives which were converted secondary modern schools and located in those neighbourhoods with a higher proportion of working class households.[2] Such a "pecking order" was officially denied by the Education Department but was privately acknowledged by the Borough's teachers.

Pupils who wished to continue with their education beyond the statutory leaving age were required to study at either the Sixth Form College or the Technical College. The former, established in 1974, had rapidly obtained a reputation as a centre of academic excellence for GCE Advanced level courses, with 75% of students winning places in higher education. Consequently, in view of the competition for places at the Sixth Form College, intending students were required to obtain five 'O' levels or the equivalent in order to secure entry. The Technical College was a large and diverse institution which offered both 'A' level and 'O' level courses together with vocational courses in Business Studies, Secretarial Studies, Engineering, Art

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2. It should be noted that the differences which existed between Manor and City catchment areas, though substantial, were not as great as those which existed between the Manor catchment area and parts of the "inner ring" of the neighbouring city. The City school catchment area provided a strong contrast to the very affluent neighbourhoods of the Manor catchment area. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the City catchment area suffered the deprivation found in "inner-ring" neighbourhoods.

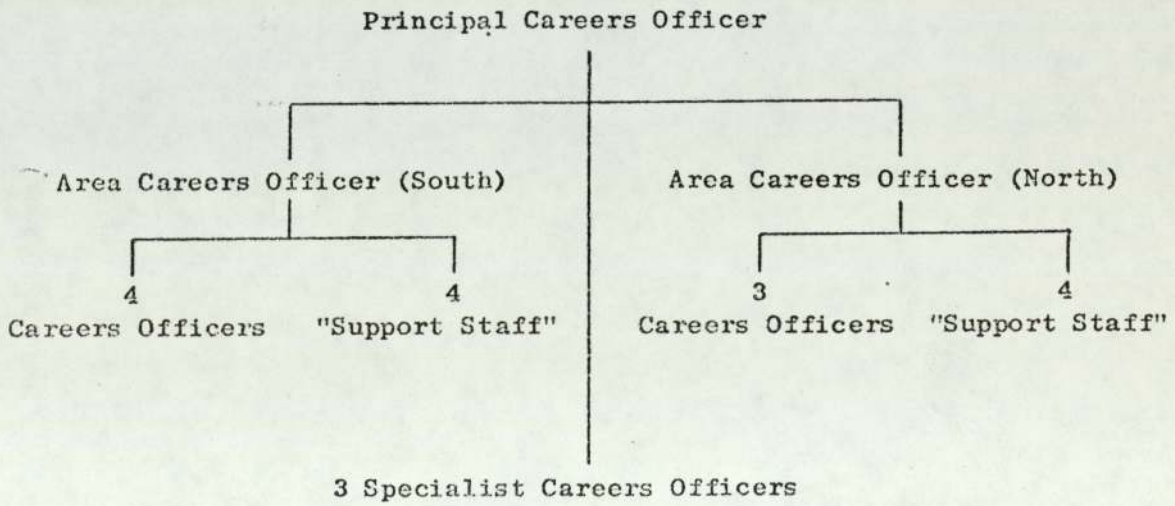
and Hairdressing. In contrast to the Sixth Form College the Technical College had a student population covering a wide range of academic abilities and vocational skills. Although the Technical College did not attract 'A' level students of the same academic calibre as the Sixth Form College, many of its pupils obtained 'A' levels and entered Higher Education and it had a high reputation in the area for such courses as Business Studies, Art, Social Studies and Engineering. It was not only popular amongst school leavers in the Borough, but also received many applications from young people in other areas of the Midlands.

The Careers Service in the Borough

The structure of the Careers Service in the Borough as it was at the time of the research is illustrated in Figure 2.2. This structure was typical of most Careers Services in the Country.

Figure 2.2

The Structure of the Careers Service in the Borough 1979-1980



The Principal Careers Officer was responsible to the Director of Education for the management of the Careers Service. The Service itself was divided into two geographical areas. The "Southern" office was responsible for pupils within the established and traditionally known Borough, whilst the "Northern" office was responsible for pupils in the recently acquired "overspill" council estate which had been added to the Borough in 1974. Each area office was managed by an Area Careers Officer who combined managerial responsibility with a case load of school pupils. In addition to the Area Officer, each Careers Office had a staff of several Careers Officers, each of whom had a case load of approximately 400 pupils normally taken from four comprehensive schools.

Three specialist Careers Officers were employed by the Borough. One of these had responsibility for pupils with physical and/or mental handicaps who attended the "special schools" within the Borough. This work required a detailed knowledge of the training and occupational openings available to handicapped young people. A second specialist Careers Officer was concerned with sixth formers who wished to enter higher education, whilst an "unemployment specialist" dealt with those school leavers who experienced particular difficulty in obtaining employment.

Throughout the author's period of employment with the Borough's Careers Service (1977-1980), he was attached to the Southern Office as a "generic" Careers Officer. The term "generic" is used by the Careers Service throughout the country to describe the work of "non-specialist" Careers Officers who provide careers guidance to pupils of all ability in secondary school up to the statutory school leaving age, and then help them obtain employment after they have left school.

"Generic" Careers Officers usually visit four to five secondary schools on a regular basis and spend the vast majority of their time with pupils in the final year of statutory education. Some advice is also given to third year pupils at the time when they choose their optional subjects, but this normally comprises only a very small proportion of the total time "spent in school".

2. Towards a General Hypothesis

Observations made during two years work as a Careers Officer in the Borough prior to the start of the research in the academic year 1979/80 provided the framework within which the general hypothesis evolved. Interviews with several hundred pupils led to five observations about the process of occupational choice.

Firstly, it was noted that whereas some pupils gave a considerable degree of thought to their future occupations, others only began to think seriously about what job they would do in the weeks immediately prior to leaving school. These pupils tended not to make a systematic search for the most appropriate job for them, but instead tended to "end up" in whatever job came their way whilst they were looking for work. This contrasted sharply with the developmentalists' description of the way in which school pupils carefully choose their jobs.(See the fuller discussion of Development Theory in Chapter 1, pp 13-15 and Chapter 3, pp 47-49.)

Secondly, it was observed that pupils had differing degrees of success in converting their occupational aspirations into actual jobs. It was apparent that particular groups of pupils, for instance those in the top academic streams of school, were generally amongst the most successful in this respect. Conversely, those in the lower streams

were frequently the least successful.

Thirdly, it was noticed that an association appeared to exist between pupils occupational aspirations and such factors as their social class, academic performance and gender. Academically successful boys generally planned to enter different types of occupations to academically successful girls. Whilst the aspirations of pupils who expected to continue with their academic education beyond 16 differed markedly from those who wished to leave at the earliest opportunity with few formal qualifications.

Fourthly, it was apparent that pupils occupational aspirations were, generally, not the result of a single identifiable decision to opt for one job rather than another, but instead developed gradually over time. This observation was supported by the literature on occupational choice which frequently described it as a "process" (see Chapter 3). The key elements within this process included subjects studied at school, attitudes to work obtained from parents and friends, and the influence of stereotypes on what constituted appropriate employment for males and females. Factors such as these gradually shaped pupils occupational aspirations. Some pupils appeared to be conscious of this process (or at least their parents were) and sought guidance from the Careers Service on such matters as the vocational implications of subject choice. Other pupils seemed to be totally unaware of it and in the months immediately prior to them leaving school discovered that many occupations were closed to them as a result of decisions made or attitudes formed earlier in their school careers.

Finally, it was apparent that in the majority of cases pupils' occupational aspirations could be described as realistic in the sense

that most wished to enter occupations which their potential qualifications enabled them to enter. This tendency has been noted by several authors including Liversidge (1962), Roberts (1968), Ashton and Field (1976) etc.

These observations together with the information obtained from the literature (see Chapters 3 and 4) led to the general hypothesis that pupils' occupational aspirations are gradually shaped by certain key factors such as their social class background, school performance, peer group influences and gender. Furthermore, these aspirations are formed within limits defined by the local opportunity structure. Thus, by the time that most pupils meet a Careers Officer for the first time in their fifth year at secondary school, their occupational aspirations have been shaped by the combined effects of the variables listed above. The Careers Service, therefore, has only a limited influence on the development of pupils' aspirations because its contact with pupils is far too short a time and at too late a stage of the process within which pupils' occupational aspirations are formed.

It was subsequently decided to analyse the occupational aspirations of pupils in the Borough to see whether this hypothesis was supported from the data obtained from the pupils. As a result of certain methodological considerations which are discussed in Chapter 5, p 88, it was decided not to obtain a sample of pupils from the Borough as a whole, but instead to limit the research to just two schools in which the author worked for two years prior to the start of the research. In terms of their social class composition and academic record, the schools were at opposite ends of the schools' "pecking order" which was described above. The two schools thus provided the opportunity to study pupils from a variety of social backgrounds. Each school is now described in detail.

3. The Two Schools

What follows are "portraits" of the two schools which provided the data for the research. It must be stressed that these "portraits" are highly subjective and impressionistic, but they do reflect the very different "ethos" and "atmosphere" of the two schools. They were gradually formed from regular visits to the schools, frequent contact with parents, teachers and pupils and by living and working in the Borough itself. In the context of the Borough, Manor and City were the two most contrasting schools. However, in view of the fact that the Borough was a predominantly middle class, white, residential area, the differences between the schools within the Borough were not as great as the differences between the Borough's schools and those in the neighbouring large city, particularly the inner city. Research based upon this latter situation may well have provided greater opportunity for a comparative study. However, this was not possible since limited time and resources (which were a consequence of doing part-time research) did not permit the inclusion of a school outside the Borough.

Manor School

Manor School was set in attractive parkland near to the centre of the Borough. It was a well maintained school built in the 1950s and was divided into two main buildings. Prior to the introduction of comprehensive education these separate buildings contained the girls Grammar School and the boys Grammar School. They now formed the lower and upper halves of a mixed comprehensive school.

The main entrance to the school led into a reception area around which were large oak panels bearing the names of the former Grammar

School's Oxbridge successes. Another oak panel was inscribed with the names and academic credentials of the school's past and present Head Teachers. Throughout the school the walls were covered with displays and noticeboards. On these were pinned details of club meetings, debates, inter-house sports events and so forth. Maps, graphs and exhibits were on display in most of the public places, and all provided evidence of the school's wide range of academic, cultural and sporting achievements.

At the front of the school were playing fields and tennis courts with flowerbeds and shrubs adding to the attractive layout of the grounds. At the back of the school, there was a large expanse of parkland with trees, ponds and an athletics track. The school grounds were kept meticulously clean by "litter squads" made up of pupils, and there was no sign of vandalism or graffiti on the walls. School rules were very strict and detention was given to those pupils caught walking on the grass. Pupils found guilty of this offence were also liable to be assigned to the "litter squads".

Manor School uniform consisted of a blazer, white shirt or blouse, striped tie, grey or black trousers or skirt and "respectable shoes".[3] The uniform rules were enforced ruthlessly and each member of the school adhered to this colour code. Girls were forbidden to wear make-up and jewellery and boys with "extreme" haircuts - that is, either too long or too short - ran the risk of being sent home from school. Regular uniform inspections maintained the standard of dress and the majority of pupils and parents chose to accept the school's strict policy on uniform. Thus, Manor gave the impression

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3. The rules on uniform extended to six pages of the introductory handbook sent to the parents of new pupils in Manor.

of a well-ordered, academic and affluent community which was both aware and proud of the high status which it enjoyed within the Borough. Naturally there were some minor grumblings amongst the pupils over some of the school's rules, but by the time pupils had reached the fifth year most were aware of the advantages that membership of Manor School bestowed upon them.

The staff at Manor School attached considerable importance to the school's reputation within the Borough. This attitude could also be observed amongst parents and pupils. On several occasions pupils expressed concern that the bad behaviour of other pupils would tarnish the school's good name. The school was at the top of the Borough's educational hierarchy with over 50% of its pupils remaining in full-time education beyond the statutory leaving age to take 'A' level courses.[4] Therefore, given Manor's undoubted academic status, why was the school so obsessed with its image ?

The explanation can be found in the Borough's recent educational re-organisation. Prior to this reorganisation in 1974, Manor was a successful grammar school. Its pupils continually reached the highest standards of academic excellence. At the time of reorganisation fears were expressed in the Borough that the school might lose its high calibre pupils and become a mediocre comprehensive. However, in the case of Manor these fears were not realised, since the catchment area of the "new" school was constructed in such a way as to include within it those parts of the Borough which contained the most expensive housing areas. Figure 2.1 shows that whilst the other comprehensive schools in the Borough were based at the centre of a circular type

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4. Being located within the Manor catchment area provided houses with strong selling feature and was often mentioned in the advertisements placed in Estate Agents' windows. It was believed that a house within the Manor catchment area had £3/4000 added to its value because of this fact.

catchment area, Manor's catchment area was designed as an elongated strip which went through the centre of the Borough. This catchment area contained none of the Borough's council estates. Most of the parents within the Manor catchment area kept faith with the school and only a few sent their children to the local fee-paying school because they were unhappy at the prospect of them attending a state comprehensive school. Furthermore, a large proportion of the grammar school staff stayed at the school and so carried over the tradition and ethos of the former grammar school into the new comprehensive. The new headmaster appointed to Manor following reorganisation, whilst recognising that the school now contained some non-academic pupils with particular needs, nevertheless appreciated that the majority of his pupils would have passed the 11 plus examination under the former system. Therefore, the goals of the "new" school required little alteration, and if anything, the challenge was there to raise the standard of those less academic pupils who now attended the school.

The strict discipline of the school, and its concern with its image, can therefore be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to maintain its reputation as a centre of academic excellence during a period of educational reorganisation and uncertainty. The school successfully transformed itself into an academically biased comprehensive and maintained its position at the top of the "pecking order" of the Borough's schools. However, the change from a selective to a non-selective intake did cause a minor decline in the academic composition of the Manor. For instance, whereas 85% of pupils in Manor Grammar School usually passed 4 'O' levels or more, only 63% of the pupils in the new comprehensive school were expected to do so. Furthermore, whereas 73.1% of the pupils reaching statutory school leaving age in 1978 (the last year of pupils taken in under the 11+) continued to

study for 'A' levels, this proportion decreased to 53.3% amongst those pupils attaining the statutory age in 1980, who were a non-selective, comprehensive intake. Thus even though Manor experienced a small deterioration in academic performance, it nevertheless remained a school with a strong academic ethos.

There was very little mixed ability teaching in Manor. Pupils were placed in sets on the basis of their first year examination performance and these sets became the key social units of the school. They provided pupils with a range of peers of similar academic ability from which friends were usually drawn (see Chapter 8 for a discussion of peer group influences upon occupational aspirations). The school believed that "setting", that is the separation of pupils into ability groups in each subject, was a more flexible system than streaming, where pupils were divided into classes on the basis of their overall academic performance and, within which, they were taught all their subjects. However, in practice, there were few pupils who were found in the top sets for some subjects and the middle or bottom sets for others. Instead, almost all the same pupils dominated the top sets in all subjects, whilst another group of pupils was taught exclusively in the bottom sets. Therefore, pupils in Manor were quite rigidly divided in terms of ability, and it could be argued that this separation of pupils into distinct academic ability groups produced a "grammar" and a "secondary modern" school under the same roof with the "grammar" school much the more dominant.

City School

In contrast to Manor, City was a Secondary Modern before reorganisation. It was situated in the middle of a council estate on the edge of the Borough where the Borough had its boundary with the large neighbouring

city. City school was located near a large car assembly plant where many of the pupils' parents worked. The school's catchment area was generally regarded within the Borough as its least prosperous district with a higher proportion of council houses and working class families. Table 2.1 illustrates the association between type of home in which respondents lived and school attended. It can be seen that the City catchment area included a smaller proportion of pupils whose parents owned their homes than was the case with Manor respondents, and a higher proportion who lived in council houses. Whereas in comparison to many inner city areas, the City catchment area could not be described as deprived, within the context of the Borough, it was an area which showed a marked contrast to the districts of the Borough from which the Manor pupils were drawn. (For a detailed comparison of the socio-economic background of the pupils of Manor and City see Chapter 6).

Table 2.1

Type of House by School Attended

Type of House *	School	
	MANOR	CITY
Detached	24.4 (22)	1.1 (1)
Semi-detached	47.8 (43)	12.2 (11)
Town	27.8 (25)	61.1 (55)
Council	0.0	25.6 (23)
	100% (90)	100% (90)

$x^2 = 72.38$, df = 3, $p < 0.001$

* Classification of housing types as used by local estate agents. 'Detached', 'Semi-detached' and 'Town' are all privately owned. 'Town' houses are small, modern houses built in rows of five or six and were a feature of many of the estates built in the Borough since the mid-1960s.

City school was surrounded on all sides by identical-looking council houses. The school was not in such a good state of repair as Manor. The paintwork had deteriorated over the years and it was common to see broken windows temporarily blocked up with sheets of cardboard. The inside of the school had fewer notice-boards and displays than Manor, and those notices which were put up were usually defaced. Occasional attempts were made to enliven the corridors by mounting small exhibitions of pupils' work, but these solitary endeavours did little to improve the aesthetic poverty of the interior of the school. Thus, City with its bare walls and grubby floors presented a contrasting environment to the colourful and stimulating atmosphere of Manor.

City school was also split into two buildings separated by a concrete playground. City did not have "litter squads" and consequently the school grounds were normally littered with empty drink cans, crisp packets and torn up pages of pop magazines and comics. There were no shrubs or flower beds to break up the monotony of the school yards, and because most of the pupils played on the grassy areas, these had developed large bare patches. During wet weather these were turned into mud and were brought into the school on pupils' shoes.

The school had a constant battle against vandalism and even though it could normally clear up most of the damage immediately, windows were sometimes left broken for several days. (The careers interview room had its windows regularly shattered by air gun pellets !) Whereas graffiti were virtually unkown in Manor, City's walls normally bore several examples. For instance, rude comments about the headmaster remained painted on the playground wall for several days. In contrast to this, the only occasion on which graffiti was discovered on Manor walls produced such a staff uproar that within a few hours

workmen had arrived from the Council's maintenance department to remove the offending slogan.

City had a school uniform and several of the first and second year pupils wore the complete outfit which consisted of a dark blazer, grey trousers/skirt and a multi-coloured striped tie. As the pupils progressed through the school, however, they wore fewer and fewer items of school uniform, so that by the fifth year it was rare to see evidence of it. The headmaster realised that he could not enforce the uniform strictly because there had been no tradition of uniform in the Secondary Modern School, and because parents and staff were not over-enthusiastic about the benefits derived from a school uniform. Hence, the head settled for what he defined as the minimum acceptable standard of dress. This included a shirt, jumper and a pair of "proper" trousers or suitable skirt.

There appeared to be three main categories of pupils in respect of uniform. The first group consisted of those who wore the full uniform. As previously stated, such pupils were most commonly in their first or second years, but there were some who wore the uniform throughout their school careers. Although very little can be said about the pupils in years 1 to 4 who fell into this category, since no data is available on them, those 5th year respondents who wore the uniform were predominantly from the highest academic sets of the school. They were, generally, those pupils who were most enthusiastic about school and tended to hold the principal posts of responsibility within it.
A systematic study of the association between school uniform wearing and attitude to school was beyond the scope of this research, but it might pose a worthwhile area for subsequent research.

The second group of pupils were those who kept to the minimum standards of dress and the general impression was that these formed the bulk of the school population. Finally, there was the third group who made little attempt to meet the minimum standards. These included those who followed closely the dress of a particular adolescent sub-culture such as the 'punks', 'teddy boys' and 'skinheads', and also those pupils, predominantly girls, who 'dressed up' to come to school. These wore the latest fashion skirts, stilleto heeled shoes, make-up and jewellery. The majority of teachers turned a 'blind eye' to the casual dressers and only apprehended those pupils whose dress was deliberately intended to antagonise the school staff. Furthermore, there were several pockets of poverty within the City catchment area, particularly on the council estates, and the staff were reluctant to force casual and untidy dressers into improving their appearance for fear of aggravating a sensitive domestic situation.

City school tended to have a poor image in the Borough, chiefly because of its situation on a council estate and its former Secondary Modern status. A present pupil described it as "the failure school, always has been", whilst a former pupil, now in her twenties and working for the Careers Service remembered it "as a scruffy school. It was fully of scruffy people and that included the teachers too".

Nevertheless, there were some indications that the transformation into a comprehensive school had raised City's academic standards. For instance, whereas the proportion of pupils in the former Secondary School capable of obtaining four 'O' levels or more varied between 5% and 10%, 25% of the respondents in the research sample were deemed capable of obtaining this number of 'O' levels or above. Secondly,

the destination of the comprehensive pupils differed from the previous Secondary Modern School leavers. For example, whereas only 3.2% of the 1978 5th formers (the last of the Secondary Modern intake) continued to study 'A' levels, 14.4% of the 1980 respondents did so.

City pupils were also separated into sets according to ability after the first year examinations. These sets formed the dominant social units of the school and teachers admitted that attempts made to counteract this academic separation, such as mixed ability registration forms and houses, were generally unsuccessful. Several senior members of staff explained that it was their policy to concentrate those pupils who displayed academic potential into a few top sets in order to protect them from what they regarded as the dominant "non-academic ethos" of the school. This policy was bitterly criticized by other members of staff who regarded it as elitist and "against the best interests of the school as a whole". Whereas the policy of Manor teachers was to expose the "minority" of non-academic pupils to the academic environment of the school so as to raise their academic horizons, some City teachers sheltered their "minority" academic pupils from what they considered to be the harsh non-academic environment dominant in their school.

Therefore, whilst City school could not justifiably be described as "deprived" when compared to some of the "inner-ring" schools of large cities, there were nevertheless marked contrasts between it and Manor. As such, it provided an excellent opportunity to undertake a comparative study between itself and Manor. City contained far fewer pupils from middle class homes than Manor and its academic record was poorer. On the basis of careers advice given to City pupils by the author in previous years, it was noted that City pupils generally aspired to

jobs of a lower socio-economic status than did Manor pupils. Consequently, it was hypothesised that Manor would have a higher proportion of pupils who aspired to professional and managerial jobs whilst City would have a higher proportion of pupils who aspired to manual employment.

It was stated above that the general hypothesis formulated was formed from observations made over two years as a Careers Officer and from the literature. The following Chapters, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 contain summaries of the literature in this field.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCHING OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

Two major difficulties face the reviewer of the literature on occupational choice. First, it has been stated frequently that the literature, though large, is fragmented with few comprehensive accounts of the process of occupational choice (Keil, Riddell and Green, 1966; Musgrave, 1967; Roberts, 1968; Ashton and Field, 1976 and Fogelman, 1979). Secondly, the literature suffers from what Clarke (1980: 4) has termed "semantic confusion". In particular, the central concept, occupational choice, has been used in a variety of different ways and contexts, sometimes meaning occupational intentions, whilst on other occasions it has been used to mean occupational expectations and even occupational destinations. Each of these has a distinct meaning, and whereas choice suggests that a young person has selected a job after a careful and rational consideration of the range of occupations available, the term occupational choice has been used to describe the jobs actually entered by young people irrespective of whether these were the jobs they really wanted. Thus it is not always possible to be absolutely sure of authors' precise meanings and much of the academic debate arises from this lack of precisely defined terminology. Kurlesky and Bealer (1966: 266-267) have suggested a way of resolving this difficulty. They argue that the term occupational choice should be reserved for individual job preferences, whilst the term "occupational attainment" should be used to refer to the total process of job entry, a process within which occupational choice is merely a part.

The literature review in this thesis is divided into two Chapters,

Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 describes the efforts made by authors since the 1950s to formulate a comprehensive theory of occupational choice. It also contains a discussion of some of the major empirical studies which have examined the development of young people's occupational aspirations. In both instances, authors have drawn attention to the fact that the process of occupational choice cannot be analysed separately from the social environment in which young people grow up. Chapter 4, therefore, examines those studies where, although the occupational choice of young people was not the authors' chief concern, the thrust of the research is directly relevant in that it shows the influence of social class, education, peer groups and gender on occupational choice.

1. Towards a General Theory of Occupational Choice

Comprehensive theories of occupational choice can be divided into two broad and contrasting categories (Speakman 1980:100). The first, the "individual-ambition" model, defines occupational choice as the process by which personal career ambitions develop over time, and where the job eventually selected is the one which provides the individual with the maximum occupational satisfaction. The second category the "opportunity-structure" model, states that individuals are restricted in the development of their occupational aspirations and are not in a position to select one job from a wide range of possibilities. Instead, occupational aspirations and opportunities are limited by structural factors such as the individual's position in the social stratification system, his or her education, gender, ethnic origin and so forth. In the first model, occupations are chosen on the basis of ambition, whilst in the second ambitions are but the product of the job one

expects to enter. Speakman (1980) allocated such authors as Ginzberg (1951), Super (1953) and Musgrave (1967) to the first category, whilst Keil et al (1966) and Roberts (1968) were included in the second.

Much of the pioneering work on occupational choice was undertaken by Ginzberg (1951) and Super (1953) in the U.S.A. It was the objective of these developmental psychologists to produce an all embracing theory of occupational choice, and although their work has been criticised by British sociologists such as Roberts (1968; 1975), it nevertheless represents one of the most important contributions towards the development of a comprehensive theory. Indeed, many of the concepts originally formulated by Ginzberg and Super have become the foundations upon which much of the subsequent research has been based.

Ginzberg conceived of occupational choice as a developmental process. Decisions made at one stage of a person's life would in turn effect the nature of later decisions. Moreover, because the earlier decisions often restrict future options (for instance in the choice of school courses) this process was largely irreversible, since few people could easily halt one career and start again. Ginzberg described the occupational choice process as consisting of three stages, the "fantasy stage", the "tentative stage" and the "realistic stage". Young people move through these stages in their early and late teenage years. At first they have unrealistic fantasy notions of the kind of occupations they want, such as the short sighted boy wanting to be a RAF pilot. Next comes the tentative stage where occupational ambitions are modified according to individual strengths and weaknesses. Finally, as young people mature and obtain a better

understanding of themselves and the job market, they enter the realistic stage and are now in a position to make an informed choice of occupation.

Although not all of Ginzberg's ideas were original, he was the first to blend them together into a single theory. His work was, however, subsequently criticised by Super (1953) who attacked Ginzberg's theory at three points. First, it did not take adequate account of previous research. Secondly, that the compromise process between aspirations and opportunities which occurs when young people move between the various stages of their occupational development was not described in sufficient detail. Thirdly, although Ginzberg defined occupational choice as preference, he subsequently used the concept very loosely.

Super's own attempt to produce a theory of occupational choice has much in common with Ginzberg's in as much as they both conceived of occupational choice as a developmental process. Super's theory was outlined in a series of ten propositions which described how individuals could be distinguished from each other by their different abilities, interests and personalities. Individuals, according to Super, develop a self concept based upon both these different characteristics together with how they perceive themselves able to implement this self concept in a job. Thus, individuals choose those occupations which enable them to assume a role in keeping with their self concepts. One important way in which Super differs from Ginzberg is that whereas the latter envisaged the development of occupational choice as being complete at the point of entry into the job market, Super conceived of situations where people might enter jobs before they reach their occupational maturity. In this way the

process continues beyond the point of entry into the job market and so explains why some people change their jobs frequently during the first few years of their working lives.

The work of Ginzberg and Super represents an important contribution to the literature on occupational choice. Indeed many of the later studies can be interpreted as responses to their work. For instance, during the 1960s there was considerable interest shown by British sociologists in the topic of occupational choice. Musgrave (1967), for example, attempted to place the theories of Ginzberg and Super within a sociological context by using the concept of socialisation, which he defined as the "learning of roles". Musgrave, as was mentioned above, was allocated by Speakman (1980) to the "individual-ambition" model approach because he placed the emphasis upon occupational choice as a product of individual development and took little account of social structure. Musgrave conceived of each young person as facing a large number of alternative occupational pathways, each consisting of a series of occupational roles. The socialisation of young people determines which pathway is chosen, with each choice limiting the range of available future pathways. Thus by a continuous choice of pathways a young person reaches that occupation which is consistent with his or her occupational socialisation.

Musgrave was subsequently criticised by Coulson et al (1967) because of the inadequate attention he paid to social structure and because of his over simplified functionalist perspective based upon a consensus view of society. Their own theory stressed the role played by social structure, and Clarke (1980: 3) has shown that this approach which explains occupational choice as a product of young people's home background, social class, school etc. is more typical of British

sociological theories of occupational choice. Speakman (1980) described this approach as the "opportunity structure" model and within it are to be found two important theories of occupational choice.

One was developed by Keil et al (1966) who suggested that choice of an occupation is a product of an individual's interaction with his or her family, neighbourhood, school and peer group. The result of this interaction is to equip young people with a set of attitudes to and expectations about work, and these explain both young people's choice of occupation and how most of them successfully negotiate the difficult transition from school to work. Young people, therefore, choose jobs which meet the expectations about work which have been developed by their experiences at home and in school. Roberts (1968; 1975) argued that young people are not free to choose any job from the entire range of available occupations, but instead have their occupational opportunities limited by their social background and educational performance. He described how young people on leaving school are graded in terms of their academic performance. This grading system closely corresponds to the grading of jobs within the job market, so that pupils are channelled by the school system into a particular level of occupation as a consequence of their performance at school. In this manner, those pupils who leave school with few or no qualifications usually have only jobs at the lowest level of the occupational hierarchy open to them. On the other hand, the more qualified pupils are able to choose from a wider range of potential jobs, including those which require new entrants to have specific educational qualifications. Roberts added that young people become aware of their grading within the school system and so develop occupational aspirations in accordance with a realistic assessment of their opportunities. This was a view also stated by Liversidge (1962) who

concluded that pupils' occupational aspirations are realistic because pupils appreciate the occupational implications of their position in the school's academic hierarchy.

In spite of the differences in emphasis between the various theories of occupational choice, Ford and Box (1967:228) have identified common ground;

> "This whole body of work can be summarised as entailing the view that occupational choice represents the culmination of a process in which hopes and desires come to terms with the realities of the occupational market place."

Thus authors working from different approaches have envisaged occupational choice as a process developing over a long period of time rather than a single decision made at an identifiable point of time, and individuals generally compromise between the jobs they would ideally like to do and the job their abilities, interests, personalities and the opportunity structure permits them to do. However, even though there is a general agreement in the literature that a compromise takes place, the exact nature of the compromise has not been clarified. Ford and Box (1967) argued that this compromise is a rational process by which desired ends are weighed against the likelihood of being obtained, whereas Roberts (1975) believes that in analysing the compromise process, less emphasis should be placed upon individual ambitions and more on available employment opportunities.

In the first section of this literature review, several of the difficulties which authors have faced in developing a comprehensive theory of occupational choice have been outlined. The main difficulty in producing such a theory is, as Holland (1959) has noted, the difficulty of reconciling the need to generalise in order to cater

for the complexities of the situation with the need not to over-generalise to such an extent that little of consequence is said. Speakman (1980: 121) felt that a single theory could not adequately cater for the immense variety of circumstances which young people experience. Middle class young people, she claimed, experience a different occupational choice process to that of the working class young, and although the work of Ginzberg and Super may accurately reflect the situation of certain groups of young people in the USA, Roberts has shown that it is an inappropriate theory for the situation faced by many in the UK. This is a view shared by Murray and Haran (1978) who state that the popularity of the developmental theory stems largely from the fact that it has become the dominant theory espoused by the Careers Service in the UK.[1] Hence, Speakman (1980) concluded that both models are required for the situation experienced by young people in Britain, with the "individual ambition model" generally more appropriate to middle class young people, and the "opportunity structure" model more appropriate to working class young people.

2. Major Empirical Studies

The second section of the literature review is concerned with those authors who, rather than attempting to develop general theories, have instead described the manner in which particular groups of young people experience their final years in school together with their transition from school to work. Some of these works are more theoretical than others, but all attempt to analyse the occupational choices of young people within their total social setting. As Ashton and Field (1976: 11) have stated, a substantial amount of the literature examines the

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1. This fact is central to this thesis.

issue of occupational choice as if it bore no relationship to the other aspects of young people's lives. The process by which a young person chooses and then enters an occupation cannot be separated from his or her everyday experiences at home, at school or in the neighbourhood.[2.]

Carter (1966) in his study of the entry into work of working class youth not only found that attitudes to work were inextricably linked to social background, but also noted that working class young people should not be conceived of as an homogeneous group. He identified three distinct types of working class family, the "home centred aspiring", the "solid working class" and the "roughs" (pp39-68). Expectations about work and commitment to obtaining a good job (and indeed what constituted a good job) varied between these different types of working class young people. The "home centred aspiring" boys hoped to find a job with prospects, which usually meant an apprenticeship. This enabled them to not only expect a comfortable lifestyle, but also one which was somewhat better than that of their parents. Consequently, these pupils tended to value their educational opportunities and they also appreciated the connection between performance at school and occupational prospects. The "solid working class" pupils were generally less concerned about the jobs they entered than were the "home centred aspiring" types. However, they were not prepared to take just any job but preferred those which paid well and offered decent working conditions. The link between job opportunities and school performance was usually recognised by these pupils, but they tended to be fatalistic about their chances of

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2. This is a process which my experience in the Careers Service has time and again reinforced.

succeeding in school and usually resigned themselves to thinking that academic success was not for the likes of them. Finally, the "roughs" were mostly willing to take any job they could obtain. In spite of generally poor prospects, such jobs at least represented a significant improvement on school and enabled them to earn money and achieve adult status.

An interesting feature of Carter's book is his description of how the pupils in his study 'selected' and then entered jobs. Unlike Ford and Box (1967) who argued that occupations are entered after desired ends are weighed against the likelihood of them being obtained, Carter found little evidence of occupations being entered in an informed and systematic way. Instead, jobs were entered as a result of hearsay, stereotypes and because they appeared to be the types of job done by people living in the neighbourhood. Working class parents were frequently reluctant or unable to offer careers advice. Some parents set down very broad guidelines as to those jobs of which they approved and those of which they did not, but within these wide parameters, their children developed occupational aspirations without active parental involvement. Parents were usually ill informed about jobs other than their own and preferred to offer no advice to offering wrong advice. Consequently, young people turned to the most available source of advice, that of their friends.[3.]

Carter also showed that the schools which young people attended also structured their occupational wishes. The streaming system which was

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3. Carter (1966: 82-106) showed that the Careers Service in the mid 1960s (the Youth Employment Service as it was then) had only a limited role in providing careers guidance to young people.

used by many of the secondary schools attended by his respondents separated pupils into different ranks on the basis of their academic performance. Pupils were then channelled into a similarly ranked labour market according to the qualifications they possessed. This was a trend also noted by Maizels (1970) in her study of the occupational aspirations of secondary school pupils in London. She (pp 91/92) observed that:

> "The limits set to vocational choice and opportunities are known to be broadly set by socio-economic and educational factors."

Occupational aspirations were found to be closely linked to school performance and these aspirations were modified as school performance improved or deteriorated. Maizels found that the majority of pupils in her sample had realistic occupational aspirations in the sense that they had, or expected to obtain, the minimum qualifications necessary for entry into the jobs to which they aspired. However, as she also noted, most of the young people aspired to jobs at the top end of the range open to them, so some disappointment was inevitable. Indeed only one third of the pupils in her sample obtained the exact job to which they aspired.

Maizels found that the occupational aspirations of young people developed with only the minimum of help from official agencies such as the Careers Service. Many of her sample had only a limited range of occupations open to them, and by the time they were given guidance by a Careers Officer, they were too far along the road to routine, unskilled work for a significant change of direction to be made. The Careers Service was mainly used by young people as a source of information on current job vacancies and Maizels concluded that it only had

a marginal impact upon the development of occupational aspirations because its contact with young people was too late and too brief.

Ashton and Field (1976: 11) attempted to analyse the occupational intentions of young people in a "systematic and unitary way". They found that the continuity of experience between young people's lives at home, at school and in the job market produced attitudes to work which made their transition from school to employment far less difficult than some authors have assumed. Like Carter (1966), Ashton and Field divided their sample into three groups differentiated by their attitudes to, and expections of work. These were termed the "careerless", the "short term career" and the "extended career" perspectives. The "careerless" were generally working class pupils who failed to achieve academic success. They had been socialised by their parents into the world of the "immediate present" (p.37), which was characterised by living for the moment with little regard for the future. Forward planning, such as studying for exams, was not a feature of their day to day existence, and these pupils generally left school at their earliest opportunity. They rarely gave much thought as to which jobs were most suitable for them and instead were prepared to take any job which provided a reasonable income. Such jobs were usually routine manual.

Young people described as having "short term" career perspectives mainly came from upper working class families where parents had some degree of control over their work situation and other aspects of their lives. This more secure atmosphere provided a situation where some short term planning was possible. Consequently, children were brought up to appreciate the connection between school performance and occupational opportunities, and although pupils tended not to be

academic high achievers, they were, nevertheless, usually capable of obtaining sufficient qualifications to allow them to enter jobs with prospects and training such as apprenticeships. This was the type of work also favoured by their parents and friends.

Ashton and Field described their third group of pupils as having "extended career" perspectives. These pupils gave considerable thought to their future careers since they had been brought up to regard a career as an important part of a person's life. They frequently aspired to professional and managerial jobs which usually had a long term career structure. On the whole, these pupils came from middle class homes, but some were from the upper levels of the working class. They were mainly brought up in homes with secure atmospheres where long term planning was possible. In school they were located in the top academic streams which in turn reinforced the encouragement they received from home to seek both educational and occupational success. Many of these pupils remained within full time education beyond the minimum school leaving age, and many of those who left school frequently obtained jobs which offered day release for further education at college.

Ashton and Field succeeded in blending together theories derived from both sociology and social psychology. They placed considerable emphasis on social structure, but also explained how these structures influenced young people's attitudes to themselves and to life in general. In a paper which was published prior to their book, Ashton (1973: 103-105) described the manner by which the allocation to a particular stream in school affected pupils' self images, and occupations were then sought which were appropriate to these self images. This finding has much in common with Super's belief that occupational choice

is the process of implementing one's self concept in a job. A second major feature of Ashton and Field's work is that it is possible to place within it those theories belonging to the "individual ambition" and the "opportunity structure" approaches. By acknowledging that different groups of young people attempt to choose jobs in different ways, Ashton and Field have produced a useful framework for analysing the occupational intentions of young people in a systematic and unitary manner.

Ashton and Field outlined the continuity between young people's experiences at home, at school and at work. A vivid description of how such a continuity influences the development of occupational attitudes and aspirations is provided by Willis (1977) in his study of working class boys reaching school leaving age in an industrial town in the Midlands. Willis set himself the task of explaining why these pupils so readily accepted heavy manual work as their inevitable occupational destination, and he discovered the reason for this in their working class culture. The boys in his study used the prospect of manual employment as a means of escaping from their inferior position as school pupils. Such work provided them with a justifiable claim for adult and masculine status. The "lads" as they were described by Willis underwent a rehearsal for their future occupations whilst still at school, for Willis drew a parallel between the anti-school subculture which the "lads" created at school, and the shop floor subculture prevalent in the factories they were shortly to enter. Willis argued that both school and factory placed working class people under external control and direction, but in both situations the "lads" were able to impose their cultural framework and so produce meaning out of harsh and boring conditions. Even though the shop floor made more physical demands on the "lads" than

school ever did, they saw this as positively attractive since they regarded written school work and non-manual work as effeminate.

Willis wrote that working class pupils such as those he described did not "choose" jobs. Choosing a career, he stated, is a middle class activity, the privilege of those who are able to manipulate their environment. The "lads" did not make informed and systematic career plans, nor left school in an orderly fashion. Instead Willis described their "tumble" out of school into which ever jobs they could find. They used the Careers Service as a source of job vacancies, but were not influenced by the Careers Service or the school as to which jobs they should take. (A finding similar to that of Maizels (1970) mentioned above). They rejected the official teaching paradigm of the school which suggested that the job one obtains is dependent upon one's performance in school, and instead fell back on the opinions and attitudes of their own culture. Willis did not suggest that all working class young people behave in this way. He differentiated between the "lads" and the "earoles", the latter group being those who accepted the authority of the school and the connection between school performance and occupational opportunities. (Certain similarities exist between Willis' "earoles" and Carter's (1966) "home centred aspiring" types). The "lads", however, rejected the authority of the school for they realised they were destined for heavy manual work and Willis stated that:

> "... there is an element of self damnation in the ("lads") taking on of subordinate roles in Western capitalism" (p.3).

A very recent study by Ryrie (1983) of the career intentions of 1200 young people in eight Scottish comprehensive schools has also highlighted the important role played by social structures such as school

and neighbourhood in the production of these intentions. Ryrie's main conclusion was that the level of pupils' occupational intentions depends on how well they do at school. Their school performance over a period of years tells them at what level of occupation they should be aiming, and they develop their intentions, and if need be adjust them, in accordance with their performance. The occupational intentions of Ryrie's respondents were also influenced by their contact with people outside of school and the official careers education programme seemed to have only a marginal effect. Unlike Roberts (1968; 1975) who argued that young people are generally aware of the local opportunity structure, Ryrie found little evidence of this amongst his sample. Nevertheless, the young people completed their schooling with fairly realistic job intentions, although they often had to take whatever job they could obtain because of the very high levels of youth unemployment in Scotland. Ryrie also concluded that the Careers Service has only a small impact upon the development of occupational intentions, and he suggested that the work of the Careers Service would be more effective if guidance is given at an earlier age, and if Careers Officers concentrated chiefly on helping young people to make the transition from school to work, rather than on developing their occupational intentions. This is exactly the same conclusion as that made by Roberts (1976).

CHAPTER 4

SOME IMPORTANT INFLUENCES ON OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS: A SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE

The literature reviewed in Chapter 3 illustrated how the development of young people's occupational aspirations cannot be analysed separately from the social environment in which they grow up. Therefore, greater attention needs to be paid to those factors which influence the development of young people's occupational aspirations, including social class, school and peer groups. During the 1950's and 1960's the association between gender and occupational aspirations was largely ignored, and as can be seen from Chapter 3, the special circumstances affecting teenage girls were largely overlooked in much the same way that most of the studies of social class and mobility also ignored women.[1] Recently, however, the importance of gender to the discussion of occupational aspirations has been acknowledged. It is the intention of this Chapter to review studies on such issues as social class, education, peer groups and gender. The purpose is not to provide a comprehensive account of the literature on each of these areas, but to summarise those works which have some bearing on this research.

1. Social Class

Social class influences occupational aspirations both directly and indirectly. It influences aspirations directly by shaping young people's attitudes to and expectations about work. On the other hand, class influences aspirations indirectly by affecting young people's

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1. This was not just a feature of the sociology of occupational choice, but was common to all branches of sociology.

educational performance which in turn influences their occupational aspirations. First, those studies on the direct influence of social class are examined.

Many authors have drawn attention to the variation in attitudes to work which exist between the social classes. Bell (1968: 130), in his study of middle class families in Swansea, noted that the concept of a "career" - that is an orderly progression through the various stages of an occupation - permeates the whole middle class approach to work. The middle class families in Bell's study attached very great importance to obtaining a suitable occupation and then progressing within it. Elliot (1972), Deverson and Lindsay (1975) and Podmore (1980) have also discussed the centrality of the career and of work to middle class adults. They have described how middle class professionals such as doctors and lawyers are unable to lose their occupational labels in their out of work activities. Deverson and Lindsay (p.74) noted that since friends are often drawn from the profession there "is no switching off at 5 o'clock". For many in the middle class, work is not a necessary evil but a means of increasing one's self-esteem and is quite pleasant in itself. In contrast to this, many manual workers leave their work behind at the end of their shifts. Parker et al (1967: 163-165), in their study of leisure activities, distinguished between the "extension pattern of leisure" where out of work activities are connected to one's occupation, the "neutrality pattern" where leisure activities are somewhat different and the "opposition pattern" where leisure activities are rigidly separated from work. The extension pattern is typical of professionals and managers, the neutrality pattern of clerical workers and minor professionals, whilst the opposition pattern is most prevalent amongst unskilled manual workers.

Lockwood (1966: 203) found that many working class men had very little involvement in their work with few attachments to their employer. Similarly, Hoggart (1957: 70) described how work appeared to be of only marginal interest to many working class men:

> "Once at work, there is for most, no sense of a career, of the possibilities of promotion. Jobs are spread around horizontally not vertically, life is not seen as a climb nor work the main interest in it".

A common theme throughout the literature is that since most working class people find little intrinsic satisfaction in their work, their children are brought up to expect the same. Consequently, unlike their middle class peers, they do not spend much time planning for their future careers (Carter, 1966, Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1979). Corrigan (1979: 75) in his study of working class boys in the North East noted:

> "The single most important finding that struck me in terms of their ideas about their future work was that thinking about future jobs was of very little importance to them".

He failed to find a causal link between why particular boys entered the jobs they did. Unlike the middle class tendency to plan for, and then select the most appropriate career, the young people in Corrigan's study provided him with very little evidence to suggest that they made a reasoned choice of jobs.

Much of the literature suggests that working class pupils tend to aspire to working class jobs, whilst middle class pupils generally aspire to middle class jobs. Westergaard and Resler (1975: 302) have argued that most occupational mobility is modest with much of it staying on one side or other of the conventional dividing line between white and blue collar work. Moreover, those people who do cross this

line do not usually get very far beyond it. This view has, however, been challenged in some respects by Goldthorpe et al (1980). Whilst agreeing with the opinion of Westergaard and Resler that working class young people are less likely to enter middle class jobs than are middle class young people, these authors added that quite significant numbers of working class young people do enter middle class jobs and this should not be overlooked. Jackson and Marsden (1962: 67-70) found that those working class pupils who do aspire to middle class occupations are often from the "sunken middle class", that is, come from working class families which had experienced downward social mobility.

One of the ways in which middle class families can help their children obtain middle class jobs themselves is by offering them practical assistance. Musgrove (1979: 35) outlined the means by which this is done, for example, by offering financial support to their children during the early years of a career when they are not self-supporting, as in the case of young barristers. Furthermore, family contacts are an important way of getting work. Musgrove agreed with Kelsall (1972) who noted that working class graduates often have narrower occupational horizons than middle class graduates, and are frequently drawn into familiar careers such as teaching because of a lack of knowledge of other opportunities.

A second major way in which social class influences occupational aspirations is indirectly through the education system. There is a considerable body of literature which indicates that educational performance is linked to class and occupational aspirations are linked to education performance. Indeed Musgrove (1979: 129) argued that this, the indirect influence of class, may be a more

important factor in the development of occupational aspirations than the direct influence of social class itself.

Morrison and Macintyre (1971: 24) explained that class is related to educational performance (and hence to occupational aspirations) in four principal ways:

i) ability at age of entry to school,

ii) attainment in school subjects when initial ability differences are held constant,

iii) age of leaving irrespective of attainment,

iv) judgments made by teachers about pupils based on pupils' class rather than pupils' ability.

The dominant theme throughout Morrison and Macintyre's study, and indeed throughout the entire literature on the subject, is that working class children generally fare less well on all four counts.

Douglas (1964) in his longitudinal study of a random sample of all children born in Britain in one week in 1946 concluded that the home circumstances of most working class children were less conducive to educational success in primary school than were the homes of middle class children. Glass (1964:20) and Ford (1969: 11) have added that this is all the more serious because the secondary school system does not compensate for this disadvantage. Davie et al (1972) also found that middle class homes were more educationally stimulating than working class homes, not just because of their superior material circumstances but because of differences in parental attitudes to their children's education. Furthermore, Banks and Finlayson (1973: 111) believe that middle class homes have a superior "cultural climate" to working class homes, for example, parents are more likely to be keen readers than are working class parents.

Apart from the cumulative advantages of coming from a middle class background, and the cumulative disadvantages of coming from a working class home, middle class children are also better off because their families are better equipped than working class families to give practical assistance at school. Carter (1966: 48) described how working class parents are less likely to telephone the school when problems arise than are middle class parents. Moreover, Jackson and Marsden (1962: 56-57) mentioned that even when working class parents do visit the school, they are often unable to successfully challenge the authorities. Lacy (1970: 76) found that middle class parents are far more skilled in challenging the opinion of the school when they consider it to be wrong. This is an important point since Banks and Finlayson (1973: 57) have argued that parents usually modify their expectations about their children's education in the light of "messages" received from school. Working class parents are more likely, therefore, to believe that teachers words are final.

The danger of assuming that the relationship between social class and educational performance is straightforward has been critisised recently by Musgrove (1979) who has argued that some researchers have failed to distinguish between "class" and "home". Musgrove contends that many middle class homes, though materially comfortable, are not educationally stimulating because parents do not give enough attention to their children. In contrast to this, many working class children grow up in homes where, although the income of parents is low, there is a richness in knowledge. Thus, Musgrove challenges those who take an over-simplified view of the relationship between class and education:

> ".. home is important, class is not". (1979: 141)

Whilst recognising the danger of over-generalising, it is, nevertheless, possible to conclude that the literature reviewed above shows that there is both a direct and indirect association between class and occupational aspirations. The influence of social class on the occupational aspirations of the young people studied in Manor and City schools is discussed in Chapter 6. The next section of this Chapter will consider, in more detail, the ways in which occupational aspirations are moulded by the school system itself.

2. The School System

Many writers have observed that the school system acts as a filter, separating pupils according to their academic performance before channelling them into different sections of the labour market. The qualifications which pupils possess frequently determines the type of jobs they can enter, and the qualifications for which pupils study is often determined by their place within the academic hierarchy of the school (Little and Westergaard, 1964; Banks, 1968: 41-47; Halsey et al, 1980: 104-124). Thus the school system plays an important role in shaping pupils' occupational aspirations for as Banks and Finlayson (1973: 51-65) have argued, the occupational aspirations of pupils are often the consequence of their realisation of what their position within the school's academic hierarchy means for the type of job they are likely to be able to obtain. Indeed, Hopper (1973: 305) has claimed that a major function of the school system is to regulate the occupational aspirations of their pupils in accordance with the occupational structure.

Schools' "filter effect" takes place both within and between schools.

Authors primarily concerned with the "within school effect" have tended to concentrate on the streaming system and the process by which pupils come to study different subjects, "the option choice process". Those authors interested in the "between school effect" formerly directed their attention towards the differences between schools under the tripartite system. Now the focus of attention has shifted to the inequalities between comprehensives.

Pupils in the third year of secondary school are usually required to drop some of their subjects and concentrate from then on with a narrower range of subjects. Maizels (1970: 100) has shown how the subjects which pupils study influence the jobs to which they aspire, since pupils normally prefer those jobs which have features in common with their favourite subjects. Thus Morrison and Macintyre (1971: 198) stated that:

> "For many young people choice of an occupation is to a large extent implicit within the educational choices they make".

Because pupils usually follow a narrower curriculum after the option choice stage, their range of occupational opportunities is often quite restricted. This is especially the case in respect of science subjects which are required for a wide range of scientific and technical careers. Thus it was argued by Morrison and Macintyre (1971: 198) that future occupational pathways are, to a large extent, determined by the educational decisions made by pupils in their third year in secondary school, and:

> "In particular which pupils will become scientists and technologists is largely determined at this stage."

Streaming, the other influential internal school structure has been studied by many writers including Shipman (1968), Ford (1969) and

Tapper (1971). All have commented on the role played by streaming as having both "intended" and "unintended" consequences. The "intended" consequence of streaming is contained within the educational belief that teaching is more effective if classes are of similar rather than "mixed" ability. It has "unintended" consequences, however, for this ranking of pupils into streams on the basis of their academic performance labels pupils in the top streams as "superior" and pupils in the lower streams as "inferior". Consequently, pupils in the top streams develop "A stream mentalities" characterised by high academic and occupational aspirations, whilst the pupils in the lower streams develop "D stream mentalities" with associated low academic and occupational aspirations. This is an opinion shared also by Ashton (1973: 103-105).

The differences between secondary schools has been the subject of many studies, and more recent work tends to conclude that variations in the quality and status of secondary schools still exist now just as they did under the former tripartite system. Ford (1969:13) stated that the Butler Education Act established three different types of schools producing pupils for three different levels of the occupational structure. Grammar schools were established to educate pupils for managerial and professional jobs, technical schools for clerical and technical occupations and secondary schools for manual occupations. This was in fact what happened and Himmelweit (1952) reported that the occupational wishes of grammar school pupils were higher than those of secondary modern boys. Liversidge (1962) also noted the way in which grammar schools raised the ambitions of their pupils. Indeed, Banks (1955: 240) commented that:

> " .. choice of school at 11 plus may well imply the choice of occupation. Almost certainly it will impose limits on the

> degree of social mobility that can be achieved".

The tripartite system of education came under attack in the 1950s and 1960s and was gradually replaced by the comprehensive system. However, the debate over the differences in the quality of education between different schools, and in different streams within schools, has not ceased. It soon became apparent that the occupational aspirations of comprehensive pupils are influenced by the type of comprehensive they attend. Many of the new comprehensive schools are former secondary moderns or secondary grammar schools with new titles, and even though they now have a "mixed ability" intake of pupils, the intake varies considerably in its social structure from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Some comprehensives serve predominantly middle class neighbourhoods, whilst others serve neighbourhoods which are predominantly working class. This led Halsey et al (1980: 213-214) to comment:

> "Tripartism was premised on both distinct types of school and distinct types of children. Comprehensive theory drops both assumptions. The danger here, of course, is that of jumping from the frying pan of segregated schools into the fire of comprehensives residentially segregated and intemally streamed in such a way as to produce the same patterns of socially based educational inequality."

Musgrove (1979: 190-192) has also discussed the variation between comprehensive schools and, in particular, he has described how comprehensives reflect the neighbourhoods in which they are sited. Musgrove drew a distinction between those comprehensives situated in middle class catchment areas, which were often former grammar schools, and those based on working class catchment areas which were, to a large extent, former secondary modern schools. Whereas the former appear to produce young people with high educational and

occupational aspirations, the latter tend to produce pupils with much lower aspirations. They function, in this respect, like former grammar and secondary modern schools.

The influential role played by schools in shaping the occupational aspirations of pupils in Manor and City schools is discussed in Chapter 7. In the next section of this Chapter, those writers who have discussed the way in which peer groups influence young people's aspirations are discussed.

3. Peer Groups

Many authors have described how, as children grow older and enter adolescence their ties with their parents loosen and they come increasingly under the influence of other young people of their own age. The main problem these writers have experienced, however, is the difficulty in distinguishing peer group influences from the range of other influences to which young people are subjected. Morrison and Macintyre (1971: 68-72) felt that the influence of the peer group varies according to the extent to which young people are involved in the group and support its norms. They have suggested that peer groups tend to be most influential in those matters about which there is greatest consensus in the group. Thus peer groups largely reinforce the attitudes of young people which are created by their family background or their experiences at school. Turner (1983: 112-120) in his study of comprehensive school pupils found that most had several sets of "friends", and the influence of these friends varied considerably. He distinguished between those pupils who were only "friends" at certain times of the day, for example, in particular lessons, and those pupils who were "friends" in a more lasting sense. These spent

time together not only during the lessons, but at break-time and out of school too. It was this latter group of "friends" which was the more influential in shaping the attitudes and opinions of young people. Thus it is a misunderstanding of the relationship between peer groups and their members to suppose that at all times and for all issues, the peer group is equally influential (or uninfluential).

Hargreaves (1967: 68-82) in his study of friendship groups amongst boys in a secondary modern school described how the norms and values of these groups varied according to their position in the school hierarchy. In the school he studied, the majority of "A" stream boys made friends with other "A" stream boys, whilst "D" stream boys were generally friendly with other "D" stream boys. He found that the central norms and values of the "A" stream pupils were different from those of "D" stream members. Whilst "A" stream pupils showed greater commitment to the wishes of their teachers such as working hard and behaving well, the "D" stream pupils usually displayed the opposite norms and values. They tended to reject the authority of the teachers, refused to co-operate with them and paid less attention to their academic work.

At school, pupils in different streams grow apart because of their limited contact with each other. They develop different aspirations, and continual contact with other pupils in the same position as themselves serves to reinforce these aspirations. Lacy (1970) in a companion study to Hargreaves found that the grammar school in which he carried out his study also had this feature. He observed that by the end of the second year at school:

> "The academic form largely replaces the house group as the unit within which friendship groups are generated and maintained." (1970: 81-82)

Lacy termed the growing apart of pupils in the various streams as "differentiation" and "polarisation". The initial process is "differentiation" and this is the result of pupils being ranked into different academic streams. The outcome of this is that pupils become "polarised" with those in the top streams usually developing pro-school attitudes and those in the lower streams, anti-school attitudes. Whilst the pro-school friendship groups generally contain members who have the potential to achieve high academic success and are thus able to consider a wide range of career opportunities, the pupils in the lower streams frequently abandon their attempts to do well in school and are instead attracted to out of school adolescent sub-cultures. Their consequent poor performance in school restricts the range of occupations open to them.

Turner (1983: 117-120) has described the "work restriction norm" which exists amongst pupils in both the upper and lower streams at school. This is the norm which regulates the amount of work it is permissible to do. In the lower streams a strict limit is normally imposed on the amount of work one should do, and this is an amount just sufficient to avoid getting into serious trouble. In the top streams, the norm is flexible enough to allow pupils to do enough work to obtain the qualifications they desire, but even here, pupils who appear to their friends as doing an excessive amount of work are subjected to peer group sanctions such as being called a "swot" or "teacher's pet".

Several authors including Lacy (1970: 82) and Gronlund (1970: 207) have shown that pupils in secondary schools tend to make friends with other pupils of the same social class as themselves. However, because of the strong association between social class and stream, it has not always been possible for authors to reach agreement on whether

pupils make friends according to their social class background or the stream in which they are allocated. Oppenheim (1955: 228) found little evidence of friendship groups being made along class lines, and he suggested that academic ability is the main factor in friendship group formation, with similarity in social class background being the consequence of this. Turner (1964: 109-137) analysed the importance of social class in friendship group formation and concluded that pupils' occupational aspirations were a better explanation of friendship group formation than were their class of origin, that is, their fathers' occupations. Ford (1969: 79), however, has argued that there is considerable overlap between these since only a minority of pupils in her study aspired to jobs of a different social class to their fathers.

It is also apparent that the role played by social class in friendship school formation varies from school to school. Musgrove (1979: 190) found that in selective schools, it is academic ability rather than social class which is the main foundation upon which friendship groups are made. Ford (1969: 103-104) noted, however, that pupils' social class is a major factor in the creation of friendship groups in comprehensive schools and concluded that its influence in this type of school is greater than was its influence in grammar schools.

To conclude, the literature on the influence of peer groups on pupils' occupational aspirations shows that as pupils move into adolescence, which is the time when many are starting to think about future jobs, the influence of the home tends to decline whilst the influence of the peer group increases. Lacy (1970: 81) has shown that pupils make friends with those the organisation of the school makes available. Pupils in the upper streams mainly draw their friends from other pupils in these streams, who usually have high educational and

occupational aspirations. On the other hand, pupils in the lower streams usually make friends with other pupils in the lower streams and these normally have only limited educational and occupational ambitions. There is some evidence to suggest that since middle class pupils are more likely to be taught in the upper streams, whilst working class children tend to predominate in the lower streams, pupils of the same social class tend to make friends. Thus these different groups of pupils develop different attitudes towards and expectations about work. These attitudes are particularly influential amongst those pupils who receive little advice from their parents, usually, but not exclusively working class pupils. The role played by peer groups in shaping the occupational aspirations of respondents in this study is discussed in Chapter 8.

4. Gender

The influence of gender on occupational aspirations, though currently a topic of considerable interest, was virtually ignored in the academic literature before the mid-1970s. Deem (1980: 1) has stated that, although there was some recognition that gender played a role in educational and occupational aspirations, it has been only recently that these differences have been treated as problematic. The recent literature on the part played by gender in the development of young people's occupational aspirations focuses on three main areas:

i) pre-school socialization of young children,

ii) the different experiences of boys and girls in school,

iii) the formation of their occupational aspirations.

There is considerable debate within the literature on the age at which

children start to be treated differently by their parents because of their gender. Delamont (1980: 16) has argued that gender identity is fixed as soon as appropriate male and female names are chosen, and this is reinforced by dressing male babies differently to girls. Goldberg and Lewis (1972) identified sex linked differences amongst six month old babies, whilst other authors such as Newson and Newson (1963), concluded that incidents of such differential treatment are minimal before the age of seven years. Byrne (1978: 83-84) believed that parents make a distinction between acceptable behaviour for boys and girls at an early stage in childhood with girls being praised for keeping quiet, clean and tidy, whilst being criticised for being muddy, rough, noisy, lazy and untidy. In contrast to this, boys are praised for being tough, strong and for displaying leadership, originality and initiative. Sharpe (1976: 73) was also of this opinion and she stated that parents usually accept those differences in behaviour associated with gender which have been defined as "normal" by society. They then pass them on to their children. Hunt (1980:8) stressed that this early demarcation of gender appropriate behaviour has far reaching consequences because,

> "Once established, gender identity becomes a basic means by which lived experiences are defined and recollected. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to change sex role assignment once gender identity has been established."

The different treatment given to young boys and girls is visible in many facets of their lives. It was mentioned above that Delamont (1980) believed these to include differences in names and clothing and Kelly (1981: 75/79) has discussed the role played by children's toys and games in their intellectual development. She noted that whilst most young girls are given prams, dolls and houses with which to play, boys are frequently provided with guns, tools and constructional

toys. Not only does this early demarcation of games and toys give domestic activities a female label and mechanical and constructional work a male label, but it also provides boys with advantages over girls in their future study of Maths and the Physical Sciences at school. Furthermore, in a study of sex-role socialisation in picture books for pre-school children, Weitzman et al (1972) concluded that the boys and men in these books are portrayed as independent and capable whilst girls and women are depicted as dependent and constantly in need of male help. Moreover, men are usually presented in their occupational roles outside of the home, whilst the women appear as housewives within the home. This is important since:

> "Adult role models provide another crucial component of sex-role socialisation. By observing adult men and women, boys and girls learn what will be expected of them when they grow older. They are likely to identify with adults of the same sex, and desire to be like them. Thus role models not only present children with future images of themselves, but they also influence a child's aspirations and goals."
>
> (p.1139)

Sharpe (1976), Deem (1978) and Byrne (1978) have argued that schools reinforce what children have learned at home about their gender roles, and that by the time children leave primary school, the differences in the aptitudes, preferences and behaviour of boys and girls have become marked. Girls of this age tend to be more interested in people related activities, whereas boys are more interested in scientific and practical matters. Furthermore, girls' verbal skills develop at a faster rate than boys. At secondary school, Brake (1980), Deem (1980) and Hunt (1980) have shown that teachers continue with this tendency of treating boys differently to girls. The basic assumption underlying much of secondary education is that boys need an education for "work", but girls need an education for marriage.

Sharpe (1976: 130) described how teenage girls use the prospect of marriage as an excuse for their academic underachievement, and as Brake (1980) also noted, girls idealise their own marriage prospects even though many have sisters and mothers who are unhappily married.

Deem (1978: 46) employed the concept of the "dual curriculum" to demonstrate the differences between the education given to boys and girls. Some subjects such as Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Craft are labelled by both teachers and pupils as "boys" subjects, whilst others, such as French, Domestic Science and Biology are given a female lable. The differences in the content of these subjects reflect what is generally believed to be appropriate "male" and "female" areas of activity. Sharpe (1976: 168) found that pupils take considerable notice of this labelling and are reluctant to follow a subject normally associated with the opposite sex. By their teenage years, boys and girls have been subjected to continual messages from their parents, schools and the media as to what is appropriate behaviour for a member of their gender. These messages create sexual stereotypes, and Ormerod (1981: 102) noted that teenagers choose some subjects and avoid others in order to conform to such stereotypes.

The dual curriculum is most obvious in the area of Maths and Physical Science. The National Federation for Education Research (1981) study on Mathematics indicated that girls perform less well than boys in virtually every area of Mathematical activity. The reason for this, the authors argued, has nothing to do with genetic make up, but is to be found in primary schools where teachers encourage girls to concentrate on non-Mathematical activities. Weiner (1980: 84) found that girls feel inadequate at Maths and, therefore, avoid it whenever

possible. This lack of practice prevents them from increasing their skills and so overcoming their feeling of inadequacy. Kelly (1981: 3) argued that when discussing the dual curriculum, it is necessary to distinguish Maths and the Physical Sciences from Biology. Whereas the former tend to be unpopular amongst girls, the latter tends to be girls' favourite scientific subject. The N.F.E.R. study suggested that this is due to the non-Mathematical content of Biology.

Byrne (1978: 128-129) has discussed the implications of girls' preference for the Biological rather than the Physical Sciences. This preference means that girls have far fewer scientific careers open to them than do boys, and in particular, it partly explains their under representation in technical and engineering careers. However, Weinrich-Haste (1981: 218) argued that one of the main reasons why girls tend not to favour scientific careers is because they equate scientific with "male" activity.

In addition to what is taught in the "overt curriculum" that is, the subject matter of lessons, many authors have also detected that girls and boys are treated differently by schools through their "hidden curriculum". Byrne (1978: 110) has described the "hidden curriculum" as that part of the school organisation:

> "which transmits to young people a collection of messages about the status and character of individuals and social groups. It works through school organisation, though attitudes and through omissions - what we do not teach, highlight or illuminate is often more influential as a factor for bias than what we do."

Whyte (1981: 264-265) listed several of the features of the "hidden curriculum and these include, separate facilities for boys and girls

such as playgrounds, seating arrangements and different forms of punishment. The fact that many schools have a male head but a predominantly female staff is also a feature of the "hidden curriculum", as is the fact that there are more male than female science teachers. In terms of the education of boys and girls, the "hidden curriculum":

> "exaggerates the differences between the sexes at the expense of what they have in common as learners."
>
> (Whyte, 1981: 266)

Furthermore, Weinrich-Haste (1981:219) identified a conflict between the schools "overt curriculum" which encourages achievement for all pupils, and the "hidden curriculum" which promotes passive, dependent and domestic attitudes in most girls.

Thus it can be seen that the school system, through both the "overt" and "hidden" curricula treats boys and girls differently. Not only are boys and girls given an education biased in different directions, but the "hidden" curriculum also provides pupils with clues as to their appropriate role in adult life. Not surprisingly, therefore, the literature shows that boys and girls tend to aspire to different jobs for this is the inevitable outcome of the dual curriculum. Sharpe (1976: 55) noted that whilst boys prefer practical, technical and scientific occupations, girls usually aspire to such jobs as nursing, catering, shop work and junior clerical and secretarial jobs. Moreover, whatever their field of work, girls and women usually are to be found in subordinate positions to men, such as nurse to doctor or secretary to manager. Sharpe stated that most female jobs are just an extension of women's traditional nurturing role. It is this role which forms an important part of the female stereotype which teenage girls are keen to match. Similarly, Willis (1977) in his

study of school leavers in the Midlands has shown that working class boys are also conscious of the need to find employment in line with the masculine stereotype. They, therefore, refuse to consider clerical work because they think it is effeminate, and instead seek heavy manual "man's" work.

Hirsch (1980) used the concept of a "dual labour market" to describe how men and women enter separate parts of the job market. He divided the labour market into two, the primary and the secondary sectors. The primary labour market consists of well paid jobs which offer training and long term prospects. They are usually with medium to large organizations or firms with good conditions of work and fringe benefits such as pension and sickness schemes. In contrast to this, the secondary labour market is composed of less desirable and more menial jobs which offer low financial rewards, little security of employment, no training and poor prospects. Hirsch observed that whilst the primary job market is predominantly occupied by men, women, together with ethnic minority groups and the physically handicapped, are frequently employed in the secondary labour market. Even when women do enter the primary labour market, they often find that they can only obtain subordinate jobs. Elias (1980: 68-86) found little evidence of occupational diversification of female employment in the primary labour market. Most women, he commented, are found in a narrow range of professional jobs in the health service, insurance, teaching and banking, and they rarely reach the top of these professions. Delamont (1980: 100) wrote that women account for only 12% of hospital consultants, 4% of practising solicitors, 4% of architects and only 1% of the members of the Institute of Directors. It is little wonder, Delamont added, that girls do not aspire to these top jobs since there are so few role models to give them hope that

they will ever achieve their ambitions. Moreover, Chandler (1980: 196) noted that girls are not brought up to aspire to senior jobs. They are taught to be humble and to let these senior jobs be taken by men. For girls:

> "are easily seduced into the polite fiction that it is indecent for girls to think about money and unladylike to want any power ..."

Thus the job market is quite rigidly separated into "men's" and "women's" work on the basis of type of occupation and seniority within occupation. Indeed, Barron and Norris (1976) concluded that men and women rarely compete for the same jobs.

No review of the literature on the role of gender as a factor in the development of occupational aspirations would be complete without a brief reference to sex discrimination by employers. A recent study by Ashton and Maguire (1980) found that discriminatory practices are still a feature of the employment market, especially amongst small employers. However, they concluded that many employers do not consciously discriminate, but rather, automatically follow established and traditional attitudes that there is "men's" and "women's" work. The authors added that the under-representation of women in some occupations is not necessarily the result of employers' reluctance to recruit girls for that work. Some of it can be traced back to the socialization of girls where certain jobs such as engineering conflict with the feminine stereotype. Similar conclusions were also reached by Chisholm and Woodward (1980) in their study of women graduates. On the one hand employers did discriminate against women who attempted to enter traditional male areas of work, but on the other, women usually avoid these areas of work due to their early subject specialization at school and the powerful influence of sexual

stereotypes. Even the experience of higher education does little to reverse this trend. The important part played by gender in shaping the occupational aspirations of the young people studied is examined in Chapter 9.

In Chapters 3 and 4 we have reviewed literature which throws light on the complex process of the formation of occupational aspirations. Two principal models of occupational choice are apparent in the literature, the "individual-ambition" and the "opportunity-structure" models. In spite of the differences between these models, there is some common ground in that they both depict occupational choice as a process which continues over several years rather than as a single identifiable decision. Indeed it is possible to argue that the process commences at birth with boys and girls being treated differently and then continues throughout their years at school as their aspirations are gradually shaped by their social class, school performance, peer group influences and gender. It is apparent that the more useful studies on occupational choice are those which do not tackle the subject in isolation, but examine the development of young people's aspirations within the total setting of their everyday lives.

Having now the discussed background against which the research developed and the principal literature on the subject, it is now necessary to examine some of the methodological considerations which influenced the way in which the research was conducted. This is done in the following Chapter, Chapter 5. The data obtained is then analysed in Chapters 6 to 9.

CHAPTER 5

THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: SAMPLE DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION AND STATISTICAL METHODS

The origins of this research project, together with a description of the two schools in which it was undertaken, were discussed in the Introduction to this thesis and Chapter 2. The purpose of this Chapter is to describe the method by which the research was planned and carried out, and the Chapter is divided into four sections of unequal length. The first section provides an account of the advantages and disadvantages of doing part-time research into one's own occupational area and also contains a description of how the sample was decided upon. The second section discusses the means by which the data was collected, and the third describes how the data was recorded, classified and analysed. Section 4 contains some concluding comments.

1. Part-time Research and Sample Design

The particular methodology chosen for a research project depends upon the hypotheses which are to be tested as well as the nature of the "population" being researched (in this case fifth year secondary school pupils). In this research another factor which influenced the methodology chosen was the special circumstances associated with doing research into one's own occupational area. Such research has its own particular advantages and disadvantages which require a brief discussion. For instance, one advantage of conducting research into one's own field is that the researcher has substantial background knowledge, which is a considerable help during the formative stages of the

research. In this case, the town in which the research was undertaken (the Borough) and its educational system were well known to the researcher before the research commenced. In some respects, this prior knowledge acted as a prolonged pilot study in that it provided insights into the issues which were to be examined and the most appropriate means by which the data could be collected. Such background knowledge is generally considered to be of great importance to research projects, especially those involving surveys (Bryson and Thompson 1978: 98).

A second advantage was the ease in which official approval was given to the research. Becker (1970:15) has discussed the problems faced by researchers of "getting in", in particular the valuable time that is "lost" by having to discuss with those in authority the usefulness of the research and the motives and integrity of the researcher. During the two years in which the author worked as a Careers Officer in the Borough prior to the start of the research, sufficient trust had developed between himself and the Principal Careers Officer for the research proposal to receive almost immediate official approval and support. This meant that the research began without undue delay and, having official support, few problems were encountered in obtaining permission from the headteachers of the schools in which the research was based. Furthermore, few restrictions were placed upon how the research was to be conducted and automatic access was granted to every source of data. Being a familiar figure to school staff, and also being seen by them as a colleague and not an outside researcher, meant that it was possible to discuss many sensitive issues with them from which an external researcher may have been barred, such as which pupils were in the care of the Borough's Social Service

Department, etc.

Another advantage which the author enjoyed was the training he had received in interview techniques. Interviewing school pupils in order to provide them with occupational advice forms the major part of a Careers Officer's job. The year-long training course which is taken to qualify for the Careers Service attaches great importance to the teaching of interviewing skills. This, coupled with the fact that these skills are reinforced by daily practice, means that Careers Officers are usually good interviewers. Both Shipman (1972: 84-85) and Bryson and Thompson (1978:100) have described how research projects benefit from having trained interviewers conducting the interviews. This is especially the case when the interviews are of an informal nature and are not simply a device for administering a set questionnaire as was the case with this research.

As well as the advantages, this type of research has accompanying disadvantages. The part-time nature of the research frequently meant that it took second place to the job of being a Careers Officer and there were constant interruptions to the research timetable. However, the main disadvantage of doing research into one's own occupational area is the danger of losing objectivity. The advantages of having prior insights into the subject and wealth of background information are counter-balanced by the danger of the researcher being unable to stand back from the subject to take a detached view. Shipman (1972: 66) has described this as one of the fundamental dilemmas of social research. He has argued that whilst involvement is necessary for real understanding, it challenges the widely held opinion that science should be a detached activity. Denzin (1971: 167) has also commented on this

problem, and he believes that good sociological research should be based on "biographically troubling issues" and indeed, can benefit from this involvement.

Another disadvantage affecting research into one's own occupational area is the danger of collecting "contaminated" data from respondents. This danger arises when respondents attempt to provide those answers which they assume that the researcher (whom they perceive in his occupational role rather than as an outside researcher) desires. Although school pupils are constantly assured that Careers Officers are only interested in advising them in accordance with their interests and abilities and do not attempt to judge them, there is always the danger of pupils modifying some of their answers to give a good account of themselves. The means taken to minimise the danger of "contaminated" data are discussed in detail below.

A final disadvantage of doing this type of research is the problem of resolving the tensions which may be created by reaching conclusions which are unfavourable to one's occupation and the desire (need) to remain within it. As the study developed it became apparent that some of the findings threw doubt upon many of the basic assumptions of the Careers Service. These findings were published in the form of progress reports and were discussed at staff meetings within the Careers Service. The "feedback" to many of the preliminary observations made was less than favourable, although there were a few Careers Officers who were in general agreement with the observations. Critical research is particularly problematic for 'insiders', but it is important to make one's findings public since constructive criticism is meant to strengthen rather than weaken an organisation.

A major way in which doing part-time research affected the research project was that it restricted the number of respondents that could be included in the research sample. In common with other Careers Officers in the Borough, the author was responsible for an annual caseload of 400 fifth year pupils drawn from four secondary schools, and during the formative stages of the research it was planned to use the whole of this caseload as the research sample. However, it was decided subsequently not to do so for two reasons. First, it was decided to collect data by interviewing pupils rather than just administering a structured questionnaire. It was felt that this would be a more sensitive and appropriate way of collecting quantitative as well as qualitative data (see section on data collection below). It was the policy of the Borough's Careers Service to interview each fifth year pupil once and these interviews were usually of 30 minutes duration. However, a pilot study undertaken before the research began showed that a single 30 minute interview with each respondent did not provide sufficient time for the necessary data to be collected (see Appendix 1). Thus it was evident that each respondent would need to be interviewed twice, but it was not possible to conduct 800 interviews during the academic year as well as carrying out the other duties of a Careers Officer, such as visiting employers and writing careers literature. On the other hand, by limiting the research sample to half of the caseload, the resulting total of 600 interviews (200 "research" pupils interviewed twice plus 200 "non-research" pupils) could be achieved. Thus it was decided to restrict the research sample to 200 pupils taken from two of the secondary schools in the Borough.

There was a second reason for reducing the sample to 200 respondents in two schools. It was described in the Introduction to the thesis

that the research proposal arose from the author's concern that many Careers Officers had a mistaken assessment of how young people developed their occupational aspirations. Whilst these Careers Officers assumed that all young people developed their aspirations in a similar manner, personal experience suggested that this was not necessarily so. Pupils appeared to approach the issue of choosing a job in different ways and these differences were particularly evident when the majority of pupils in Manor school were compared to those in City school. Hence, the idea of undertaking a comparative study of pupils in these two schools became increasingly interesting. This idea was consistent with having a sample of 200 pupils, since it would be possible to select 100 pupils from each school. It was decided to adopt this approach, and following final calculations of the number of pupils it would be possible to interview twice, it was eventually decided to take a sample of 90 pupils from each school to make a total sample of 180 pupils. This was less than originally planned, but as Moser (1958: 39) has indicated:

> "The sample design is decided upon in the light of what is practically feasible, as well as what is theoretically possible".

The 90 pupils from each school (which formed approximately half of the fifth year) were chosen at random from the fifth year school lists and each was allocated a time for their first interview. Non-response was not expected to be a major problem since the Careers Teachers at both schools went to considerable lengths to ensure that pupils attended their interviews which were held in school time between September 1979 and April 1980. Potential absentees, such as those with a record of frequent sickness were placed at the top of the interview list to ensure that, should they be absent, sufficient

time would be available to give them another interview.

2. Methods of Data Collection

Two considerations influenced the choice of methods of data collection, Oppenheim's (1966) distinction between the "reliability" and "validity" of different methods and Becker's (1970) opinion that collecting data by a variety of methods is one of the best ways of reducing bias in the data.

Oppenheim (1966: 69-78) argued that a method can be described as "reliable" if it produces the same result each time it is used, just as a watch is reliable if it always records the correct time. On the other hand, a method is "valid" if it actually measures what it is intended to measure. It is generally acknowledged that some methods are more reliable than valid, whilst others are more valid than reliable. Using this distinction, Newby (1977: 115-166) describing his study of Suffolk farm workers made the comment that:

> "... surveys offer reliability at the expense of validity, while participant observation offers validity at the expense of reliability."

He employed both methods in his research in order that the quantitative data which he collected by surveys was complemented by the qualitative data collected through observations. Otherwise, he feared that he was just

> "... creating a set of statistics without knowing what they meant".

Becker (1970: 52) has argued that research which employes a variety of methods of data collection is often freer from possible bias than

that which relies upon just one method. This is because the data obtained by each method can be compared to see whether it has been influenced by the method used to collect it. This is a popular approach which has been employed in much recent sociological research (Bell and Newby, 1970: 10).

It was felt that the study of young people's occupational aspirations required both qualitative as well as quantitative data. It was hoped that the research would provide some quantitative evidence on how pupils' occupational aspirations varied according to their social class, gender, etc., but it was also evident from the literature reviewed prior to the start of the field work, that a mere statistical account could not provide an adequate explanation of these differences. The way to achieve this was through discussions, not only with pupils, but also with their parents, teachers and future employers. This would provide the rich qualitative data needed to illuminate the quantitative evidence. Consequently, four methods of data collection were adopted. These were; interviews with school pupils; discussions with teachers, parents and employers; observations; and official documents.

i. Interviews

Each respondent was interviewed twice. The first interview took place during the Christmas term of their fifth year, and the second took place during the Easter term. Since the main point of the research was to study the occupational aspirations of school pupils, interviews with these pupils were obviously a major source of data. As was mentioned above, it was decided to give each of the 180 respondents two 30 minute interviews. The first interview served the dual purpose of both providing data for the

research and acting as the "official" school careers interview. These interviews were conducted in a semi-structured style. A structured questionnaire was not used since it was intended to respond to pupils' replies with supplementary questions in order to probe the reasons for their initial responses. However, as far as possible, questions were asked at a similar stage of the interview and each question was phrased in an identical manner, so that conditions were as standard as possible. To achieve this a semi-structured interview schedule was used and this is given at Appendix 2. This also provided a list of headings under which data was collected. Some variation in wording or tone inevitably occurred for, as Moser (1958: 188) has commented, "interviewers are not machines".

The pupils also completed a Careers Service questionnaire prior to the interviews so that certain information was available before the first interview. This questionnaire is given at Appendix 3., and its purpose was to gather factual background information on pupils so that as much time as possible during the interview could be devoted to discussing pupils' aspirations and so forth.

The information gathered during the first interview was chiefly that normally gathered during a typical school careers interview. Pupils were questioned about their school subjects, attitudes to continued education and their occupational aspirations. It was explained to respondents that the information they provided would be used for a research project as well as for normal Careers Service purposes. The objectives of the research were

explained to them and assurances were given that the data would be treated with confidence. It was also explained to them that they did not have to participate in the research, but all agreed to do so.

It is the policy of the Borough's Careers Service to invite parents to attend their children's school careers interviews, although parents were not invited to the second interview which was carried out entirely for the purposes of the research. The presence of parents at the first interview was both an advantage and a disadvantage. It was an advantage in that it permitted the author to meet a wide range of parents, but it also had its problems since experience showed that pupils were not always as forthcoming when their parents were present. This is a problem which was not unique to the research, but is a constant factor when interviewing pupils in school. In order to counteract this, a technique had been developed by the author of interviewing pupils alone for the first half of the interview, which was justified to parents by stating that:

> "It would be useful to see how he (she) copes alone in an interview".

Parents were then brought in for the second half of the interview. This technique was adopted during the research, and in those cases where it was felt that the presence of parents greatly affected respondents during the first interview, respondents were given a longer (45 minutes) second interview.

The second interview was a far less structured affair and was used entirely for the purposes of the research. It had two principal aims. The first was to gather data from respondents

on more "sensitive" matters which were not part of the normal careers interview, for example, parents' occupations or the influence which peers at school had on respondents' aspirations. It was felt that pupils might consider these questions "out of place" during the first interview. Experience had shown that most pupils are considerably more relaxed and prepared to talk freely on a wider range of topics during their second meeting with a Careers Officer than during the first. The other purpose of the second interview was to collect the rich qualitative data that appeared necessary for a full understanding of respondents' aspirations. It was felt that the research would be enriched by giving the pupils a chance to talk freely about their occupational aspirations. Although a certain amount of direction was given during these interviews to guide respondents onto particular topics, for example, how marriage might influence their occupational aspirations, once the topic had been introduced, it was left to respondents to take the discussion into those areas that were most important to them. By encouraging this process, it was possible to obtain information which may have been missed during a formal and structured interview. For instance, following discussions on the value of continuing with one's education beyond the statutory school leaving age, a Manor pupil stated:

> "Actually, I think you are wrong to ask me why I've decided to go to the Sixth Form College. I never decided to go to College. You don't decide to go to College, its the natural thing to do."

Comments such as this provided valuable insights into how many academically able pupils in Manor "automatically" considered that the Sixth Form College was their inevitable next step after leaving Manor. In contrast to this, many of the City pupils of a similar academic

standard were not at all sure that going onto College was the "automatic" next step. (See Chapter 7 for a discussion on how the particular school respondents attended influenced their educational and occupational aspirations.)

There are several dangers inherent in the use of interviewing as a method of collecting data. For instance, questions might sometimes be worded ambiguously and so fail to produce "valid data". In order to minimise the danger of this, questions were "piloted" to test pupils' responses, and if necessary, the wording was changed as a result of piloting (see Appendix 1). A second problem with interviews is that which has been described by Dean and Foote Whyte (1978: 181) as "how do you know the respondent is telling the truth ?" Respondents' answers to factual questions were, where possible, checked against official records, for example, the number of 'O' levels studied. This was not possible for non-factual responses however. Although it is impossible to be completely certain that respondents are telling the truth, many writers including Johnson (1975: 118) and Dean and Foote Whyte (1978: 182) have argued that the best method to ensure that they do is to create a rapport with respondents and allow them to answer questions in their own time and in their own words. By conducting the interviews in a sympathetic, non-authoritarian manner, there is a greater chance of obtaining answers which accurately reflect their opinions.

ii. Discussions

Discussions with parents, teachers and local employers are a regular feature of the routine work of a Careers Officer. The information which was obtained from these discussions was frequently of direct

relevance to the research project and that which was not directly relevant was useful as background data. Information collected on this more "casual" basis was extremely valuable in that it helped to "ground" the more formally collected data in its proper context. The author was in a very favoured position to collect such data and, indeed, had been "collecting" such data well before the research project formally began.

At least twice a week during term time lunch hours were spent at Manor or City and sometimes school meals were taken with teachers. Conversations would frequently develop concerning particular pupils at school, the present state of the job market and current issues at the school. These discussions were often the source of useful information, such as:

> "Brian ... is under a lot of pressure to do well because both his elder brothers are at university".

and:

> "The trouble with our pupils is that their occupational horizons don't stretch past the ... car works".

In addition to discussions with teachers in both schools, information could also be obtained from conversations "overheard" in the staff room. These were sometimes about issues which were of relevance to the research, such as the option choice process or school links with local employers. This source of data provided useful background information, but does raise certain ethical issues. Hargreaves (1967: 199) has discussed whether "overheard" staff room conversations should be used as research data. Although it was known throughout both schools that the Careers Officer was doing research, it is doubtful

if this was uppermost in teachers' minds when they were talking to each other in the staff room. Thus, they were probably unaware that their discussions were useful as research data. Following the guidelines set down by Hargreaves, it was decided that such data was too valuable to be ignored, but only information which was relevant to the research was written up in the author's file and data of a controversial nature was not recorded.

Most of the discussions with parents occurred during and following their children's careers interview at school, at careers conventions and at school parents' evenings which were attended as a matter of course. These discussions with parents were useful since they tended to confirm much that was written in the literature about social class variations in parental attitudes to their children's education and future jobs. For example, a middle class parent of a respondent from Manor made the following comment at his son's careers interview:

> "You see, I know he's interested in Art, but I'd rather he took 'A' levels than an Art course at the Tech. What sort of living is Art going to give him ? He needs a safety net of 'A' levels as a foundation for a more suitable careers."

Comments such as this illustrate not only the high degree of interest shown by many middle class parents in their children's education, but they also show how many of these parents knew a good deal about the prospects of different jobs and had a firm grasp of the relationship between education and occupational entry. This was in contrast to the rather more limited knowledge of many working class parents. (The influence of social class on the formation of pupils' occupational aspirations is discussed in Chapter 6.)

It was discussions with parents which highlighted the important role played by gender in shaping pupils' occupational aspirations. Parents were usually worried if their children aspired to jobs normally associated with the opposite sex, and it was apparent that many parents had different criteria for their sons' future occupations than they had for their daughters. Indeed, on one occasion a father stated:

> "I've always let my wife come to careers interviews in the past, but I thought I'd better come with the lad".

The role played by gender in shaping aspirations is discussed in Chapter 9.

Another source of data was the discussions with those local employers to whom the author made frequent routine visits. These provided a valuable source of information on such matters as the importance of qualifications to employers, employers' attitudes to the different comprehensive schools in the Borough and sex discrimination. Moreover, Careers Officers are in almost daily telephone contact with employers and this also provided useful background data. A lot can be learned about an employer's attitude to school leavers when he/she telephones to complain that the Careers Service has submitted the "wrong type" of school leaver for a vacant job, or when he/she attempts to avoid equal opportunities legislation by stating that a boy (or girl) who could play football for the work's football team would be a particularly attractive employee !

iii. Observations

In addition to data gathered in formal interviews and informal

discussions, both participant and non-participant observations also proved to be a fruitful source of information about respondents and their schools. Some of the observations were arranged, for example, when permission was obtained to "sit in on" staff meetings at school and during assemblies. On other occasions, casual observations were made of teachers in the staff room, pupils during their break time and school leavers who called at the Careers Office looking for job vacancies. Observations by themselves do not "prove" a particular theory, nor are they usually the foundation for major conclusions. Instead, they provide the "clues" for further lines of inquiry during interviews. Indeed, Wiseman (1978: 113) has compared the task of the researcher to that of the detective in a murder mystery. Starting with just an idea or a hunch, a picture of the suspect is gradually formed on the basis of clues until the detective knows the type of evidence required to solve the case !

iv. Official Documents

Official documents, such as school and Careers Service records, provided important background material on the Borough and its educational system as well as on individual respondents from Manor and City schools. They were particularly important for understanding the transition which had taken place in the Borough in the early 1970s from a system of selective secondary education to a comprehensive one. Careers Service files were examined and from these it was apparent that the role of the Careers Service had expanded at the time of this reorganisation. Records on local employers were useful for understanding the employment trends in the Borough, and the records of the jobs entered by past school

leavers gave a good idea of the local "travel to work" area.

The records kept by the schools and the Careers Service contained a considerable amount of information on pupils at each school, for example, past academic performances, attendance, health, etc. Many of the respondents had elder siblings who had been interviewed by Careers Officers and these files were used to gather information on the jobs or further education which they obtained after leaving school. They also showed whether the careers advice which had been given to past school leavers had been of use during their early years in the job market. Individual Careers Officers tend to be very sensitive about, and protective towards, their files, and it is doubtful whether an outside researcher would have obtained such easy access to them. Indeed, one colleague refused to co-operate with the author and the only way in which the information on his files could be obtained was by telling him what was wanted and he then produced it.

In addition to the methods of data collection mentioned above, background information for the research was gathered informally as a result of the author working, living and shopping in the Borough. Local newspapers were read to keep abreast of current issues, but even such activities as shopping sometimes produced interesting material. One of the most vivid accounts of the "pecking order" of the schools in the Borough was obtained by overhearing a conversation between two mothers in a supermarket queue. The role played by the school system in the life of the Borough could even be seen in the windows of estate agents which advertised homes as being "particularly desirable" because they were in the Manor catchment area. Being within the City catchment

area was never mentioned as a selling feature for houses.

3. The Recording, Classification and Analysis of the Data

Following the advice of C. Wright Mills (1959: 215-248), files[1] were used extensively during this stage of the research. Mills suggested that sociologists should keep files not only to record relevant data, but as an aid to analysing it too. For by comparing the material on different files, it is possible to obtain insights into associations between different data which one did not previously realise existed. Two main types of files were kept during the research and these were given the working titles of "participant" files and "concept" files. "Participant" files were used to store information on the principal people in the occupational choice process, the school pupils themselves, teachers, parents, employers, relatives, neighbours, peer group and Careers Officers. "Concept" files, on the other hand, were used to store data on the main theoretical considerations, such as social class, gender, occupational aspirations, attitudes to continued education, etc. These two types of file were inter-related and data stored in one had relevance for the other and vice versa. During the writing up stage, the contents of the files were, of course, blended together, and their main use was as a device to store and categorise items of information during the data collection phase of the research.

Four main types of "participant" files were used:

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1. The term "files" refers to paper files and not computer files.

i) Data from interviews with individual respondents was recorded onto individual files, so that 180 of these were created. The headings under which data was recorded is given at Appendix 2. Much of this information eventually became the quantitative data which was fed into the computer (see below). These individual files also contained qualitative data on each respondent, such as impressions recorded during interviews and comments made by respondents, parents and teachers that helped to throw light on why pupils aspired to the particular occupations they did.

ii) Data on the two schools was recorded onto each school's file under such headings as physical features, streaming and academic organisation, past history, comments made by pupils, parents and teachers about the school, etc.

iii) A file was created on local employers and features of the local job market, for example, the number of vacancies registered at the Careers Office, entry qualifications, etc.

iv) A Careers Service file was set up which contained information on its recent history, present structure, the role of the Careers Service and the growing desire for professional status.

"Concept" files were created to record data on each of the principal

concepts used in the research. These were, social class, peer groups, gender, school performance, etc. Some of this data was recorded directly onto the "concept" files, but a substantial amount was originally recorded on "participant" files and then transferred across with the cross reference recorded. For example, if a girl respondent stated that women should put their families before their own careers, this information was first recorded on her individual file and then entered on the "gender" file. This helped the subsequent analysis of the data as each item of information was classified as it was recorded, and associations within the data gradually became apparent as the number of cross references grew. For example, it was evident from the number of cross references between the "participant" files of Manor respondents and the "condinued education" "concept" file, that there were far more pupils in Manor interested in continued education than there were in City.

The quantitative data was subsequently coded and then punched into the computer for statistical analysis (see below). A full description of the classification and coding of the main variables used in this research is given at Appendix 4. The reasons for the adoption of a particular code or classification are also given at Appendix 4 for those variables where they are not obviously apparent. The classification of the qualitative data required a different approach to that of the qualitative data. Many writers have commented on the difficulties of giving order to large quantities of qualitative data, for example, Cass et al (1978: 144-145) and Turner (1983: 176). The method adopted to classify qualitative data in this research was to use sets of files in the manner discussed above. The data collected was recorded on the appropriate file, but much of the data was relevant for more than a single file. As has been suggested, this

filing system not only enabled the qualitative data to be recorded systematically, but the process by which data was recorded on two or more files with cross-references clearly marked made a substantial contribution towards identifying relationships within the data. A few lines of explanation were written about each of these inter-relationships and gradually formed some of the paragraphs for the first draft of the thesis.

The starting point for the analysis of the quantitative data was to decide which were the key variables to be selected for computer analysis using the SPSS program. The key variables decided upon are given at Appendix 4. A "whole count" of these variables was subsequently produced and crosstabulations of data using the statistical test of significance chi square were carried out. In the analysis of the quantitative data relationships between variables with confidence levels of greater than 90% (i.e. $<.10$) were assumed to be statistically significant. However, it is as necessary in research not to attach too much importance to statistically significant relationships as it is not to totally dismiss those relationships which are not. Moser (1958: 293-294) is one of a number of writers who have cautioned against an over reliance on tests of significance. He has drawn the distinction between the statistical significance of data and its substantive significance. In essence, a statistically significant relationship merely shows that one can be confident, up to a certain point, that the relationship is not due to chance. However, the test of significance does not show that the relationship is theoretically interesting or uninteresting, nor does it prove or disprove a causal relationship. On the other hand, the lack of statistical significance does not mean that a relationship between

data is of no interest or relevance. Therefore, taking these considerations into account, the result of the crosstabulations of variables were sorted into three categories:

i) Association present - statistically significant

ii) Association present - not statistically significant

iii) No apparent association

The preliminary analysis of the data revealed that several of the variables needed recoding so that the data could be analysed in a more manageable form. This usually entailed reducing the number of categories in the classification. The results of the cross-tabulations were examined, sorted into the three categories outlined above and then recorded on the appropriate files. For instance, a crosstabulation showing an association between respondents' social class and the social class of their friends at school was entered on both the social class file and the peer group file with the appropriate cross reference made. Since these files also contained items of qualitative data, the process of relating the qualitative to the quantitative data began. Statistical associations were complemented by observations made at interviews and elsewhere, and pertinent quotations were also included. Whilst qualitative and quantitative data generally pointed to the same conclusions, this was not always the case. For example, discussions with teachers suggested that pupils made friends with other pupils of the same social class background to themselves, but the quantitative data showed that pupils made friends with others in the same academic stream as themselves and the association with class occurred because middle class pupils tended to predominate the upper streams, whilst working class pupils were mainly located in the lower streams. This

is a good example of the danger of assuming that because a relationship exists between two variables, it must be causal relationship.

4. Conclusion

Bell and Newby (1977) have argued that methodological descriptions rarely give a completely full account of how research is actually carried out. They stated that the process of writing a methodology chapter has, to some extent, the effect of "tidying up" the methodology because of the need to write the Chapter in a systematic fashion. This tends to give the impression that the research was undertaken in a more orderly way than was actually the case. Many authors, including Atkinson (1977: 31-34) and Wiseman (1978: 114) have shown that the research is not always conducted in this manner. It is common for the various stages of the research process to occur simultaneously. Different methods of data collection are used at the same time and various methodologies are tried until the most appropriate ones are found. As has been suggested, the way in which this Chapter has been written might suggest that the research was carried out in a very orderly fashion with each stage being completed before the next was started. Yet in fact, many of the stages merged into each other with a substantial amount of the recording, classifying and analysing of the data undertaken at the same time.

Although much can be learned by reading specialist books on research techniques and the methodology chapters of published research, it is only by doing research oneself that the problems associated with doing research become fully apparent. By then, of course, it is too late to utilise this newly acquired knowledge, and one is left with the feeling that things would be so much better if it was possible to

start over again. Atkinson (1977: 31-34) has written, however, that if researchers become too obsessed with the deficiencies of their methodologies, then the field would rarely be entered, and of those who actually do enter the field, few would write their findings up.

Doing part-time research into one's own occupational area has both advantages and disadvantages and these have been considered above. Of particular importance in this respect, is the way in which the methods used to collect data need to be fitted into a work pattern determined not by the considerations of the actual research, but by one's occupational responsibilities. This is an approach where the most appropriate method has to be balanced against what is feasible. It is one where it is necessary to look at every aspect of the job and consider whether it offers an opportunity to collect suitable data. With hindsight, it may have been advantageous to adopt a methodology different to the one actually used, for example, a far more in depth study of a smaller sample of pupils. It would, however, be very difficult for a Careers Officer to devote a substantial amount of time to one particular group of pupils and such research would be far more feasible if undertaken by a full-time researcher. Hence, the methodology of this research has been influenced by the limitations imposed by doing a full-time job at the same time.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL CLASS AND THE FORMATION OF OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

In this Chapter it is intended to examine the ways in which social class background affects, directly and indirectly, the occupational aspirations of school pupils. It was hypothesised that this occurs in three major ways:

i. Parental aspirations for their children are closely related to parents' social class as a considerablebody of research indicates. Moreover, there are widespread differences between the social classes regarding the importance which should be attached to one's occupation and, consequently, how much time and effort should be invested in identifying and obtaining the most suitable occupation. Generally, middle class children are encouraged by their parents to place considerable importance on obtaining an occupation which will obtain a middle class lifestyle, whilst working class children are often socialised to aspire to predominantly working class jobs and usually spend less time and effort in preparing for their future occupations.

ii. Children born into the different social classes, as they grow up, become familiar with quite distinct types of occupations undertaken by those adults with whom they have contact such as relatives and neighbours. Middle class children are more familiar with non-manual occupations, whilst working class children are generally more accustomed to the notion that adults do manual work. Children's occupational aspirations, therefore, develop within a

framework restricted by the limited range of jobs with which they are familiar.

iii. A strong association exists between children's social class background and their educational performance. In general, middle class children are more successful in obtaining academic qualifications than those from working class homes. Increasingly, many occupations require formal academic qualifications as a condition of entry.

It was further hypothesised that these influences do not operate independently, but are instead closely interwoven together. The result is two broad patterns which can be termed the "middle class" and the "working class" patterns of influence on childrens' occupational aspirations. These patterns are "ideal types" and do not exist in such a clear cut and simplified form in real life. Nevertheless, such "ideal types" do provide a useful framework for analysing, in general terms, the influence of social class on pupils' occupational aspirations.

The "middle class" pattern of influence is characterised by a child born into an intellectually stimulating home environment where considerable stress is placed upon personal achievement in the educational and occupational spheres. The child grows up surrounded by a family and neighbours employed in predominantly "white collar" jobs, and these serve as occupational role models to which the child comes to aspire. In pre-school years the child's intellectual development is encouraged by the parents and this provides a sound foundation upon which a formal education can be built. During the early years in school the child receives a considerable amount of encouragement and

advice from the parents. The child is later encouraged to aspire to higher level occupations and is given considerable support in obtaining the educational qualifications which are usually required for entry into these occupations.

The "working class" pattern of influence is, in many respects, the opposite of the "middle class" pattern. The child grows up in a home unaccustomed to educational and occupational success, and where the parents have restricted ambitions for their children. Family and neighbours are chiefly engaged in manual occupations, and the child's occupational horizons are usually fixed at this level of the occupational hierarchy. Compared to the middle class child, the working class child usually comes from a home with a relatively low level of intellectual stimulation, and owing to a combination of this and parental indifference to the importance of an academic education, the working class child fails to obtain the necessary qualifications for entry into non-manual occupations.

Between these two rather exaggerated versions of home background are to be found possible situations where a mixture of these influences are at work. For instance, the working class family which places considerable emphasis upon their children's occupational success, but where the connection between type of occupation entered and academic qualifications is either not recognised nor accepted. There may also be cases of pupils who do not fit into either of these "ideal types" and whose behaviour and aspirations, to some degree, contradict them. For example, the middle class child who does badly in formal school work and, as a result, aspires to a low level occupation. Although the empirical research indicated several examples of pupils who did not fit into these two broad patterns, the relative

scarcity of such "deviant cases" did not seriously challenge them. In this chapter it is intended to determine whether the three broad hypotheses outlined above are supported by the data obtained by respondents from Manor and City schools.

1. Differences between the Attitudes of Middle Class Parents and Working Class Parents to their Childrens' Future Occupations

It was hypothesised that middle class parents and pupils attach more importance to occupational success than do working class parents and pupils. It was anticipated that this pattern of behaviour would be evident in the way in which the majority of middle class respondents aspired to professional and managerial occupations, whilst working class respondents aspired predominantly to manual occupations. It was shown in Chapter 4,pp 61-66 that this hypothesis has considerable support in the literature. Table 6.1 illustrates the relationship between respondents' social class and their occupational aspirations. It can be seen that there was an association between class and aspirations in both schools. In Manor practically all (94%) the respondents from upper middle class backgrounds aspired to a middle class job themselves as did 76% of those respondents from lower middle class homes. (Professional, managerial, clerical and technical occupations being defined as middle class jobs). In City, on the other hand, most, 38 out of 57 (66.6%), of the working class respondents planned to enter working class jobs themselves, whereas the vast majority, 27 out of 33 (78.7%) of middle class pupils wanted middle class jobs. (Skilled, manual, service and semi-skilled and unskilled manual being defined as working class jobs).

Of those respondents who aspired to working class jobs, very few

Table 6.1

The Relationship Between Respondents' Social Class and Their Occupational Aspirations

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR SCHOOL

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Respondents' Social Class: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Upper Professional and Managerial	20.0 (10)	8.0 (2)	0.0	0.0
Lower Professional and Managerial	50.0 (25)	28.0 (7)	20.0 (2)	20.0 (1)
Clerical and Technical	24.0 (12)	40.0 (10)	30.0 (3)	40.0 (2)
Skilled Manual and Service	6.0 (3)	24.0 (6)	50.0 (5)	40.0 (2)
	100% (50)	100% (25)	100% (10)	100% (5)

$x^2 = 21.20$, df = 9, $p < 0.05$

CITY SCHOOL

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Respondents' Social Class: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Upper Professional and Managerial	14.3 (1)	0.0	0.0	3.8 (1)
Lower Professional and Managerial	42.9 (3)	19.2 (5)	9.7 (3)	3.8 (1)
Clerical and Technical	28.6 (2)	61.5 (16)	29.0 (9)	19.2 (5)
Skilled Manual and Service	14.3 (1)	15.8 (4)	58.1 (18)	61.5 (16)
Semi-skilled/ Unskilled Manual	0.0	3.8 (1)	3.2 (1)	11.5 (3)
	100% (7)	100% (26)	100% (31)	100% (26)

x^2 32.92, df = 12, $p < 0.001$

wanted semi-skilled or unskilled work. To some extent this can be explained by the fact that over half (56.9%) of the working class respondents came from upper working class homes. These pupils generally aspired to skilled manual, service, clerical and technical occupations. This supports a similar finding by Ashton and Field (1976, 55-69) who described such pupils as desiring "short term careers", which have some, but only to a limited degree, training and prospects. Hence apprenticeships were very popular amongst working class respondents. Indeed obtaining an apprenticeship often appeared more important than the actual occupation to which the apprenticeship led. Those pupils who on leaving school failed to obtain an apprenticeship in their favoured field, for example engineering, generally preferred to take an apprenticeship in one of the building trades rather than settle for a semi-skilled job in engineering. Working class girls were particularly keen to obtain apprenticeships in catering or hairdressing. (The differences in the types of occupations to which boys and girls aspired is discussed in Chapter 9).

A detailed analysis of the parental background of those working class pupils who aspired to middle class occupations showed that many of these families had links with the middle class and, as such, this finding is in line with Jackson and Marsden's (1962, 67-70) observation that successful working class children are part of the "sunken middle class". For example, several pupils had mothers who had followed middle class occupations such as teaching or nursing.[1] It was not possible, however, to account for all ambitious working class pupils in this manner.

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1. Although the most conventional way of deriving a family's social class is from the husband's occupation, this does have its limitations. It tends to diminish the importance of the wife's occupation. It is thus rather a "sexist" way of portraying "social class".

Sometimes their occupational aspirations were more influenced by their experiences at school rather than at home. (The influence of school on occupational aspirations is discussed in Chapter 7).

Middle class parents did not only give encouragement to their children to obtain middle class jobs, usually they were also in a position to give practical help. They were normally more successful than were working class parents in ensuring that their children derived the maximum benefits from school and they could also use contacts in the local community to help their children. The following two examples are typical of the ways in which middle class parents gave practical assistance to their children:

i. A middle class Manor girl was told by her Physics teacher that she was unsuitable for a career as an optician. Her parents contacted the Headmaster to ascertain upon what basis the Physics teacher considered it his business to offer careers guidance, and also contacted a neighbour (an optician) to arrange for the girl to spend her half-term holiday watching an optician at work.

ii. A middle class Manor girl was caught stealing a purse. She had applied for a job at a bank, and when they were told of the incident, her application was rejected. Her father, a manager at another financial institution, contacted the bank and convinced them that what his daughter had done was "out of character". The bank reversed its decision and offered the girl a job.

Most middle class parents were of the belief that they should, and could intervene to increase their children's educational and occupational success. In contrast to this many working class parents were

unwilling to intervene in this manner. Sometimes this was because they felt it was probably not worth going to the trouble of doing this, but conversations with these parents showed that many lacked the confidence to intervene in the same way that many middle class parents did. Differences in parental attitude were reflected in the attitudes held by their children. Many of the middle class respondents had obviously gone to considerable lengths to obtain information about their future occupations as the following statement by a Manor middle class pupil shows:

> "I hope to read languages at University, not just working as a translator in mind, but to give me the opportunity of jobs in education, the Civil Service and the media."

Many working class pupils, on the other hand, had not really thought through their occupational plans as the following two conversations illustrate:

Working class City pupil:

> "I want to be a car mechanic when I finish school."

Careers Officer:

> "What would you do if you couldn't get a job as a car mechanic ?"

Pupil:

> " .. (long silence) I'd keep trying until I did".

Careers Officer:

> "What do you wish to do when you leave school ?"

Working class City pupil:

> "I'm good at woodwork so I want to be a carpenter."

Careers Officer:

> "What is your second choice to carpentry ?"

Pupil:

> "Dunno ... haven't got one .. (long pause) I'd do anything with my hands I suppose"

The comments given above (which are typical of many made by such pupils) indicate that many working class pupils had given far less thought to their future occupational plans than was the case with typical middle class pupils. In some respects, the reluctance shown by many working class pupils to plan ahead for their future occupations was attributable to what they perceived as the limited opportunities open to them in the job market. This led to rather fatalistic attitudes towards future occupations. Other than the few who hoped to secure hobs with large organisations which operated an annual recruitment programme, most of these pupils expected to find employment with small firms whose future recruitment plans were unpredictable. Many pupils, therefore, felt it a waste of time to plan ahead by writing off for jobs. Instead they waited until they left school and were available for immediate employment. They then visited the Careers Office to "see what was going". By this time most of the better jobs had already been taken, so many of these pupils were forced to accept whatever employment they could find. This was usually not a cause of much distress since few possessed a desire to enter only one specific area of employment. As Willis noted:

> "There is near indifference to the particular kind of work chosen so long as it falls within certain limits defined not technically, but socially and culturally. Sometimes the actual choice is made literally by accident". (1977, 133)

When in need of occupational advice, the natural inclination of the majority of the respondents was to turn to their parents. Whilst middle class parents were usually equipped with much of the information or contacts to help their children, interviews with working class parents indicated that many were aware of the limited help which they could give and were reluctant to offer advice in case it proved to be incorrect. Friends, in and out of school, were usually willing to supply these pupils with the advice which was unavailable from

parents (see Chapter 8). More often than not, this advice was inaccurate and even contradictory, but it played a powerful role in shaping occupational aspirations. An example of the problems caused "by listening to your mates" is given below. The first quotation was taken from an interview with a working class respondent at City school, and the second was taken from an interview with a teenage jobchanger at the Careers Office later on the same day.

> "My mates told me that tyre fitting was a really good job that pays good money."
>
> "I used to work as a tyre fitter but I gave that up. The money was poor and I used to go home filthy of an evening."

Sometimes parental attitudes about the type of work which was appropriate for their children was a limiting factor. For instance, a City working class respondent who was estimated by his teachers as capable of obtaining 'A' levels instead left school at 16 with five 'O' levels to take a labouring job in a brick works. His father had been instrumental in this decision by asking how "a son of his could want to do paper work." The pupil explained:

> "I couldn't work in an office. All the men in our family are grafters."

Quite rigid job horizons were also a feature of many middle class parents, and these had influenced their children. Academic and technically minded middle class pupils were frequently reluctant to consider such occupations as mechanical and production engineering because of their apparent connection with the factory floor. Research, design and development were by far the most popular branches within the engineering profession. Other middle class parents had aspirations for their children to enter what they considered to be the 'higher' status professions such as Chartered Accountancy, Law, Medicine and University teaching. Careers associated with manufacturing industry

or sales and distribution were not very popular amongst the middle class parents spoken to.[2]

The rigidity of middle class job horizons was a potential source of tension in the case of academically weak middle class pupils. Such pupils, after failing to obtain a reasonable number of 'O' levels, were usually encouraged by their parents to resit. Frequently they did little better at the second attempt and, therefore, were still without a sufficient level of qualification to obtain the non-manual employment to which they aspired. In terms of strict academic ability, such pupils were capable of obtaining semi-skilled manual work. Both they and their families considered this to be unsuitable and so they enrolled on low level clerical courses at the technical college in the hope that they would perform better on a vocational course than an academic one.

The hypothesis that parents' and children's attitudes to employment are related to their social class is, therefore, supported by the data from respondents from Manor and City schools. It was possible to identify two broad groups amongst respondents. On the one hand a group of predominantly middle class pupils who were prepared to plan ahead for their future careers, and on the other, a group of predominantly working class pupils who displayed much less concern for their future jobs. Not all middle class pupils belonged to the former group, nor did all working class pupils to the latter. The number of deviant cases, however, was relatively small and did not invalidate the hypothesis.

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2. It has been suggested by many commentators that the attitudes such as these have contributed to the "British disease", whereby abler young people are reluctant to enter industry as a career.

2. The Role Played by Neighbours and Relatives in Shaping Pupils' Aspirations

It was hypothesised that children born into the different social classes would grow up so as to be familiar with distinct types of occupations undertaken by relatives and neighbours. This would influence children's occupational aspirations by restricting their occupational horizons to only the range of jobs with which they were familiar (Douglas, 1968: 121). The influence of neighbours and relatives upon children's occupations can be both direct and indirect. It can be direct when actual advice is given, for example, many respondents mentioned during their interviews that neighbours and relatives had advised them. The following quotations are typical of the statements they made in this respect:

> "My uncle's in the building trade and he said its no good because things get too quiet in winter."
>
> Working Class City Pupil

> "Both my mother's sisters are teachers and they say that in spite of the problems its a good job because the hours are attractive."
>
> Manor Middle Class Pupil

> "The man next door is a solicitor and he's offered to let me spend a day in the office to see what the work is like".
>
> Middle Class Manor Pupil

The influence of neighbours and relatives can also be indirect in that as young people grow up they become familiar with the types of occupations undertaken by the adults with whom they have contact. Even though adults such as these may not offer direct advice about jobs, the work they do can nevertheless influence young people's occupational aspirations as the following quotations show.

> "Most of the men round us work at the ... (a large car assembly plant). They seem to be doing O.K.".
>
> City Working Class Pupil

"I'd like to get a job with a company car.
Most of the people where I live drive these".

Middle Class Manor Pupil

Thus it was hypothesised that young people's job horizons would be influenced, to some extent at least, by the occupations undertaken by relatives and by people in the neighbourhood.

The first step in testing this hypothesis against the data from respondents in Manor and City was to establish whether a relationship existed between respondents' social class and the social class of their neighbours and relatives. Data was collected on each of the respondents' two next door neighbours and three of their relatives (see Appendix 4 pp155). In the following discussion only data on respondents' first neighbour and relative is given in order to avoid a repetitive statistical discussion. However, mention is made of whether the data on the second neighbour and second and third relative supports, or does not support, that of the first neighbour or relative.

It can be seen from Table 6.2 that in Manor middle class pupils were extremely likely to have middle class neighbours, and half the working class respondents in the school did so too. (The data was the same for second neighbours.) This is not surprising since the catchment area of Manor was constructed to exclude the Borough's council estates (see Chapter 2, pp 36). In City, on the other hand, a majority of middle class respondents, 18 out of 28 (64.2%) had working class neighbours, as did an even larger majority, 41 out of 53 (77.3%) of working class respondents. (The data was similar for second neighbours). The data for respondents in City school was not, however, statistically significant for either of the neighbours they mentioned. It must, therefore, be treated with caution.

Table 6.2

Relationship between Respondents' Social Class and Social Class of First Neighbours - Manor/City

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Social Class of First Neighbour	Respondents' Social Class: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Upper Middle	72.9 (35)	36.3 (8)	14.3 (1)	(0)
Lower Middle	22.9 (11)	45.4 (10)	57.1 (4)	20.0 (1)
Upper Working	4.2 (2)	13.5 (3)	28.6 (2)	60.0 (3)
Lower Working	0 (0)	4.8 (1)	0 (0)	20.0 (1)
	100% (48)	100% (22)	100% (7)	100% (5)

(missing data 8)

$x^2 = 36.11$, df = 9, $p < .001$

CITY

Social Class of First Neighbour	Respondents' Social Class: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Upper Middle	33.4 (2)	9 (2)	7.1 (2)	4.0 (1)
Lower Middle	16.6 (1)	22.7 (5)	17.8 (5)	16.0 (4)
Upper Working	50.0 (3)	40.9 (9)	32.1 (9)	28.0 (7)
Lower Working	0 (0)	27.4 (6)	43.0(12)	52.0 (13)
	100% (6)	100% (22)	100% (28)	100% (25)

(missing data 9)

$x^2 = 10.14$, df = 9, not significant

Neither was it significant when it was recoded using the two broader categories of "middle class" and "working class". Thus whilst the majority of middle class respondents in Manor had middle class neighbours and the majority of working class respondents in City had working class neighbours, the situation faced by the other groups of respondents, that is, working class Manor pupils and middle class City pupils, was less clear cut.

The association between respondents' social class background and that of their first relative is presented in Table 6.3. It can be seen that in Manor, middle class respondents were far more likely to name a middle class first relative than a working class first relative. (The position was the same for second and third relatives). In City whilst a slight majority, 15 out of 27, (55.5%) of middle class respondents named a middle class first relative, and a large majority, 33 out of 39, (67.3%), of working class respondents named a working class first relative, the results were not statistically significant. However, when the data for City respondents was recoded using just the two categories of 'middle' and 'working' class as is shown in Table 6.4, the data arranged in this fashion is statistically significant. This also proved to be the case for the second and third relatives named by City pupils. Thus it is possible to argue that an association existed between respondents' social class background and the social class of their relatives, especially when class is defined in the broad terms of 'middle' and 'working'.

The second part of this hypothesis stated that pupils' occupational aspirations are influenced by the occupations undertaken by their neighbours and relatives, and the quotations presented above suggest that there are some grounds for this belief. However, in order to

Table 6.3

Relationship between Respondents' Social Class and Social Class of First Relative - Manor/City

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Social Class of First Relative	Respondents' Social Class: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Upper Middle	73.3 (33)	29.2 (7)	12.5 (1)	20.0 (1)
Lower Middle	17.7 (8)	37.5 (9)	25.0 (2)	0 (0)
Upper Working	6.6 (3)	29.2 (7)	50.0 (4)	40.0 (2)
Lower Working	2.4 (1)	4.2 (1)	12.5 (1)	40.0 (2)
	100% (45)	100% (24)	100% (8)	100% (5)

(missing data 8)

$x^2 = 34.79$, df = 9, ($p < .001$)

CITY

Social Class of First Relative	Respondents' Social Class: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Upper Middle	60.0 (3)	18.2 (4)	15.3 (4)	4.3 (1)
Lower Middle	0 (0)	36.3 (8)	19.2 (5)	26.0 (6)
Upper Working	0 (0)	22.7 (5)	34.6 (9)	30.4 (7)
Lower Working	40.0 (2)	22.7 (5)	30.9 (8)	39.3 (9)
	100% (5)	100% (22)	100% (26)	100% (23)

(missing data 14)

$x^2 = 13.47$, df = 9, not significant

Table 6.4

The Relationship Between Respondents' Social Class and the Social Class of First Relative Named in City School

(numbers in brackets)

CITY SCHOOL

Respondents' Social Class

Social Class of First Relative	Middle Class	Working Class
Middle Class	55.5 (15)	32.6 (16)
Working Class	45.5 (12)	67.3 (33)
	100% (27)	100% (49)

(missing data 14)

$x^2 = 3.80$, df = 1, $p < 0.1$

determine whether this hypothesis is supported by quantitative as well as qualitative data, it is necessary to show a satistical association between the social class of respondents' neighbours and relatives, and the level of occupations to which respondents' aspired. It is evident from Table 6.5 (where the results are not statistically significant) that no clear association existed between respondents aspirations and social class of first neighbours other than that the vast majority of Manor respondents with middle class first neighbours aspired to middle class jobs (professional, managerial, clerical and technical) themselves. This was also the situation found when the data on second neighbours was examined. It appears therefore, that although some respondents had their occupational aspirations influenced by their neighbours, as the qualitative data presented above suggests, there is little evidence from the available quantitative data to support the claim that young people's occupational aspirations are incluenced directly by their neighbours. It seems that most respondents were aware of the occupations followed by their neighbours, but only a few were influenced by this knowledge when formulating their own occupational plans.

Interviews with respondents suggested that relatives were more likely to offer direct vocational advice than were neighbours. Not surprisingly most respondents had closer contacts with their relatives than they did with their neighbours. Whilst future jobs were not a major topic of discussion when respondents were in their early teens, it gradually became more frequent as they approached the statutory school leaving age and were preparing to enter for external public examinations such as G.C.E. and C.S.E. Relatives did not appear to be the major factor in the development of occupational aspirations, but they did appear to exert some influence as the following quotations (which were typical

Table 6.5

Relationship between Respondents' Occupational Aspirations and Class of First Neighbour

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Social Class of First Neighbour: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Higher Professional/ Managerial	18.2 (8)	11.5 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Lower Professional	38.6 (17)	42.3 (11)	40.0 (4)	0 (0)
Clerical/Technical	36.4 (16)	15.4 (4)	30.0 (3)	50.0 (1)
Skilled Manual and Service	6.8 (3)	30.8 (8)	30.0 (3)	50.0 (1)
	100% (44)	100% (26)	100% (10)	100% (2)

(missing data 8)

$x^2 = 13.47$, df = 9, not significant

CITY

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Social Class of First Neighbour: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Higher Professional/ Managerial	0 (0)	0 (0)	3.6 (1)	3.2 (1)
Lower Professional	28.6 (2)	6.7 (1)	3.6 (1)	12.9 (4)
Clerical/Technical	14.3 (1)	53.3 (8)	35.7 (10)	32.2 (10)
Skilled Manual and Service	57.1 (4)	40.0 (6)	50.0 (14)	45.2 (14)
Semi-Skilled and Unskilled Manual	0 (0)	0 (0)	7.1 (2)	6.5 (2)
	100% (7)	100% (15)	100% (28)	100% (31)

(missing data 9)

$x^2 = 8.75$, df = 12, not significant

of many made by respondents) suggests:

> "My uncle is a teacher and he is always going on about education being the key to life".
>
> Middle Class Manor Pupil

> "My dad and uncle were talking and my uncle said that things will get worse, so its best to get a job now 'cos if you go to college there won't be as many jobs in a few years time".
>
> City Working Class Pupil

> "There's a bit of jealousy in our family, and ever since my cousin went to medical school my mum wants me to become a doctor".
>
> Manor Middle Class Pupil

There is some evidence to suggest that a relationship existed between the level of respondents' occupational aspirations and the social class of their first relative as can be seen from Table 6.6. For example, a large majority of respondents with upper and lower middle class first relatives aspired to middle class jobs themselves in both schools, and a majority, 16 out of 24 (66.6%) of respondents in City who named a lower working class first relative aspired to working class jobs themselves. This pattern was also evident when data on the second and third relatives named was examined. Thus relatives would appear to play some part in the development of the occupational aspirations of pupils, though it appears that their influence may not be as important as other factors such as parents or school.

3. Social Class and School Performance

It was hypothesised that middle class children would generally perform better in school than working class children and leave with more and higher qualifications. This would permit them to aspire to a far greater range of occupations. Thus what follows below is an account of how social class influences young people's occupational aspirations

Table 6.6

Relationship between Respondents' Occupational Aspirations and Social Class of First Relative

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Social Class of First Relative: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Higher Professional/ Managerial	19.0 (8)	10.5 (2)	6.2 (1)	0 (0)
Lower Professional/ Managerial	47.6 (20)	26.3 (5)	31.3 (5)	20.0 (1)
Clerical/Technical	28.6 (12)	42.1 (8)	25.0 (4)	40.0 (2)
Skilled Manual	4.8 (2)	21.1 (4)	37.5 (6)	40.0 (2)
	100% (42)	100% (19)	100% (16)	100% (5)

(missing data 8)

$x^2 = 14.99$, df = 9, $p < 0.1$

CITY

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Social Class of First Relative: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Higher Professional/ Managerial	8.3 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.2 (1)
Lower Professional/ Managerial	25.0 (3)	5.3 (1)	19.0 (4)	12.5 (3)
Clerical/Technical	41.7 (5)	63.2 (12)	38.1 (8)	16.7 (4)
Skilled Manual	16.7 (2)	31.6 (6)	42.9 (9)	54.2 (13)
Semi-Skilled Manual	8.3 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	12.5 (3)
	100% (12)	100% (19)	100% (21)	100% (24)

(missing data 14)

$x^2 = 26.29$, df = 12, $p < 0.01$

through the workings of the school system. The relationship between social class and educational performance is generally regarded as the product of four main factors:

i. Middle class children are normally better prepared for school during their pre-school years than are working class children.

ii. Middle class children generally progress faster in school even when initial ability differences are held constant.

iii. Middle class children normally finish their education at a later age than working class children irrespective of attainment.

iv. Teachers frequently make judgments on the basis of pupils' social class rather than ability. (Morrison and Macintyre, 1971:240).

Many other authors have described the manner in which the characteristics typical of a middle class home such as greater parental interest in their children's education and a more stimulating home environment give middle class children considerable advantages over working class pupils (see Chapter 4, pp 61-70). These advantages are often so great that it is difficult for the formal education system to adequately compensate for the relative deficiences of the early years of working class children.

The relationship between respondents' social class and their teachers' assessment of their academic ability is given in Table 6.7. It can be seen that in both schools, middle class respondents were assessed as being of higher ability than working class pupils. In Manor 41 out of 50 (82%) of upper middle class pupils were assessed as being of very high or high ability compared to three out of 10 (30%)

Table 6.7

The Relationship between Respondents' Social Class and School Assessment of their Academic Ability *

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

School Assessment of Academic Ability	Respondents' Social Class: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Very High	60.0 (30)	36.0 (9)	30.0 (3)	20.0 (1)
High	22.0 (11)	8.0 (2)	0.0	20.0 (1)
Average	12.0 (6)	28.0 (7)	30.0 (3)	20.0 (1)
Low	6.0 (3)	28.0 (7)	40.0 (4)	40.0 (2)
	100% (50)	100% (25)	100% (10)	100% (5)

$x^2 = 20.17$, df = 9, $p < 0.05$

CITY

School Assessment of Academic Ability	Respondents' Social Class: Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Very High	42.9 (3)	26.9 (7)	16.1 (5)	7.7 (2)
High	14.3 (1)	11.5 (3)	9.7 (3)	0.0
Average	42.9 (3)	46.2 (12)	29.0 (9)	15.4 (4)
Low	0.0	11.5 (3)	38.7 (12)	65.4 (17)
Non-Exam.	0.0	3.8 (1)	6.5 (2)	11.5 (3)
	100% (7)	100% (26)	100% (31)	100% (26)

$x^2 = 27.2$, df = 12, $p < 0.01$

* Very High - Respondent expected to pass 6 'O' levels or more.
High - Respondent expected to pass 4 or 5 'O' levels.
Average - Respondent expected to pass at least 4 subjects at C.S.E. grade 2 or higher but fewer than 4 'O' levels
Low - Respondent expected to pass fewer than 4 subjects at C.S.E. grade 2.
Non-Exam. - Respondent not entered for external exams.

respondents from upper working class backgrounds. In City four out of seven (57.2%) of the upper middle class pupils were assessed as being of very high or high ability compared to 8 out of 31 (25.8%) respondents from upper working class backgrounds.

Middle class pupils in Manor and City were, therefore, expected by their teachers to perform much better in public examinations than were working class pupils. This would allow them both to continue on to higher level academic courses or alternatively, to leave school at the statutory leaving age with qualifications which would enable them to obtain jobs with good prospects.[3] A detailed explanation of the factors involved in this tendency for middle class pupils to have a superior academic record to working class pupils is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, one feature noted during the research which may have some relevance for this superior academic performance was the inability of many working class respondents to appreciate the connection between the subjects which they studied at school and their future employment prospects. On many occasions, working class pupils stated that they failed to understand why academic subjects studied at school should affect their future jobs:

> "School's no use. I want to go to College to get proper qualifications."
>
> City Working Class Pupil

> "An apprenticeship is better than more qualifications. Companies don't want you if you have just got a load of 'O' levels".
>
> City Working Class Pupil

> "My dad's a plumber and he left school with no qualifications. He's learnt all about plumbing since

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3. Many middle class children were therefore, in a position where they could exercise some choice over which occupation they entered. The question of how much choice of occupation young people have is central to much of literature (see Chapter 3). It is a subject which is discussed in the concluding Chapter, Chapter 10.

he left school. He says he's forgotten all he was taught at school". (Emphasis added)

City Working Class Pupil

Many similar illustrations could be cited. It seems that academic qualifications were viewed with suspicion by many working class pupils. They failed to appreciate the attitude prevalent amongst many employers (and middle class families) that ability in History, Mathematics or English Literature although not directly relevant for particular future jobs, does show that a pupil has intellectual ability and discipline which could be useful to an employer. For many employers, it is the fact that a young person has done well in school rather than the actual subjects studied that is important. However, when offered the choice between continuing with their education beyond the statutory school leaving age or entering employment at 16, many of the working class respondents chose the latter route in the belief that it provided them with better job prospects. The reasons they gave for this included:

"It would give me a longer time in which to learn my work. I would already know how the business is run when College leavers come to the firm, so this would give me an advantage".

City Working Class Pupil

"I think work experience is better than more education".

City Working Class Pupil

"To get a good start on people with higher education".

Manor Working Class Pupil

"If you go on to further education, it is not guaranteed that you will get a job anyhow".

Manor Working Class Pupil

"I'd prefer to get a job and get qualifications from College".

Manor Working Class Pupil

The greater importance attached to on the job training and day release to college for vocational qualifications was frequently an expression of attitudes absorbed from parents and from the neighbourhood which stressed the value of obtaining an apprenticeship in order to gain "a trade in one's hands" and more job security. At the time of the research, most apprenticeship schemes were only open to those who left school at 16.[4] To remain in education longer than this was to run the risk of being too old for an apprenticeship. Many working class parents and pupils assumed that the apprenticeship system was used as an entry route to most occupations. They failed to realise that for many jobs, such as banking, computer programming, nursing, retail management, secretarial work and clerical, the possession of higher qualifications obtained from full-time continued education was an advantage both for obtaining a job in the first place, and for subsequent advancement in that job. Job changers interviewed at the Careers Office frequently stated that after a couple of years in employment they realised that their 'O' level and C.S.E. results were insufficient for promotion within their companies. Others spoke of the frustrations of having higher qualified, ex-full-time students recruited into the firm on a higher salary scale and with prospects of accelerated promotion. The decision whether to leave school at 16 or continue in full-time education was, therefore, of crucial importance to respondents' occupational opportunities and, once again, attitudes to continued education were found to be closely related to social class as the discussion below shows.

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4. This situation has now changed with many apprenticeship schemes having moved away from the "time served" method of training, to one where "skilled status" is achieved by reaching certain fixed levels of performance. Age of entry is, therefore, not so important now.

Social Class and Full-Time Continued Education

Evidence available from the job vacancies registered at the Borough's Careers Office from the early 1970s onwards showed that most employers were asking increasingly for higher qualifications. For instance banks and insurance companies began to increase their recruitment of 'A' level candidates, and nursing and other hospital jobs such as laboratory technicians were more easily entered by those with 'A' rather than 'O' levels. Hence an increasing number of occupations were placed beyond the reach of those pupils who chose to leave school at the minimum leaving age. Indeed Halsey et al (1980: 128) have stated that with the advent of the comprehensive school and the demise of selection at 11 years, the most important statistic in the educational world is the percentage of pupils who remain in full-time education beyond the age of 16. They noted that there is still a large working class drop out rate at 16, though once in the Sixth Form, the educational prospects of working class pupils become similar to those of middle class pupils.

Table 6.8 shows that a greater proportion of middle class respondents were keen to continue with their education than was the case with working class respondents.[5] For example, 42 out of 50 (84%) upper middle class respondents in Manor were keen to continue with their education compared to only three out of 10 (30%) of upper working class respondents. In City it is also clear that attitudes to continued education were related to social class with far more middle class respondents keen to continue with their education than was the

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5. With the increase in the levels of youth unemployment, it appears that many more working class pupils are considering remaining in full-time education after the statutory school leaving age, rather than entering on to a Youth Training Scheme. Research into this area should prove interesting.

Table 6.8

The Relationship between Respondents' Social Class and their Attitude to Full-time Continued Education

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

		Respondents' Social Class			
		Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Respondents' Attitude to Continued Education	Keen	84.0 (42)	60.0 (15)	30.0 (3)	60.0 (3)
	Unsure	14.0 (7)	16.0 (4)	30.0 (3)	20.0 (1)
	Not Keen	2.0 (1)	24.0 (6)	40.0 (4)	20.0 (1)
		100% (50)	100% (25)	100% (10)	100% (5)

$x^2 = 17.88$, df = 6, $p < 0.01$

CITY

		Respondents' Social Class			
		Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Working	Lower Working
Respondents' Attitude to Continued Education	Keen	57.1 (4)	42.3 (11)	22.6 (7)	11.5 (3)
	Unsure	28.6 (2)	26.9 (7)	12.9 (4)	23.1 (6)
	Not Keen	14.3 (1)	30.8 (8)	64.5 (20)	65.4 (17)
		100% (7)	100% (26)	100% (31)	100% (26)

$x^2 = 16.39$, df = 6, $p < 0.05$

case with working class respondents. The reasons why middle class pupils are more ready to continue with full-time education are well documented (see Chapter 4,pp61-70). On the basis of evidence obtained from respondents in Manor and City, there appeared to be three reasons for this.

i. Middle class children were more likely to want managerial and professional jobs that required advanced qualifications as a condition of entry. Most working class respondents aspired to occupations which could be entered with the qualifications they hoped to obtain in their final year of statutory education. They, therefore, had fewer occupational reasons to continue with their education.

ii. Working class respondents were less likely to have friends who also wished to continue with full-time education than were middle class respondents. (The influence of the peer group is discussed in detail in Chapter 8).

iii. It was apparent that certain groups of respondents did not actually make a decision to continue with their education. It was the automatic next stage of their lives and they had been socialised by their parents and teachers to assume this. This was overwhelmingly a middle class characteristic, and was rarely mentioned by working class respondents. The following quotations are typical examples of this attitude.

"You just go to college after school. I don't know why, you just do".

Manor Middle Class Pupil

"I've never thought about leaving at 16. You're not ready to work at 16".

City Middle Class Pupil

"Going to College isn't a decision, its the natural thing to do".

Manor Middle Class Pupil

Many middle class pupils regarded continuing with their education as the obvious next step for them. They had been brought up in an environment when leaving the educational world before one had reached one's academic peak was seen as abnormal. It was apparent during interviews with these respondents that they saw few advantages in leaving school at 16. Of course, they were sacrificing an income, but, parents were able usually to support them in a comfortable 'student lifestyle'. Remaining in education provided themselves and their parents with considerable status. Conversely, not remaining in education might lead relatives, neighbours and friends to believe that "something had gone wrong".

4. Summary

It was hypothesised at the start of this Chapter that social class background influenced the occupational aspirations of school pupils in three main ways. Subsequent examination of each of these hypotheses has shown that whereas the first and the third hypotheses were supported by the data, the second hypothesis, that is, occupational aspirations are influenced by neighbours and relatives, was not conclusively proven nor disproved by the evidence. It was further hypothesised that two broad patterns of social class influence would be apparent in the data, and these were termed the "middle class" and "working class" patterns of influence. The former appears to have been supported by the data. A relationship between social class background was identified whereby middle class pupils aspired to middle class jobs. They were usually supported in this by parents who stressed the centrality of occupation to lifestyle and who provided

the advice and support for these aspirations to be translated into reality. It was also shown that middle class respondents tended to have middle class relatives and neighbours, and there is some evidence to suggest that the former in particular may have exerted some influence on their occupational aspirations.

A key factor within the middle class pattern of influence is the tendency for middle class respondents to perform successfully within the education system. Although a discussion of the mechanics of educational channelling into a stratified occupational hierarchy is left until later (Chapter 7), it was shown that middle class pupils generally obtain sufficient qualifications to permit them entry into non-manual professional, managerial, clerical and technical occupations. Parental support and encouragement was also an important ingredient in this process.

The "working class" pattern of influence also appears to have been supported by the data. A large majority (66.6%) of working class pupils in City school aspired to working class occupations and exhibited the typical working class attitude of fatalism towards their future jobs. It should be noted, however, that a small majority of working class respondents in Manor, eight out of fifteen (53.3%) aspired to middle class occupations (see Table 6.1). The small number of working class respondents in Manor prevent firm generalisations being drawn from this finding, but it may well be due to the influence of the school and their peers raising their aspirations. Nevertheless, the majority (62.4%) of working class respondents in the sample as a whole desired working class occupations themselves. Working class parents were usually less able to advise and support their children than were middle class parents and were generally less skilled at

intervening to resolve those educational difficulties which their children encountered. The evidence suggests that working class pupils in the Borough were not as academically successful as their middle class peers and completed their full-time education at a younger age. Evidence supporting the hypothesis that the occupational aspirations of working class pupils were influenced by their neighbours was inconclusive. This, however, was not surprising bearing in mind the nature of working class families in the Borough. In the main they were from the upper levels of the working class, relatively affluent with more than two thirds (69%) owning their own homes. (Data obtained from school records). In these respects they were distinct from what Carter (1966: 50-56) terms the "solid working class" of traditional communities based on mining or heavy industry. As such they were not consistently and continually subjected to the type of working class influences which have been eloquently described by Hoggart (1957); Willmot and Young (1957); Willis (1977); Corrigan (1979) etc, etc.

Finally, it should be noted that not all respondents could be neatly allocated into the two broad patterns of influence. The number of such pupils was not large enough to invalidate the use of this framework, but should still serve against an over-simplistic account of the influence of social class upon occupational aspirations. Frequently it was circumstances experienced at school which "raised" the aspirations of some working class pupils and "lowered" the aspirations of some middle class pupils. The following Chapter, Chapter 7, contains a detailed analysis on how schools influence the occupational aspirations of their pupils.

CHAPTER 7

SCHOOL AND THE FORMATION OF OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

The intention of this chapter is to examine the role played by schools in the development of pupils' occupational aspirations. In the first part of this chapter, emphasis is placed upon the mechanisms by which the two schools, Manor and City, differentiated and stratified their pupils. In the second part this theme is continued in order to analyse the manner in which this differentiation and stratification of pupils frequently served to prepare them for entry into the different sections of the labour market.

1. The Differentiation and Stratification of Pupils

The term "differentiation" is used to describe the way in which pupils were allocated to different groups within school according to the range of subjects they studied. Apart from the core curriculum which consisted of English, Maths and a Science subject, pupils in Manor and City were usually expected to follow a somewhat specialised curriculum from the fourth year of secondary school onwards. These specialised curricula normally had either an "Arts", a "Science", a "Commercial" or a "Practical" bias in terms of the subjects studied. The term "stratification" described the process by which Manor and City schools ranked their pupils according to ability as expressed by expected examination performance, and then assigned them to different ability groups which were termed "sets". In this way pupils of higher ability spent much of the school day physically separated from pupils of lower ability. Even though Manor and City were both non-selective comprehensive schools, their internal arrangements resulted in pupils being selected to follow different

curricula on the basis of their expected examination performance. So, in this chapter, differentiation and stratification describe two distinct processes. The former relates to the separation of pupils according to subjects studied, whilst the latter refers to the ranking and setting of pupils within those subjects.

The differentiation and stratification of pupils can be analysed at two levels. First, it is possible to examine differentiation and stratification within a school. This involves a study of the process by which pupils choose to study certain subjects whilst deciding not to study others, together with an analysis of how pupils are ranked according to their teachers' assessment of their academic ability. Secondly, it is possible to analyse the differentiation and stratification of pupils between schools. For example, it was hypothesised that pupils attending Manor would experience a more "academic" education than those attending City and would have significantly higher educational and occupational aspirations.

Within School Differentiation and Stratification

Two major factors were identified as contributing to the differentiation and stratification of pupils within Manor and City. They were, first, the option choice process, and secondly, the streaming system within the schools which were based upon teaching pupils within different sets for each subject.

At the end of their third year, pupils in Manor and City were expected to select a limited range of subjects from the total number available at each school. To some extent, pupils were required to specialise in those subjects they enjoyed the most and/or those that were needed for entry into the occupations in which they were interested. This was

termed the option choice process and marked the start of within school differentiation for, from this stage onwards, pupils followed different curricula. In both schools, English, Maths and a Science subject were included in the core curriculum which all pupils followed. Pupils were able, however, to choose up to six optional subjects in order to complete their timetable, though they were not free to select any six options for two reasons. First, each school had limited resources in respect of teachers and materials, and there was an upper limit on the number of pupils who could be physically taught each subject. Secondly, it was a policy of both schools not to allow a completely random choice of options, but to direct pupils towards certain inter-related combinations of subjects. For instance, in Manor it was possible to study Physics, Chemistry and Biology, but not Physics, Chemistry and German. Pupils who opted for two languages in City could only choose one science subject, and pupils who chose all three sciences could study only one subject from History, Geography and Social Studies.

Another factor affecting pupils choice of subjects was the informal hints made by teachers regarding the suitability of pupils for studying the subject they taught. Discussions with teachers in both schools (frequently when they were "off guard" during breaktime in the staff room) indicated that they were particularly interested in encouraging the most able pupils to choose "their" subject, whilst discouraging the less able from doing so. Since the whole issue of option choice was tied up future occupational opportunities, the author was frequently asked to "have a word with" a particular pupil favoured by a teacher to reinforce his or her interest in choosing that teachers subject. The reverse situation sometimes occurred, and the following example illustrates one particular method by

which teachers tried to influence which pupils chose "their" subject.

Addressing the author in his capacity as a Careers Officer a teacher asked,

> "She wants to be a nurse, but quite frankly I don't relish the prospect of teaching her next year. Tell me is it absolutely essential that she studies my subject to get into nursing ?"

In fact, it was not and the pupil was subsequently told by the teacher that "the Careers Officer suggests you don't study ..... if you want to be a nurse". Thus in addition to the formal advice which pupils received to assist them with their selection of optional subjects, they were also subjected to informal pressures from certain teachers.

The parents of pupils in Manor and City were informed by letter of the option choice process and were invited to a parents evening (also attended by the Careers Officer) to discuss the implications of this for their children. Each school made it clear that pupils could not be guaranteed their first choice of subjects, so parents and pupils were asked to inform the school of second choice subjects. On those occasions where more pupils chose to take a course than the school could accommodate, such factors as performance in examinations and future educational and occupational plans were taken into account. It appeared to the author, and this was confirmed during discussions with teachers, that the more able pupils, especially those with articulate and resourceful parents, normally obtained their first choice of subjects. Most of the schools' manipulation of choice took place amongst the least able pupils. Thus, by the start of their fourth year in secondary school, Manor and City pupils had been channelled into groups following different curricula as a consequence of the option choice process. This differentiation had far reaching effects

upon pupils' occupational aspirations, and this is discussed in a later section of this Chapter.

The second way by which pupils were differentiated and stratified within school was via the streaming system. Banks (1968: 200) defines streaming as:

> " ... classifying children of the same age into two or more groups on the basis of some measure of ability. These groups are then used as the teaching unit ..."

The system of streaming in Manor and City was termed "setting", and pupils were "setted" from their second year onwards on the basis of first year, and then subsequent, end of year examinations. Whereas streaming refers to a teaching unit in which pupils are taught all their subjects, "setting" is an arrangement which takes into account the fact that pupils' ability in each subject can vary. Thus each subject is "set", and the most able are taught in Set 1, the next ability group in Set 2 and so forth. Hence a pupil who does well in English may be taught in Set 1 for that subject, but if that pupil was less able in Maths he or she might be taught in Set 2 or 3 for that subject. Whilst streaming is based upon pupils' average ability across the curriculum, "setting" reflects their differing abilities in each subject. It is, therefore, more flexible than the rather rigid system of streaming.

Although "setting" provided the facility for pupils in Manor and City to be taught in different sets according to their ability in each subject, it was observed that virtually the same pupils dominated the top sets in all subjects, whilst other pupils were almost exclusively taught in the bottom sets. This resulted in the situation where,

although neither school had clearly marked 'A', 'B' or 'C' streams, the ability level of most pupils could be assessed from whether they were taught predominantly in the top, middle or bottom sets. The system of sets was similarly constructed in each school. In those subjects which all pupils studied, that is, English and Mathematics, there were five sets for pupils of differing ability in each subject. In subjects taken by only a minority of pupils, there were as few as two sets.

Discussions with teachers in both schools indicated that a large majority of them were in favour of "setting" because classes based on a restricted ability range were easier to teach than mixed ability classes. Despite the fact that the intended purpose of "setting" is to aid teaching, one of the unintended consequences is that it provides pupils with a visible and public measure of their academic ability as assessed by the school. Shipman (1968: 46) noted that once allocated to streams, pupils soon start to display 'A', 'B' or 'C' stream mentalities. Those pupils in the top stream gain the impression that they are "better" than those in the lower streams, and this often provides them with the motivation to maintain, and possibly improve their standards. The opposite often takes place amongst pupils in the bottom streams. Regardless of how streams or sets are labelled, and even if their titles bear no relationship to a ranking system, pupils soon become aware of which are the streams for the "bright" pupils and which are the streams for the "dull" ones. This point is illustrated by the quotations presented below:

> "Its supposed to be a comprehensive, but I know where I am; right at the bottom of the pile"
>
> Manor Pupil in Bottom Sets

"Pupils in the top sets are different from those in the bottom ones. They are not just cleverer, they're better at all things. They captain school teams and are prefects".

Manor Pupil in Top Sets

"I used to be good, but I go to pieces in exams and can't remember my facts. I'm in the bottom sets for English and Maths. I've sort of given up, you know, got used to it. I don't worry."

City Pupil in Bottom Sets

It is apparent from these examples that pupils in Manor and City were quite aware of the position they occupied within their school's academic hierarchy. Not only did many of them see the "setting" system as a measure of their academic ability, but it was also interpreted as the school's assessment of their worth as individuals. Posts of responsibility in both schools were usually given to pupils in the top sets, as were the captaincies of sports teams, though one would have thought that these would have provided the schools with an opportunity to make formal recognition of something other than academic ability. (Certain teachers in City tried to limit the importance of academic ability as is discussed below.) As it was, academic achievement (or lack of achievement) generally affected the motivation of pupils towards other aspects of their life in school. Discussions with pupils in both schools indicated that pupils in the lower sets had a lower level of involvement in school activities than did pupils in the higher sets.

A number of authors, for example, Ford (1969: 13); Tapper (1971: 24) and Banks and Finlayson (1973: 174) have drawn attention to the fact that one of the more unfortunate consequences of streaming is the way in which it acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Assignment to a high stream encourages pupils in their attitudes to school, whilst

allocation to a low stream discourages them. It was anticipated, therefore, that an association would be found between the sets in which respondents were taught and their attitude to school. Table 7.1 shows that such an association existed between respondents English and Maths sets and their attitude to school. (English and Maths sets are used as the best indicators or respondents' position in the school academic hierarchy). In both schools, the higher the set in which pupils were taught, the more likely were they to be enthusiastic in their attitudes towards school, which is just as one would expect. Furthermore, the greater interest shown by higher "setted" pupils in their education was also evident in their attitudes towards continuing with their full-time education beyond the statutory school leaving age, as can be seen from Table 7.2. In both schools the higher "setted" pupils were more interested in continuing with their education than were pupils in the lower sets. The more academically able pupils in the higher sets usually considered themselves quite capable of making the transition from 'O' to 'A' levels, and it was apparent from statements which they made during the interviews that they were regularly encouraged by their teachers to hold this view. In contrast to this, pupils in the bottom sets were aware that they had been labelled as academic "failures" by their teachers and they were much more reluctant to consider continuing their education beyond the statutory school leaving age. This was partly due to the fact that they had come to accept their label as academic failures, and partly because allocation to a low set had done nothing to engender within them an interest in academic work.

It is, therefore, possible to argue that the "setting" system which operated in Manor and City acted as a mechanism which stratified pupils within schools. Pupils in the higher sets generally regarded

Table 7.1

The Relationship between Respondents' English and Maths Sets and their Attitude to School *
(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

English Set

Respondents' Attitude to School	1	2	3	4	5
Positive	90.0(27)	80.0(16)	66.7(12)	0.0	10.0(1)
Indifferent	10.0 (3)	20.0 (4)	33.0 (6)	83.3(10)	60.0(6)
Negative	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	16.7 (2)	30.0(3)
	100%(30)	100%(20)	100%(18)	100%(12)	100%(10)

$x^2 = 51.5$, df = 8, $p < 0.001$

Maths Set

Respondents' Attitude to School	1	2	3	4	5
Positive	93.3(28)	82.4(14)	45.0 (9)	31.3 (5)	0.0
Indifferent	6.7 (2)	17.6 (3)	50.0(10)	62.5(10)	57.1(4)
Negative	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	5.0(11)	6.2 (1)	42.9(3)
	100%(30)	100%(17)	100%(20)	100%(16)	100%(7)

$x^2 = 48.78$, df = 8, $p < 0.001$

CITY

English Set

Respondents' Attitude to School	1	2	3	4	5
Positive	78.6(22)	55.6(10)	15.4 (2)	5.9 (1)	21.4(3)
Indifferent	21.4 (6)	38.9 (7)	61.5 (8)	58.8(10)	28.6(4)
Negative	0.0 (0)	5.6 (1)	23.1 (3)	35.3 (6)	50.0(7)
	100%(28)	100%(18)	100%(13)	100%(17)	100%(14)

$x^2 = 41.2$, df = 8, $p < 0.001$

Maths Set

Respondents' Attitude to School	1	2	3	4	5
Positive	74.2(23)	57.1 (8)	19.0 (4)	15.8 (3)	0.0
Indifferent	25.8 (8)	35.7 (5)	66.7(14)	36.8 (7)	20.0(1)
Negative	0.0 (0)	7.1 (1)	14.3 (3)	47.4 (9)	80.0(4)
	100%(31)	100%(14)	100%(21)	100%(19)	100%(5)

$x^2 = 47.3$, df = 8, $p < 0.001$

* 'Positive' - generally interested in school, participates in school activities

'Indifferent' - periods of interest in certain school activities interspersed with periods when no interest is shown.

'Negative' - shows no interest in school, does not participate in school activities.

Table 7.2

The Relationship between Respondents' English and Maths Sets and their Attitude to Continued Education

(numbers in brackets)

Respondents' Attitude to Continued Education

MANOR — English Set

	1	2	3	4	5
Keen	96.7(29)	85.0(17)	66.7(12)	16.7(2)	30.0(3)
Not Sure	3.3 (1)	10.0 (2)	27.8 (5)	33.3(4)	30.0(3)
Not Keen	0.0 (0)	5.0 (1)	5.6 (1)	50.0(6)	40.0(4)
	100%(30)	100%(20)	100%(18)	100%(12)	100%(10)

$x^2 = 42.30$, df = 8, $p < 0.001$

Respondents' Attitude to Continued Education

Maths Set

	1	2	3	4	5
Keen	93.3(28)	88.2(15)	60.0(12)	37.5(6)	28.6(2)
Not Sure	6.7 (2)	11.8 (2)	35.0 (7)	18.7(3)	14.3(1)
Not Keen	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	5.0 (1)	43.7(7)	57.1(4)
	100%(30)	100%(17)	100%(20)	100%(16)	100%(7)

$x^2 = 42.18$, df = 8, $p < 0.001$

Respondents' Attitude to Continued Education

CITY — English Set

	1	2	3	4	5
Keen	50.0(14)	33.3 (6)	15.4 (2)	5.9(1)	14.3(2)
Not Sure	17.9 (5)	22.2 (4)	30.8 (4)	5.9(1)	35.7(5)
Not Keen	32.1 (9)	44.4 (8)	53.8 (7)	88.2(15)	50.0(7)
	100%(28)	100%(18)	100%(13)	100%(17)	100%(14)

$x^2 = 20.4$, df = 8, $p < 0.01$

Respondents' Attitude to Continued Education

Maths Set

	1	2	3	4	5
Keen	51.6(16)	21.4 (3)	9.5 (2)	15.8(3)	20.0(1)
Not Sure	19.4 (6)	28.6 (4)	23.8 (5)	15.8(3)	20.0(1)
Not Keen	29.0 (9)	50.0 (7)	66.7(14)	68.4(13)	60.0(3)
	100%(31)	100%(14)	100%(21)	100%(19)	100%(5)

$x^2 = 15.4$, df = 8, $p < 0.1$

themselves as "superior" to those in the lower sets and received more favourable comments from their teachers. Although their position in the high sets was due to their performance in academic examinations, it was overwhelmingly assumed by these pupils (and by several teachers too) that they were superior in non-academic activities such as sport and cultural pursuits. It has been argued by Halsey et al (1980: 213-214) that the practice of streaming within comprehensive schools serves to rank pupils in much the same way as did the former tripartite system, albeit that the ranking now takes place under one roof. For not only were pupils in the different sets in Manor and City separated during lessons, but they also spent much of their free time during and after school with friends drawn from the same sets. The implications this had for their occupational aspirations are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

Between School Differentiation and Stratification

The differences in the social compositon of the catchment areas from which Manor and City drew their pupils and the academic records of each school were discussed in Chapter 2, pp34-44. Few people in the Borough - neither teachers, parents, pupils nor employers - considered the ex-grammar school Manor to be of the same status as the ex-secondary modern school City. They were both termed "comprehensive", but Manor was regarded as far superior to City. The differences between various comprehensives have been discussed by Musgrove (1979: 191).

> "It is impossible to talk about the 'comprehensive school' even as one could reasonably talk about the 'grammar school'. Comprehensives differ principally according to where they are located and the type of school out of which they have been formed. The comprehensive embedded in a well-to-do middle class suburb is a very different proposition from a comprehensive school in a decaying inner city or a slum clearance housing estate which is a transfigured secondary modern".

It was hypothesised that, just as pupils within Manor and City were differentiated and stratified within these schools as a result of the different subjects they studied and the sets in which they were taught, so they would be further differentiated and stratified by attending schools which were of differing academic standards and which had contrasting reputations within the Borough. Compared to City pupils, Manor pupils were expected by their school to be far more successful in their G.C.E. and C.S.E. exams.[1] It can be seen from Table 7.3 that almost half (47.8%) of Manor pupils were expected to obtain six or more 'O' levels, compared to only 17 out of 90 (18.9%) in City. The majority of City pupils (66.7%) were expected to leave that school with qualifications in the range of three 'O' levels (or C.S.E. grade 1) to low grade C.S.E. passes. Furthermore whilst over 50% of Manor pupils left the school each year to continue with 'A' level courses, the equivalent figure for City varied from 10 to 15%.

In addition to such measurable factors as the proportion of pupils expected to pass 'O' levels, or the percentage continuing to 'A' levels, it was possible to distinguish Manor from City in respect of the differing "atmospheres" in each school. Such an "atmosphere" or "ethos" does not lend itself easily to measurement and is essentially a subjective variable, less "scientific" than, for example, examination results. Nevertheless, Shipman (1968:25) argued that schools could be described:

> "... by their 'spirit' or 'ethos' or 'climate'. This is an attempt to sum up an impression, not of particular aspects, but of the total pattern of life, culture within it. The buildings and the

---

1. Teachers in both schools were remarkably accurate in their predictions of pupils' exam results. The differences in the expected grades of pupils from Manor and City were not due to Manor teachers being "optimistic" about exam results and City teachers being "pessimistic".

Table 7.3

Respondents' Anticipated Academic Qualifications in Manor and City

(numbers in brackets)

School Forecast of Academic Qualifications	School Attended	
	Manor	City
Very High	47.8 (43)	18.9 (17)
High	15.6 (14)	7.8 (7)
Average	18.9 (17)	31.1 (28)
Low	17.8 (16)	35.6 (32)
Non-Exam	0	6.7 (6)
	100% (90)	100% (90)

$x^2 = 27.66$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$

Very High - School expects respondent to pass 6 'O' levels or more

High - School expects respondent to pass between 4 or 5 'O' levels

Average - School expects respondent to pass at least 4 subjects at C.S.E. grade 2 or higher but fewer than 4 'O' levels

Low - School expects respondent to pass fewer than 4 subjects at C.S.E. grade 2

Non-Exam - Respondent not entered for external exams

> equipment of schools may be identical but their cultures differ being the result of traditions built up by successive intakes of individuals interacting with one another under the influence of patterns already established."

The "ethos" of a school cannot be adequately assessed on the basis of a single visit, nor a single conversation with a teacher or pupil. At the same time, individuals who spend the majority of their time within an institution are frequently so involved in it that they are unaware of its unique characteristics. Careers Officers, however, tend to be in a good position to evaluate the "ethos" of a school. First, they have contacts at every level of schools - head teachers, teachers, parents and pupils - and secondly, although they are attached to particular schools for a considerable time and are frequent visitors, they remain external to them. They are in a fairly unique position to make comparisons between the different schools in which they work.

It was apparent that the "ethos" which prevailed in Manor was very different from that in City. Manor retained the "ethos" of a grammar school with considerable emphasis being placed upon individual academic achievement, competition between pupils, rewards for hard work and the obligation each pupil had to maintain the high reputation which the school had within the Borough. A senior teacher summed up the situation in Manor:

> "You could say that we attach too much importance to academic work, but that's the main function of the school. Its what employers want, its what parents want, its what children need."

City school, by contrast, appeared to attach less importance to individual academic achievement and, instead, stressed the philosophy of doing one's best within the limits defined by one's own talents:

> "It is not who wins that matters, it is who makes the most effort. There can only be one winner in the race, but you can all try for your best possible result".
>
> Statement made by Senior Teacher during Assembly

In City, some teachers regularly explained to pupils that people had different talents, academic ability being just one, and not necessarily the most important:

> "Look at the person sitting next to you. Don't judge that boy or girl by the number of exams he or she might pass. Look at them again. They may be in the bottom sets, but they may be a good singer, a talented dancer, a skillful fisherman, a good team member".
>
> Statement made by Teacher during Assembly

It was apparent that whilst the "ethos" of Manor was based upon the principle of individual advancement, that of City was more egalitarian. (Although, as noted above, this did not extend to choosing the head boy and girl from other than the top sets). The values of each school reflected not only their present condition, but also their status prior to their transformation into comprehensives.

A school's "ethos" can take on a physical expression, and Shipman (1968: 38-39) includes within this "symbolic manifestation" the head teacher's gown, the honours board, the school uniform and so forth. The physical appearance of Manor had changed little since its grammar school days (see Chapter 2, p 35). The head still wore a gown during assembly, the oak panels bearing the school's Oxbridge successes still surrounded the reception area to the school, which also contained sporting trophies in glass cabinets. City, on the other hand, presented a more austere, even "scruffy" image to the world. Notice-boards were left bare or else contained torn notices with graffiti on

them. It was also possible to draw contrasts between the two schools in respect of their extra-curricula activities. In Manor the guest speakers at events such as prize days were frequently drawn from the Church or academic life. In City guest speakers were usually sporting celebrities, such as the manager of the local first division football club. End of term activities at Manor included debates, chess tournaments and classical music concerts. In City, the boys usually had a boxing match, whilst the girls attended a fashion show.

Pupils are, thus, differentiated and stratified according to the type of school they attend and their position within their school's academic hierarchy. This separation and ranking has important implications for their future occupations as is discussed below.

2. The Role of the School in Preparing Pupils for Entry into the Labour Market

The data so far presented in this Chapter has shown how pupils in Manor and City were differentiated and stratified into various categories. This, it will now be argued, prepared them for entry into a similarly differentiated and stratified labour market. It will not be claimed that schools act as "occupational traffic policemen", directing pupils into one occupation rather than another, but rather that schools gradually socialise pupils into aspiring towards a particular range and level of occupation.

Performance in public examinations such as, 'O' levels and C.S.E., is a major criterion used by many employers in selecting new, young recruits to their labour force. Qualifications, although far from being an infallible guide to a person's suitability for a particular

occupation, are still the most available and tangible single method by which employers can assess past school performance and predict occupational potential. This has lead to the situation where the possession of educational credentials has become of crucial importance for obtaining a job (Little and Westergaad, 1964; Banks, 1968:240). Although recent research by Ashton and Maguire (1980) and Cuming (1983) has indicated that some employers attach less importance to the possession of qualifications than is sometimes believed by pupils, parents and teachers, it was generally assumed by respondents in Manor and City that one's qualifications were of great importance in determining the type of job one could obtain. It was this, the perceived role of qualifications, that appeared to be a very important factor in shaping pupils' occupational aspirations.

It was noted during the research that schools influence their pupils' occupational aspirations in three main ways. First, the subjects which pupils study have a direct influence upon the type of occupations to which they aspire. Secondly, the level of job to which pupils aspire is related to the school's expectation of their examination performance. Thirdly, pupils' aspirations are associated with the type of school they attend.

Many respondents in Manor and City expressed a desire to obtain employment in an area of work which was related to their favourite school subject, for example, Chemistry for Pharmacy, English for Journalism, Biology for Nursing. Many employers also consider a good performance in a related school subject to be a factor in a candidates favour when being considered for a particular job. In Manor, 68 out of 90 (75.5%) respondents gave performance in a related subject as a reason for aspiring to a particular job. In City, 64 out of 90 (71.1%) did so

too. There was also a negative side to this association, and many respondents gave poor performance in a related school subject as a reason why they did not aspire to certain jobs. The following quotations provide examples of this point:

> "I had thought of becoming a nursery nurse, so I chose to study Child Care. But I wasn't much good at it so I dropped the idea."
>
> City Girl

> "I wanted to be a draughtsman since I was good at Technical Drawing. But you need Physics too, so I changed my mind. I won't do very well in Physics".
>
> City Boy

The association between subjects studied at school and occupational aspirations has major implications for pupils when choosing their optional subjects at the end of their third year. The decision to take certain subjects and not others results in some occupational pathways remaining open to them whilst others are closed. Morrison and Macintyre (1971: 198) have stated:

> "For many young people, choice of an occupation is to a large extent implicit within the educational choices they make. In particular, which pupils become scientists and technologists is largely determined at this stage".

The second way in which schools shape pupils' occupational aspirations is by ranking them by expected examination results. Table 7.4 shows that respondents' occupational aspirations were closely associated to their teachers' forecast of their examination performance. In both schools a large majority of pupils in the "very high ability" category (six 'O' levels or more) aspired to professional and managerial occupations, whilst pupils in the "low" category (C.S.E. grades 3 to 6) mainly aspired to skilled manual, service and semi-skilled occupations. This association is also present when respondents'

Table 7.4

The Relationship between School's Assessment of Respondents' Academic Ability and their Occupational Aspirations

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	School Assessment of Respondents' Academic Ability *			
	Very High	High	Average	Low
Upper Professional and Managerial	23.3(10)	7.1(1)	5.9(1)	0
Lower Professional and Managerial	65.1(28)	50.0(7)	0	0
Clerical and Technical	11.6 (5)	35.7 (5)	76.5 (13)	25.0 (4)
Skilled Manual and Service	0	7.1 (1)	17.6 (3)	75.0 (12)
	100% (43)	100% (14)	100% (17)	100% (16)

$x^2 = 82.67$, df = 9, $p < 0.001$

CITY

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	School Assessment of Respondents' Academic Ability				
	Very High	High	Average	Low	Non-Exam
Upper Professional and Managerial	11.8 (2)	0	0	0	0
Lower Professional and Managerial	52.9 (9)	28.6 (2)	3.6(1)	0	0
Clerical and Technical	29.4 (5)	71.4 (5)	71.4(20)	6.2(2)	0
Skilled Manual and Service	5.9 (1)	0	25.0(7)	84.4(27)	66.7(4)
Semi-skilled and Unskilled Manual	0	0	0	9.4(3)	33.3(2)
	100%(17)	100%(7)	100%(28)	100%(32)	100%(6)

$x^2 = 95.55$, df = 16, $p < 0.001$

* Very High - Respondent expected to pass 6 'O' levels or more
High - Respondent expected to pass 4 or 5 'O' levels
Average - Respondent expected to pass at least 4 subjects at C.S.E. grade 2 or higher but fewer than 4 'O' levels
Low - Respondent expected to pass fewer than 4 subjects at CSE grade 2
Non-Exam - Respondent not entered for external exams

occupational aspirations analysed in conjunction with their position in English and Maths sets (Table 7.5). In Manor, the majority of respondents in the top two English and Maths sets aspired to managerial and professional jobs, whilst all the pupils in the two bottom sets in English and Maths had lower occupational aspirations. They aspired to clerical, technical, skilled manual and service occupations. This pattern whereby a greater proportion of respondents in the top sets aspired to professional and managerial occupations than the proportion of respondents in the bottom sets was also evident in the data from City school.

The data presented above shows that a strong association existed between respondents' academic performance in school and their occupational aspirations. It was apparent from the interviews conducted with respondents that likely examination results and position in the "setting" system were an extremely important factor involved in shaping their occupational aspirations. Most were well aware of the fact that many jobs could only be entered with a certain level of qualification. The quotations given below are typical of many which could be cited in support of this argument:

> "I suppose if I was cleverer I wouldn't want to be a hairdresser. But I wasn't born like that".
>
> City Girl Expected to Gain Average Grade C.S.E. passes

> "I expect to get a better job than those in the C.S.E. classes. It wouldn't be worth it otherwise."
>
> Manor Pupil Expected to pass Six 'O' levels

> "You have to have clever people doing the important jobs like being a doctor or running things. Its common sense."
>
> City Pupil Expected to get Low Grade C.S.E. passes and who wished to become a carpenter

Table 7.5

The Relationship between Respondents' English and Maths Sets and their Occupational Aspirations
(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations — English Set

	1	2	3	4	5
Upper Professional and Managerial	23.8(7)	10.0(2)	16.7(3)	0.0	0.0
Lower Professional and Managerial	66.7(20)	65.0(13)	11.1(2)	0.0	0.0
Clerical and Technical	10.5(3)	20.0(4)	61.1(11)	41.7(5)	40.0(4)
Skilled Manual	0.0	5.0(1)	11.1(2)	58.3(7)	60.0(6)
	100%(30)	100%(20)	100%(18)	100%(12)	100%(10)

$x^2 = 67.18$, df = 12, $p < 0.001$

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations — Maths Set

	1	2	3	4	5
Upper Professional and Managerial	33.3(10)	0.0	10.0(2)	0.0	0.0
Lower Professional and Managerial	53.3(16)	82.4(14)	25.0(5)	0.0	0.0
Clerical and Technical	10.0(3)	17.6(3)	55.0(11)	56.2(9)	14.3(1)
Skilled Manual and Service	3.3(1)	0.0	10.0(2)	43.7(7)	85.7(6)
	100%(30)	100%(17)	100%(20)	100%(16)	100%(7)

$x^2 = 79.05$, df = 12, $p < 0.001$

CITY

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations — English Set

	1	2	3	4	5
Upper Professional and Managerial	7.1(2)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lower Professional and Managerial	32.1(9)	11.1(2)	7.7(1)	0.0	0.0
Clerical and Technical	57.1(16)	50.0(9)	30.8(4)	11.8(2)	7.1(1)
Skilled Manual and Service	3.6(1)	38.9(7)	61.5(8)	76.4(13)	71.4(10)
Semi-skilled/ Unskilled Manual	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.8(2)	21.5(3)
	100%(28)	100%(18)	100%(13)	100%(17)	100%(14)

$x^2 = 56.02$, df= 16, $p < 0.001$

(table continued over/-

/ Table 7.5 (continued)

CITY

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Maths Set 1	2	3	4	5
Upper Professional and Managerial	6.5(2)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lower Professional and Managerial	32.3(10)	14.3(2)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Clerical and Technical	54.8(17)	50.0(7)	28.6(6)	10.5(2)	0.0
Skilled Manual and Service	6.5(2)	35.7(5)	61.9(13)	73.7(14)	100(5)
Semi-skilled/ Unskilled Manual	0.0	0.0	9.5(2)	15.8(3)	0.0
	100%(31)	100%(14)	100%(21)	100%(19)	100%(5)

$x^2 = 53.90$, df = 16, $p < 0.001$

A third way in which schools influenced the occupational aspirations of their pupils had much to do with whether they attended a "good" school or a "bad" school. In the context of the Borough, Manor was a "good" school because it was a former grammar, based on a middle class catchment area and it had maintained its good reputation in the Borough. City, on the other hand, was a "bad" school when compared with Manor because it was a former secondary modern, based on a more socially diverse catchment area and had fewer pupils than Manor leaving it to study 'A' levels at the prestigious Sixth Form College in the Borough. Table 7.6 compares the occupational aspirations of respondents in Manor and City. In Manor, 47 out of 90 respondents (52.2%) aspired to professional and managerial jobs compared to only 14 out of 90 (15.5%) in City. Furthermore, a greater proportion of Manor pupils aspired to upper professional and managerial occupations such as medicine, dentistry or law, than was the case with City pupils. At the other end of the scale, 44 out of 90 (48.9%) of City respondents aspired to skilled manual, service and semi-/unskilled occupations, compared to 16 out of 90 (17.8%) of Manor respondents. It is clear, therefore, that Manor and City tended to feed different sections of the labour market even though they were both comprehensive schools.

It was apparent that attending Manor school had the effect of raising the occupational aspirations of many pupils.This appeared to be due partly to the "ethos" of the school which encouraged pupils to seek success in educational and occupational matters. Many pupils were aware of Manor's position at the top of the Borough's "pecking order" of comprehensive schools. The examples given below are typical of the statements made by Manor respondents during their interviews:

Table 7.6

The Occupational Aspirations of Respondents from Manor and City Schools

(numbers in brackets)

		School Attended	
		Manor	City
Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Upper Professional and Managerial	13.3 (12)	2.2 (2)
	Lower Professional and Managerial	38.9 (35)	13.3 (12)
	Clerical and Technical	30.0 (27)	35.6 (32)
	Skilled Manual and Service	17.8 (16)	43.3 (39)
	Semi-Skilled/ Unskilled Manual	0	(5.6) (5)
		100% (90)	100% (90)

$x^2 = 33.40$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$

"Its probably the best school round here."

"Its a really good school with lots of very able people in it".

"Manor's more like a grammar than a comprehensive".

"People here want to get on and be successful".

City, on the other hand, did not appear to do this. Many pupils there felt that City was "nothing special". Others liked it for being "friendly" or "nice", but few described it as "academic" or "successful". Most of the respondents were glad they had not gone to Manor because they felt it was "posh", "stuck up" or "really unfriendly". Yet they appreciated that Manor pupils would probably obtain better qualifications than themselves:

"Most of them go to the Sixth Form College. They are different from us".

City Pupil

The advent of the comprehensive school was seen by its advocates as a significant step towards reducing inequalities between schools. Prior to the introduction of the comprehensive system, the tripartite division of the secondary education system produced schools which tended to educate pupils for entry into different levels of the occupational structure. Grammar school pupils were educated with the assumption that they would probably enter professional and managerial occupations. Technical school pupils were generally thought to be destined for technical and clerical work, whilst secondary modern pupils were usually assumed to enter manual employment after leaving school. Comprehensive schools, as stated above, were seen by many as a means of preventing the situation where different schools feed different levels of the occupational structure. The data contained in Table 7.6, however, shows that pupils in comprehensives like Manor are, frequently, guided into different occupations to those of pupils

in comprehensive schools like City. This suggests that the close links which existed between type of school and occupational destination under the tripartite system have not been removed by the introduction of a comprehensive system of education. In the Borough, pupils were differentiated and stratified between schools as well as within schools, and this had important implications for the development of their occupational aspirations as has been discussed above.

3. Summary

Schools, therefore, act as filters, separating pupils into a number of groups based on subjects studied and performance within these subjects. These groups are then channelled into different sections of the job market. Pupils are constantly reminded of their "rank" within schools by being allocated to sets on the basis of their academic ability. Attempts to lessen the impact which such a ranking system has on pupils' aspirations, such as mixed ability registration forms and egalitarian comments made by some teachers during assembly, do not appear to have much affect.

It was observed during the research that the separation of pupils into academic sets had important consequences for the friendship groups which developed amongst pupils at school. It was noted that pupils who were taught together also made friends with one another. Hence, many pupils spent their entire day at school, both inside and outside of the class room, in the company of a group of pupils of similar academic ability. The implications this had for their occupational aspirations are discussed in the next Chapter, Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8

PEER GROUPS AND THE FORMATION OF OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

The intention of this Chapter is to examine the influence of peer groups upon pupils' occupational aspirations. In the first part of this Chapter, the development and the nature of peer groups are discussed, and in the second part, the implications which peer groups have for pupils' occupational aspirations are examined.

1. The Development and Nature of Peer Groups

Several authors have noted that the peer group, that is, other young people of approximately the same age, is one of the key factors involved in the development of pupils' occupational aspirations. This is because contemporaries at school frequently serve as the reference groups[1] towards which pupils orientate their actions (see Chapter 4, pp 71-74). The peer group is of particular significance to this study since its influence usually increases as children pass through their early to mid teens when most are loosening their ties to their parents. This, of course, is the very time when pupils are required to make major decisions affecting their future education and occupations.

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1. Reference groups were defined Berger (1963: 137) as:

> "... the collectivity whose opinions, convictions and courses of action are decisive for the formation of our own opinions, convictions and courses of action. The reference group provides us with a model with which we can continually compare ourselves."

Hargreaves (1967: 8) observed during his study of secondary modern school pupils that peer groups were:

> "... united by certain values and produce norms which define the criteria of membership and the expected forms of behaviour."

The peer group values and norms which were deemed relevant for the purposes of this research included the attitudes of the friends of respondents from Manor and City to school subjects, school discipline, continued educationand future employment. Turner (1983: 112-120), in his research on comprehensive school pupils, found that most pupils had several sets of "friends", and the influence of these "friends" varied considerably. He distinguished between those pupils who were only "friends" in certain lessons and those who were "friends" in a variety of school contexts and outside school as well, and it was this latter group that was the more influential. Consequently, it was decided to base this present study of peer group influence upon respondents' three closest friends at school, that is, those pupils who they generally "went around with". Data was collected on each of these three friends and this included their gender, social class, attitude to school and continued education, performance in formal school work and occupational aspirations.

Lacy (1970: 80) reported that friendship networks in secondary schools were frequently the continuation of groups which had originally formed in primary school. Manor and City took the majority of their pupils from a small number of primary schools within their respective catchment areas. Most respondents recalled that they had entered secondary school in the company of large numbers of children they had known at primary school. Teachers at Manor and City indicated that during the first few months at secondary school, primary school friend-

ship groups usually remained intact, but as pupils became familiar with other pupils from different primary schools, so these initial friendship groups began to break down. Frequently, new groups emerged consisting of pupils from several different primary schools. Four factors appeared to be involved in varying degrees of importance, in the formation of new groups of friends in secondary school, and these were:

i) shared interests,
ii) gender,
iii) social class background,
iv) the "setting" system.

Shared Interests

Many respondents found it difficult to explain why they were friends with certain pupils and not with others. A typical reason given was:

"We like doing the same things in our spare time"

Frequently this meant supporting the same football team or listening to the same type of popmusic. The fact that the vast majority of football supporters in both schools followed the same team, and most of the pupils enjoyed listening to the same type of pop music rather devalued the significance of these explanations for the formation of particular friendship groups. More significance could be attached to those instances where friends shared more unusual hobbies such as bell ringing or collecting foreign dolls. As often as not, however, these past-times grew out of the friendship and were not the reason for its formation in the first place. Moreover, many pupils stated that they had no particular interest other than "going out", "messing around" or "going to disco's", so no specific interests could have acted as the reason why they made friends with whom they had. It was apparent, therefore, that shared interests did not play such an important role in the formation of particular friendship groups as some of the

initial comments mady by respondents had suggested. To a large extent, shared interests was a secondary factor which only came into operation after the allocation of pupils to different teaching sets had determined which pupils would have most contact with one another. (This is discussed in detail below). It was then that shared interests contributed to the formation of some of the friendship groups which subsequently developed within these sets. The important point to note is that allocation to different sets as a result of examination results was the principal factor involved, and it will be explained later why this was so. Indeed, there was very little evidence to suggest that pupils made friends with others in different sets just becausethey shared similar interests.

It was mentioned above that some respondents mentioned that they and their friends enjoyed the same type of music. Music and associated teenage fashions play an important part in the lifestyle of many teenagers as Brake (1980: 71-85) has discussed. Many respondents in Manor and City sought some form of teenage identity which was unconnected with school. Lacy (1970: 71-72) has described such adolescent sub-cultures as:

> "A sphere of activity which has its centre of gravity outside the school, and free of school domination. Those that are least successful in school are most attracted to it."

Even though close identification with a teenage sub-culture was mainly a characteristic of pupils who obtained little status or satisfaction from school, an interest in pop music or a concern with keeping up with the latest fashions was not restricted just to pupils with anti-school attitudes. Many pupils displayed some of the characteristics of a distinctive teenage lifestyle and, as Musgrove (1979: 46) has mentioned

"There is no inexorable link between pop culture and school failure."

Many respondents had some inclination towards a particular sub-culture which was apparent from the past-times they mentioned during their interviews and their dress at weekends.[2] They remained, however, within the limits of what Brake (1980: 23) has termed "respectable youth". These pupils were able to alternate between behaviour which won the approval of their teachers and parents, such as working hard and completing their homework on time, and behaviour which gained the respect of their peers, such as wearing the latest fashions out of school. They flirted with a sub-cultural lifestyle but realised that there was a limit beyond which they should not go. Other pupils though were far more involved in youth subcultures as is discussed below.

Since youth sub-cultures represented an area of activity outside the dominant influence of the school, it was anticipated that they would provide the opportunity for pupils from different sets to make friends. Although there was some evidence that pupils from different sets had increased contact as a result of the same sub-cultural affiliation, it was not of sufficient magnitude to suggest that identification with a particular sub-culture nullified the effects which social class background and academic performance had on friendship group formation. The most committed members of particular youth-sub-cultures were almost always pupils from the bottom academic sets and, inspite of the differences between the various sub-cultural groups (at the time of the field work these were 'skinheads', 'punks' and a revival of the 'teddy

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2. One of the advantages of living in the Borough was that I was able to see Manor and City pupils out of school in the evenings and weekends.

boy' image) members of different groups appeared to have more in common with each other than they were prepared to admit. They nearly all shared an intense dislike of school, and a prolonged observation of these pupils showed that many moved from one sub-cultural identity to another with relative ease. It could be argued, therefore, that the foundations of these groups were based as much on their members position at the bottom of the school academic hierarchy as they were on their members commitment to a particular lifestyle and philosophy. Discussions with teachers and my own observations, showed that the "skinhead" and the "punk" in the bottom sets had more in common than the "punk" in the bottom set and the pupil in the top set who had an interest in "punk" music and fashion.

Gender

Not surprisingly, pupils' gender appeared to be an extremely important factor in friendship group formation. Of the 180 respondents only a very small number (five) mentioned a member of the opposite sex in their list of three friends. At first this seemed surprising since many of the respondents were seen to spend a considerable amount of time in mixed company. It was possible, of course, that respondents felt embarrassed to name a member of the opposite sex as a close friend, although this seemed unlikely in view of the generally open manner in which interviews were conducted. More likely, this was a feature of teenage friendships where members of the same sex provided more stable friendship than did members of the opposite sex. This latter type of friendship tended to be of a far more transitory nature, or as a City girl portrayed it vividly:

"from one disco to the next".

Pupils frequently sought members of the opposite sex in order to

increase their status amongst members of their own sex. (A similar observation was made by Sharpe (1976: 214-219) in her study of Ealing school girls). Hence current boy or girl friends tended to have less influence upon pupils' long term plans because of the short period during which they usually existed. This was especially the case when future occupations were discussed since boys and girls aged 15 and 16 generally knew little about the job opportunities open to each other. Friends of the same sex were usually better informed in this respect.

Social Class Background

The literature suggests that the influence of pupils' social class background upon friendship group formation varies considerably according to the type of school pupils attend. (See Chapter 4, pp 71-74) Several studies on grammar schools have shown that social class was not a major factor in the formation of friendship networks amongst pupils. On the other hand, research on unstreamed primary schools indicated that pupils tend to choose their friends from other pupils of similar social origins to themselves. Ford (1969: 76) in her study of comprehensive schools found that social class was a factor involved in the formation of friendship groups, but pupils' "class of aspiration", that is, the occupations which they desired was as important as their class of origin.

From observations made prior to the start of the formal fieldwork, it was apparent that pupils tended to make friends with others of similar background. It was expected, therefore, that an association would be found between respondents' social class background and that of their friends. Table 8.1 shows that such a relationship did exist when the social class background of the first friends respondents

named were examined. It can be seen from this Table that in Manor the vast majority, 62 out of 71, (87.3%), of middle class respondents named a middle class first friend, whilst working class respondents were evenly divided between middle class and working class friends. (The data on the second and third friends showed a similar statistically significant relationship.) This result is similar to other research in this area which shows that social class is a factor in friendship formation (see Chapter 4, p 74). It should be noted, however, that there were relatively few working class pupils in Manor which was very much a middle class school.

Table 8.1

The Relationship between Respondents' Social Class and Social Class of their First Friend

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

		Respondents' Social Class	
		Middle Class	Working Class
Social Class of First Friends	Middle Class	87.3 (62)	53.3 (8)
	Working Class	12.7 (9)	46.6 (7)
		100% (71)	100% (15)

missing data 4

$x^2 = 9.8$, df = 1, $p < 0.01$

CITY

		Respondents' Social Class	
		Middle Class	Working Class
Social Class of First Friends	Middle Class	56.6 (17)	30.9 (17)
	Working Class	43.3 (13)	69.1 (38)
		100% (30)	100% (55)

missing data 5

$x^2 = 5.1$, df = 1, < 0.05

City school, on the other hand, had a more equal balance of pupils from different social backgrounds, and so provided the opportunity to examine the effects of social class on friendship formation in a more heterogeneous population. It can be seen from Table 8.1 that more middle class respondents in this school named middle class friends than working class friends, whilst over two thirds of working class respondents (69.1%) named working friends. (Data on second and third friends was similar and also statistically significant). Thus data from City school shows that there was a relationship between pupils' social class background and that of their friends.

This finding has important implications for pupils' occupational aspirations. It was argued in Chapter 6 that there was a tendency for pupils from different social class backgrounds to be subjected to different sets of attitudes held by their families about the importance of education and future occupations. Since pupils appeared to spend much of their time at school in the company of friends of the same social class, it can be argued that the attitudes to which they were subjected at home were reinforced by similar attitudes which were held by their friends at school. This point is developed in section 2 of this Chapter.

The "Setting" System

A major factor contributing to the development of friendship groups amongst respondents in both schools was their distribution into different teaching sets on the basis of their end of year examination results in each subject. Thus the internal school organisation created groups of pupils who had more contact with each other than they did with other groups of pupils in different sets. As Lacy (1970: 82) noted:

"Friends are, therefore, chosen from the population the school makes available".

The "populations" of pupils in Manor and City were composed of children of approximately the same level of academic performance. Furthermore, it was shown in Chapter 7, pp144 that most respondents were taught exclusively in either the top or middle or bottom sets. Pupils, therefore, had greater contact with other pupils of the same academic performance levels as themselves than they did with pupils of different performance levels. Consequently, it was not surprising to find a close relationship between respondents' academic performance level and those of their friends. Indeed, Table 8.2 indicates that a large proportion of pupils in each ability group named a friend of the same ability level. It can also be seen from this Table that those friends named who were not in the same ability category were usually in an adjacent one. (Data was similar and statistically significant for second and third friends named).

For many pupils in the top sets, the friendship group generated its own pressures to succeed, and so reinforced the pressures to succeed which also came from pupils' parents and teachers. The following quotations illustrate how this norm of high performance worked amongst pupils in these groups:

"We take an interest in each others' work. I suppose you could say we compete against each other, especially in exams".

Manor Pupil

"You get pushed by your friends to work harder and keep up with them".

Manor Pupil

"My friends make me want to work. They make me feel that I've got to get 'O' levels."

City Pupil

Table 8.2

The Relationship between Respondents Academic Ability and the Academic Ability of their First Friend *

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

		Respondents' Academic Ability			
		Very High	High	Average	Low
Academic Ability of First Friend	Very High	72.1(31)	14.3(2)	0.0	0.0
	High	23.2(10)	71.4(10)	29.4(5)	0.0
	Average	4.7(2)	14.3(2)	64.7(11)	31.3(5)
	Low	0.0	0.0	5.9(1)	68.7(11)
		100%(43)	100%(14)	100%(17)	100%(16)

$x^2 = 99.7$, df = 9, $p < 0.001$

CITY

		Respondents' Academic Ability				
		Very High	High	Average	Low	Non-Exam
Academic Ability of First Friend	Very High	64.6(11)	14.3(1)	0.0	0.0	0.0
	High	17.7(3)	57.1(4)	7.2(2)	0.0	0.0
	Average	11.8(2)	28.6(2)	67.9(19)	21.8(7)	0.0
	Low	5.9(1)	0.0	24.9(7)	68.8(22)	50.0(3)
	Non-Exam	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.4(3)	50.0(3)
		100%(17)	100%(7)	100%(28)	100%(32)	100% (6)

$x^2 = 100.2$, df = 12, $P < 0.001$

* Very High - School expects respondent to pass 6 'O' levels or more.
High - School expects respondent to pass 4 or 5 'O' levels.
Average - School expects respondent to pass more than 4 subjects at C.S.E. grade 2 but fewer than 4 'O' levels.
Low - School expects respondent to pass subjects at C.S.E. grade 3 or below.
Non-Exam - Respondent not considered for entry for external exams.

Many similar examples could be cited. At the other end of the academic scale, friends in the bottom sets often had the opposite effect. They generated "anti-school work" attitudes which discouraged the competitiveness which was a feature of the high performance groups. Pupils at this level of the academic hierarchy won the approval of their friends by doing as little formal school work as possible. Turner (1983: 117-120) has described this as "the work restriction norm". The quotations given below are typical of the opinions which were prevalent amongst such pupils:

> "You won't find us talking about our lessons, we're too busy messing around."
>
> Manor Pupil

> " I sometimes don't understand things, but its no good asking your mates 'cos they'd tell you to shove it !"
>
> City Pupil

> "All my friends talk about is boys; that and going out. We get enough of school already without always going on about it".
>
> Manor Pupil

> "The likes of us won't be going to college. We'll all be down to sign on in the summer."
>
> City Pupil

In addition to the "pro-school" groups of friends who discussed their school work and competed with one another, and the "anti-school" groups who had little time or inclination to talk about their school work, there was also a third type of friendship group which generally formed amongst pupils in the middle sets. These "intermediate" groups adopted what one teacher described as a "selective approach to school". They took from the school what they thought was important, for example, a subject which might assist them in their attempts to obtain a particular job, or a school activity that captured their enthusiasm,

for instance, a sponsored run to raise money to buy a guide dog for a local blind man. On the other hand, they ignored what they thought was irrelevant such as subjects that had no clear connections with jobs, History for example.

The important role played by friendship groups was widely acknowledged by both parents and teachers. At parents evenings to which Careers Officers were invited as a matter of course, it was common to hear parents express concern that their children had or might "get in with the wrong crowd". On several occasions parents explained that their children's poor academic performance was due largely to "bad friends" as the following examples show:

> "Of course she's got ability. She says her friends distract her in lessons."
>
> "To be honest, he needs to have some competition from other pupils. It seems his friends think its bad to work hard and excel."

Teachers were also aware of the powerful influence of friends upon pupils' opinions and attitudes. Many stressed that the early years in school were amongst the most important of all since it was at this stage that most friendship groups were formed. They explained that if pupils obtained a place in the high sets in their second or third year, they were likely to be surrounded by other academically orientated pupils from whom they were likely to choose their friends. Of course if they were allocated to low sets, the opposite was very likely to occur. This is an example of the streaming system creating "self-fulfilling phrophecies" which was discussed in Chapter 7, pp 146-147.

Understanding the factors involved in the development and the nature of peer groups is a necessary first step towards fully appreciating

the impact which they can have upon pupils' attitudes and behaviour. It was apparent from the study of peer groups in Manor and City that pupils generally made friends with those pupils who were like themselves in several important respects. For instance, middle class pupils normally befriended other middle class pupils, whilst academically successful pupils usually made friends with other academically successful pupils. Usually the norms and values of the peer group were very similar to the norms and values prevalent in their members homes, but there were some instances where they were in conflict. As the quotations given above illustrate, some pupils whose parents were keen for them to achieve academic success made friends with pupils for whom academic success was relatively unimportant. There were also occasions when pupils made friends with others from quite different social backgrounds. A Manor girl from a working class home said during her interview that she was too embarrassed to take her (middle class) friends home because her "house wasn't very big and the furniture was a bit old".

Thus peer groups play an important role in the lives of most school pupils. In the next part of the Chapter the role which peer groups play in shaping pupils occupational aspirations is examined.

2. The Relationship between Respondents' Occupational Aspirations and the Occupational Aspirations of their Friends

In view of the fact that academic performance and social class were two of the main factors involved in the formation of friendship groups amongst respondents, it was not unexpected that an association should be found between the level of occupations to which respondents and their friends aspired. This does not necessarily mean that friends deliberately persuaded one another to aspire to the same occupations, but rather, that friendship groups generated their own opinions about the relative value of various jobs. However, before the association between pupils' occupational aspirations and those of their friends is discussed, it is necessary to examine three of the contributory factors to this association. These were, first, the impact of friendship groups upon the development of sexual stereotypes amongst their members. Secondly, the impact of friendship groups on members' attitudes towards school. Finally, the impact of friendship groups upon members' attitudes to continued education.

The sexual stereotyping of children has its roots in the home where male infants are treated differently by their parents than are female infants (see Chapter 4, pp 76-77). This initial stereotyping is frequently reinforced as children pass through the school system, for not only do boys tend to study different subjects to girls, but the "hidden curriculum", that is, the messages which pupils receive about what teachers etc define as "normal" behaviour, also contributes to the differentiation of male and female pupils (see Chapter 4, pp 79-80 and Chapter 9, pp 202-204).

It was noted during the research, however, that teachers were not solely responsible for the reinforcement of sexual stereotypes in school; friendship groups also played a role. It was evident from comments made by large numbers of respondents that they were extremely sensitive to comments made by their friends about which occupations were appropriate to members of their sex. Pupils who aspired to occupations normally associated with the opposite sex were frequently subjected to considerable ridicule from their friends. For example, amongst respondents from City were several boys who wished to enter catering after leaving school. Two of them stated that they wished they could have studied home economics, since this would assist them in their attempts to obtain catering apprenticeships. They had not done so, however, out of fear of being teased by their friends for studying a "girls' subject". Indeed one had told his friends that he was keen to enter the Army Catering Corps. In fact he had no intention of doing so, but, as the Careers Teacher explained, he thought the mention of the Army might restore some of his lost masculinity in the eyes of his friends.

There were also occasions where girls were subjected to similar pressure from their friends. One particular incident deserving of comment was the case of two City girls who had considered studying metal work. During an informal discussion with them one lunch hour, they recalled how the comments from their friends had been so hurtful, that they finally decided to abandon the idea. One had been called a "tom boy", but the other had been called "dirty":

> "They said I was dirty because I was only interested in metal work because I'd be with boys on my own. It wasn't true, I was really keen on it. I mend my brother's bike at home."

This is a good example of, not only the cruel comments which friends made about one another, but also the "double bind" situation faced by those who dared to break away from orthodox sex-typed behaviour. For not only could a girl be accused of masculine behaviour if she expressed an interest in a "boy's subject", but she was also liable to criticism for being unfeminine, for being too interested in boys.

A second contributory factor was the impact of friendship groups on members' attitudes towards school. Table 8.3 illustrates the relationship between respondents' attitudes to school and the attitudes to school of their first friends named. (Tables for the second and third friends named, which are not presented here, show a similar relationship which was also statistically significant.)

It can be seen from Table 8.3 that an association existed between respondents' attitudes to school and those of their first friends. Respondents who were positive towards school were far more likely to have friends who were also positive, than were respondents who were negative. Hence, on the basis of data presented in Table 8.3, it can be argued that pupils generally mixed with other pupils who had similar attitudes to school. Indeed, respondents often explained their friendship with other pupils in terms of "having things in common". Frequently, feeling the same way about school, or doing or not doing homework, were amongst the "things to have in common". Not only were pupils likely to make friends because of shared attitudes to school, but these shared attitudes often reinforced pupils' original views about school, as the following quotations illustrate:

> "We talk a lot about our school work, and see how each other are doing. We compete against ourselves".
>
> Manor Pupil

Table 8.3

The Relationship between Respondents' Attitudes to School and the Attitudes of their First Friend *

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Respondents' Attitudes to School

Attitude to School of First Friend	Positive	Indifferent	Negative
Positive	83.1 (44)	44.8 (13)	50.0 (2)
Indifferent	15.1 (8)	44.8 (13)	25.0 (1)
Negative	1.8 (1)	10.4 (3)	25.0 (1)
	100% (53)	100% (29)	100% (4)

missing data 4

$x^2 = 19.80$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$

CITY

Respondents' Attitudes to School

Attitude to School of First Friend	Positive	Indifferent	Negative
Positive	83.2 (30)	39.6 (12)	24.8 (4)
Indifferent	8.4 (3)	43.9 (16)	12.4 (2)
Negative	8.4 (3)	16.5 (5)	62.8 (10)
	100% (36)	100% (33)	100% (16)

missing data 5

$x^2 = 38.77$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$

* Positive - Generally interested in school, participates in school activities

Indifferent - Periods of interest in certain school subjects interspersed with periods when no interest is shown.

Negative - shows no interest in school, does not participate in school activities.

"Nobody's interested in school work.
We talk about soccer, music, messing around.
Nobody cares about lessons, they're boring
apart from games."

To some extent, the association between respondents attitudes to school and those of their friends was a bi-product of the streaming system which was in use in both Manor and City. Pupils were allocated into different sets on the basis of their teachers' assessment of their academic ability. Thus, pupils of very high ability spent most of their time at school in the company of pupils of similar academic ability, and these pupils were usually keen on school. In contrast to this, pupils of low ability were taught with other pupils of low ability, and these were not normally keen on school.

A third way in which friends shaped respondents' occupational aspirations was by influencing attitudes to continued education. At the end of their fifth year in Manor and City, pupils were required to choose between continuing their education at the Sixth Form College or Technical College, or else seeking employment. This decision had far reaching consequences for pupils' occupational aspirations since, as was discussed in Chapter 6, p134 many areas of employment were only open to those who had taken advanced qualifications or training which were not available at Manor or City. Interviews with respondents indicated that many of them took the opinions of their friends into account when making the decision to leave school or continue with their education. The quotations presented below are typical of the manner in which this influence worked:

"Influence wih friends goes both ways.
We all play rugby and do the same type of
sport. We do the same subjects at school.
All three of us are going to the Sixth Form
College".

Manor Boy

"Sue and Julie are going to the Sixth Form College and they gave me the idea. I'm glad they'll be there."

City Girl

"All my friends say that if you go out to work at 16, you won't get a good job."

Manor Girl

"I suppose I would (go to college) if my friends told me I should. We've only ever talked about work."

City Boy

Although the decisions of pupils to remain in full-time education beyond the minimum school leaving age, or else to leave and seek work, were the product of many factors including, their academic performance, occupational aspirations and the advice given to them by the schools and the Careers Service, there was sufficient evidence in the data from respondents in Manor and City to suggest that the attitudes of friends made an important contribution to these decisions. This was especially the case where there was little constructive advice available at home. Table 8.4 shows that there was a relationship between respondents' attitudes to continued education and the attitudes of the first friend mentioned. (The results were similar for second and third friends mentioned.) In both Manor and City pupils who were keen to continue their education were more likely to have friends who were also keen, than they were to have friends who were against the idea of continued education. In contrast to this, pupils who were against the option of continuing their education were more likely to have friends who were also against it, than they were to have friends who were keen. Thus pupils tended to associate with other pupils who shared similar attitudes to continued education, and as can be seen from the quotations presented above, these shared opinions frequently affected each other's behaviour.

Table 8.4

The Relationship between Respondents' Attitudes to Continued Education and the Attitude of their First Friend

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

		Respondents' Attitudes to Continued Education		
		Keen	Unsure	Not Keen
Attitude to Continued Education of First Friend	Keen	86.4 (52)	78.7 (9)	16.6 (2)
	Unsure	8.5 (5)	14.2 (3)	24.9 (3)
	Not Keen	5.1 (3)	7.1 (2)	58.5 (7)
		100% (60)	100% (14)	100% (12)

missing data 4

$x^2 = 33.20$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$

CITY

		Respondents' Attitudes to Continued Education		
		Keen	Unsure	Not Keen
Attitude to Continued Education of First Friend	Keen	57.7 (12)	36.8 (7)	22.5 (10)
	Unsure	14.1 (3)	15.8 (3)	18.4 (8)
	Not Keen	28.2 (6)	47.4 (9)	59.1 (26)
		100% (21)	100% (19)	100% (44)

missing data 6

$x^2 = 12.06$, df = 4, $p < 0.05$

In view of the evidence presented above - that is, friendship groups were formed amongst pupils of similar social background, gender, academic performance and similar attitudes towards school and continued education - it was anticipated that a relationship would be found between respondents' occupational aspirations and the aspirations of their friends. Table 8.5 shows that such a relationship did exist. In Manor a large majority of pupils who desired professional and managerial jobs had friends with the same level of occupational aspirations. Conversely only a small proportion had friends who aspired to skilled manual or service work. In City, 45.4% (five out 11) of respondents with lower professional and managerial aspirations had friends with similar aspirations, whilst only 9.3% (one from 11) had friends who aspired to skilled manual or service work. The relationships were similar when the data on the second and third friends named by respondents were examined.

The reason why the occupational aspirations of friends were closely related was that both pupils' aspirations and the type of friends they made were the product of the same set of factors, that is, their social class background, gender and academic performance. Friends usually shared similar attitudes to work and continued education and since they were likely to be in the same sets at school, they could expect to enter the labour market with the same level of qualifications. The range of jobs to which friends could aspire was, therefore, very similar.

The influence of the friendship group was not just restricted to the level of job to which pupils aspired. The group also played a part in the preparations which were made, or not made, for future jobs. For example, pupils in the top sets, were usually very concerned about

Table 8.5

The Relationship between Respondents' Occupational Aspirations and the Occupational Aspirations of their First Friend

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Occupational Aspirations of First Friend	Respondents' Occupational Aspirations: Upper Professional & Managerial	Lower Professional & Managerial	Clerical and Technical	Skilled Manual and Service
Upper Professional and Managerial	16.7(2)	6.1(2)	0.0	0.0
Lower Professional and Managerial	50.0(6)	60.2(20)	48.0(12)	18.7(3)
Clerical and Technical	25.0(3)	24.4(8)	40.0(10)	25.0(4)
Skilled Manual and Service	8.3(1)	9.3(3)	8.0(2)	50.0(8)
Semi/Unskilled Manual	0.0	0.0	4.0(1)	6.2(1)
	100% (12)	100% (33)	100% (25)	100% (16)

missing data 4

$x^2 = 28.15$, $df = 12$, $p < 0.001$

CITY

Occupational Aspirations of First Friend	Respondents' Occupational Aspirations: Upper Professional & Managerial	Lower Professional & Managerial	Clerical and Technical	Skilled Manual & Service	Semi-Unskilled Manual
Upper Profess. & Managerial	0.0	0.0	3.3(1)	0.0	0.0
Lower Profess. & Managerial	100(2)	45.4(5)	26.6(8)	2.7(1)	0.0
Clerical & Tech.	0.0	45.4(5)	43.3(13)	23.7(9)	25.0(1)
Skilled Manual and Service	0.0	9.2(1)	20.2(6)	65.8(25)	50.0(2)
Semi/Unskilled Manual	0.0	0.0	6.6(2)	7.8(3)	25.0(1)
	100% (2)	100% (11)	100%(30)	100%(38)	100% (4)

missing data 5

$x^2 = 42.05$, $df = 16$, $p < 0.001$

their future careers, and even though many of them hoped to enter higher education and were still several years away from entering the job market, they were, nevertheless, interested in obtaining careers information. Such pupils tended to be regular visitors to the careers rooms in Manor and City, and it was interesting to observe that they rarely visited the careers room alone, but almost always with their friends. The careers rooms were only open to pupils during their lunch hour, which was the time when friendship groups were at their most active. There was usually a range of activities for pupils to be engaged in during the lunch hour, such as sport, club meetings or just relaxing and talking with their friends. Therefore, it says much about the importance which these pupils attached to their future careers that they were prepared to sacrifice these other activities to obtain careers information.

It was much rarer to see groups of pupils from the bottom sets visit the careers room during their lunch hour.[3] Generally, their preparations for their future careers were of a more limited nature, often restricted to only obtaining a list of employers to whom they could apply for jobs, and these were normally given to them during their careers interviews. As Willis (1977: 100) noted, such pupils generally made few preparations for leaving school. Instead, they "tumbled out" without much control over their employment prospects.

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3. Data on visitors to the careers rooms was obtained from two sources. First, whilst visiting schools, I spent my lunch hours in the careers room offering brief advice to pupils who required it, and so was able to observe who the "regulars" were. Secondly, it was possible to see from the "Loan Book" who were the regular borrowers of careers information since pupils had to sign their names against items borrowed.

The Careers Teacher in City recognised the importance of the group, especially in regard to apprenticeship applications. To obtain an apprenticeship on leaving school in July, it was necessary to apply in the preceeding January. Every year many pupils who were capable of obtaining apprenticeships failed to obtain one by not applying in time. This was a very common problem in City, and to reduce the numbers of disappointed potential apprentices, the Careers Teacher placed extra pressure on the key members of the various friendship groups so that they applied in time. Consequently, as soon as the other pupils saw the "ring leaders" making serious preparations for employment, they too would begin to apply.

3. Summary

As the influence of parents declines during pupils' teenage years, so the influence of the peer group at school increases. For some pupils the influence of the peer group is relatively marginal and their parents remain the prime source of influence in their lives. For others, however, the peer group gradually replaces the home as the dominant source of influence, and acts as the reference group whose opinions have considerable influence. On the basis of the data provided by respondents, it was apparent that the influence of the peer group was normally consistent with the norms and values to which respondents were subjected at home. They, therefore, reinforced each other. The influence of the peer group was, for some pupils, in conflict with the attitudes and opinions to which they were accustomed at home, and in these circumstances, pupils were placed in the difficult situation of having to reconcile one with the other. Such a situation was described by a respondent from Manor:

> "For years my parents have been saying how proud they'll be for me to go to college. But I don't want to go. None of my friends are going and they'll be earning money and I'll just have pocket money and not be able to go out."

Sometimes pupils adopted strategies to cope with this conflict of views, such as, modifying their behaviour according to the company they were in.

The influence of the friendship group was particularly potent in those cases where the influence of the home was weak. This was chiefly, but by no means exclusively, a feature of pupils from working class backgrounds. In situations such as these, parents could not or would not, supply their children with adequate information and advice at those critical moments when their aspirations were developing and important decisions about their future, for example, the choice of school subjects, were needed. On many occasions pupils were forced to take whatever advice they could obtain, and this frequently came from their friends and was based on hearsay, or else was inconsistent or badly thought through. For instance, two girls were once heard discussing their future jobs whilst standing in a corridor prior to a talk by their Careers Officer:

> "You don't want to go for hairdressing, you'll be on your feet all day. Shop work's better, You'll be meeting people all day."

Hairdressing was criticised because it involved standing on one's feet all day, whilst shop work was recommended because you met people. This advice completely ignored the fact that hairdressers also met people and shop work meant being on one's feet too ! Pupils who received informed advice from their parents (and usually, middle class

parents were better equipped to do this than were working class parents) were in a far better position to plan ahead for future courses and careers. They were able to base their plans upon facts rather than the half-truths and generalizations which were spread by other pupils in school.

The cumulative advantages of coming from an educationally advantaged middle class home were evident. Middle class pupils usually made friends with other middle class pupils and it was frequently these pupils who performed best at school and took most interest in their school work. Not only were middle class pupils normally subjected to parental pressures to succeed in school (see Chapter 6, p 114) but these domestic influences were reinforced by their friends at school. In contrast to this, working class pupils were more likely to come from educationally disadvantaged homes, and at school, they were more likely to be allocated to the lower sets along with a large proportion of other working class pupils, with whom they frequently made friends. Thus the domestic influences characteristic of typical working class homes were reinforced at school.

In this chapter mention has been made of the influence which pupils' gender had upon friendship group formation and the impact this had on the development of their occupational aspirations. It was apparent that gender was a major factor in the development of pupils occupational aspirations with the jobs to which boys aspired, substantially different to the jobs to which girls aspired. The following Chapter, Chapter 9, is concerned with the influence of gender in the development of pupils' occupational aspirations.

CHAPTER 9

GENDER AND THE FORMATION OF OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

In the previous chapters it was argued that the school system tends to differentiate and stratify pupils according to their home background, teachers' assessments of their academic ability, the range of subjects which they study and the type of school they attend. In this Chapter it will be argued that a fifth factor, that is, gender, needs to be included in the analysis, since this is also an important differentiating and stratifying influence upon the experience of school pupils.

Many writers, including Sharpe (1976), Byrne (1978) and Deem (1978) have discussed the manner by which the education of boys differs from that of girls. Brake (1980: 173) has argued that:

> "Whatever the egalitarian ideology of the school, girls and boys are seldom given equal opportunity to study. There is always schooling with marriage in mind so that girls have an ambivalent attitude to their future."

Other studies, such as Deem (1980) and Hunt (1980) support Brake's view and, consequently, it has been argued that schools reproduce the sexual division of labour. This is helped by the fact that many girls still see marriage as their main "occupation" in life and often use this as a reason for not attaching too much importance to their education and the jobs they obtain on leaving school.

It is the intention of this Chapter to examine the manner in which Manor and City schools treated their male pupils differently from their

female pupils and the effect this had on pupils' occupational aspirations. There is considerable evidence, for example, Dale (1974) that co-educational schools tend to reinforce "traditional" gender roles to a far greater extent than single-sex schools. In particular girls in single-sex schools are more likely to choose to study Physical Sciences (and so have a wide range of scientific and technical occupations open to them) than girls in co-educational schools. Both Manor and City were co-educational and it was expected, therefore, that "traditional" gender roles would be reinforced because of this.

1. The Dual Curriculum in Manor and City

On the basis of previous research into this area, it was hypothesised that girls in Manor and City would receive a fundamentally different education to boys (see Chapter 4, p 78). This has been termed the "dual curriculum" and it arises because boys tend to study different subjects to girls and because the informal education which pupils receive at school also emphasises the differences between the sexes. This latter process is known as the "hidden curriculum". Both of these aspects of the "dual curriculum" are now examined using data from the respondents in Manor and City.

"Boys' Subjects" and "Girls' Subjects"

Deem (1978: 41-46) and Kelly (1981: 123-138) have drawn a distinction between "boys' and girls' subjects". The subjects which tend to be associated with boys are the Physical Sciences, Technical Drawing, Woodwork, Metalwork and Mathematics, whilst English, Modern Languages, Biology, Commercial subjects and Domestic Science are generally associated with girls. This separation into a "male" and "female"

curriculum is a feature of schools throughout the U.K. and is reflected in the different qualifications obtained by male and female pupils. It can be seen from Table 9.1 that far more boys than girls obtain qualifications in Physics, Chemistry, Design and Technology, whilst girls obtain qualifications in Commerce, Cookery, Needlework, Biology and Modern Languages in greater proportions to boys.

Table 9.1

G.C.E. 'O' Level England

	NUMBERS AWARDED GRADE A-C (Percentage)	
Subject	Boys	Girls
Physics	74.5	25.5
Chemistry	65.9	34.1
Design and Technology	96.7	3.3
Commercial Subjects	36.4	63.6
Cookery	2.0	98.0
Needlework	0.1	99.9
Biology	40.0	60.0
French	40.5	59.5
German	38.0	62.0

C.S.E. (all models) England

	NUMBERS AWARDED GRADE ONE (Percentage)	
Subject	Boys	Girls
Physics	82.7	17.3
Chemistry	62.6	37.4
Commerce	28.4	71.6
Domestic Subjects	3.1	96.6
Technical Drawing	96.6	3.4
Needlework	0.3	99.7
Biology	33.3	66.7
French	29.6	70.4
German	29.1	70.9

Source: Department of Education and Science: Statistics of School Leavers 1980.

There is substantial evidence to suggest that the "dual curriculum" operated in both Manor and City. Table 9.2 shows that in both schools, a large majority of boys followed a "male" curriculum, whilst girls generally followed a "female" curriculum. In addition to this, it can be seen that of those pupils who did not follow a curriculum "appropriate" to their gender, only a small proportion took subjects normally associated with the opposite sex. Most followed what can best be described as a "mixed" curriculum which contained a mixture of both "boys'" and "girls'" subjects. For instance, a pupil whose timetable consisted of such subjects as English, Maths, Chemistry, Geography, Commerce and Home Economics could be described as following a "mixed" curriculum.

The reasons for this division of the curriculum are complex and it was shown in Chapter 4, p78 that pupils often choose subjects which help them express their masculinity or femininity. Furthermore, it has been argued by many commentators that girls tend to avoid those subjects with a Mathematical content because they have been brought up under the assumption that "girls aren't good at Maths". Thus, Physics, Chemistry, Technical Drawing and Craft subjects are rarely taken by girls. The examples given below are typical of many statements made by respondents and illustrate these points:

> "Its pretty dangerous in the metalwork room, what with drills going and hot metal. Its no place for a girl."
>
> City Boy

> "I enjoy typing. I pretend I'm working in a large office surrounded by dishy fellas".
>
> City Girl

> "I decided against Physics when the teacher stressed it was all Maths."
>
> City Girl

Table 9.2

The Sexual Division of the Curriculum Amongst Respondents in Manor and City

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Type of Curriculum *	MALE	FEMALE
"Male" Curriculum	68.6 (35)	10.3 (4)
"Female" Curriculum	5.9 (3)	64.1 (25)
"Mixed" Curriculum	25.5 (13)	25.6 (10)
	100% (51)	100% (39)

$x^2 = 37.43$, df = 2, $p < 0.001$

CITY

Type of Curriculum	MALE	FEMALE
"Male" Curriculum	67.5 (27)	10.6 (5)
"Female" Curriculum	0.0	72.3 (34)
"Mixed" Curriculum	32.5 (13)	17.1 (8)
	100% (40)	100% (47)

missing data 3

$x^2 = 50.12$, df = 2, $P < 0.001$

* "Male" Curriculum - respondent studies two or more optional subjects from the range - Physics, Chemistry, Metalwork, Woodwork, Technical Drawing.

"Female" Curriculum - respondent studies two or more optional subjects from the range - Biology, Typing, Shorthand, Commerce, Home Economics, Needlework, Modern Languages, Childcare.

"Mixed" Curriculum - respondent studies a mixture of subjects traditionally associated with both sexes.

In addition to pupils own opinions of the appropriateness of particular subjects, they were also influenced by the attitudes of some of their teachers, which were clearly intended to dissuade certain pupils from taking a subject because of their gender. Examples of this are given below (but they are also relevant to the discussion of the "hidden curriculum" which is contained in the next section of this Chapter).

> "He (Physics teacher) said what did I need Physics for ? He asked if I planned to spend my life in a factory".
>
> Manor girl

> "Mr ... said to me, 'that's a stupid combination, Technical Drawing and Home Economics. What do you think you'll do with that, design giant puddings ?"
>
> City Girl

> "Girls' Crafts
> This subject is also available to those boys in the school who would like to sew and stuff soft toys !"
>
> Extract from City's Option Choice Leaflet sent to Parents of Third Year Pupils.

Respondents in Manor and City chose their optional subjects in the third year at secondary school when they were 13 or 14 years of age. Sharpe (1976: 168) has shown that pupils of this age (especially in co-educational schools) are extremely sensitive to what constitutes "appropriate" male and female behaviour. It seems unfortunate, therefore, that pupils have to make subject choices at this age when non-academic factors such as gender identity often predominate, and this could well be another argument against the early specialisation of pupils in schools. Some subjects dropped at this relatively early age are unlikely to be studied later in life. Since many occupations and courses in further and higher education require applicants to have studied certain subjects at school, dropping a vital subject at

13 or 14 is tantamount to abandoning one's prospects of entering certain occupations. Nowhere is this more significant than in the case of science subjects which are dropped by many girls after their third year. Not only are these subjects becoming increasingly important for courses and jobs after school, but it is also difficult to restart learning these subjects in later life. English, Geography, History, etc. can usually be successfully studied from "scratch" at night school, but laboratory based subjects are much more difficult to work up from a minimal basis and demand more extensive facilities with less scope for independent study at home. Consequently, it can be argued that it is in the study or non-study of science and technical subjects that the "dual curriculum" has the greatest impact upon the future educational and occupational opportunities of boys and girls. This matter will now be considered in more detail.

The differences in the numbers of science subjects taken by boys and girls in Manor and City are illustrated in Table 9.3. In both schools, girls tended to study only one science subject, whilst boys were much more likely to take two or even three science subjects. The tendency for more boys than girls to study science was even more pronounced when Biology was excluded from the analysis. This distinction between Biology and Physics/Chemistry is an important one for, as Kelly (1981: 3) has indicated, Biology, as taught in school, tends to be more descriptive and less mathematical and analytical than Physics and Chemistry. It is also the science with the least vocational currency. Table 9.4 shows the different patterns of science subjects amongst boys and girls in Manor and City. It can be seen that in both schools only a small proportion of girls studied both Physics and Chemistry (Pattern III) whilst far greater proportions of boys did so. The majority of girls, 61.5% in Manor and 61.7% in City, studied Biology only (Pattern I).

Table 9.3

Number of Science Subjects Studied by Male and Female Respondents in Manor and City

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Number of Science Subjects Studied	Male	Female
One	23.0 (12)	61.5 (24)
Two	46.0 (23)	28.5 (11)
Three	31.0 (16)	10.0 (4)
	100% (51)	100% (39)

$x^2 = 14.06$, df = 2, $p < 0.001$

CITY

Number of Science Subjects Studied	Male	Female
One	60.0 (24)	81.0 (38)
Two	32.5 (13)	12.5 (6)
Three	7.5 (3)	6.5 (3)
	100% (40)	100% (47)

missing data 3

$x^2 = 5.18$, df = 2, $p < 0.001$

Table 9.4

Patterns of Physical Science Study amongst Male and Female Respondents in Manor and City

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

	Male	Female
Pattern I *	5.9 (3)	61.5 (24)
Pattern II	41.2 (21)	23.0 (9)
Pattern III	52.9 (27)	15.4 (6)
	100% (51)	100% (39)

$x^2 = 33.49$, df = 2, $p < 0.001$

CITY

Pattern I	27.5 (11)	61.7 (29)
Pattern II	45.0 (18)	23.4 (11)
Pattern III	27.5 (11)	14.9 (7)
	100% (40)	100% (47)

missing data 3

$x^2 = 10.64$, df = 2, $p < 0.01$

* Pattern I - No Physical Science studied (Respondent studies Biology only).

Pattern II - Respondent studies either Chemistry or Physics

Pattern III - Respondent studies both Chemistry and Physics

In my experience as a Careers Officer, Biology is usually the least useful science in terms of a qualification for employment. This is especially the case when it is studied in isolation without Chemistry. Chemistry and Physics are far more useful, both for entry into employment and for admission to scientific and technological courses at universities and polytechnics.[1] Nevertheless, many girls still choose to study Biology by itself as the data presented above shows. The implications which this had for their future occupational opportunities is discussed in the second part of this Chapter.

The "Hidden Curriculum"

In Chapter 7 it was shown that pupils at school are differentiated according to the subjects they study at school with some pupils choosing a set of subjects biased towards an academic timetable, whilst others studied fewer academic subjects and more practical subjects such as Metalwork, Needlework, Typing and Technical Drawing. In addition to this, it was been argued above that the formal school curriculum can also be divided into "male" and "female" components. Both these ways of analysing the curriculum are based upon an examination of the subjects studied by pupils. However, to restrict the study of the curriculum to the subjects formally taught at school is to ignore a wide range of learning experiences to which pupils are subjected. Educationalists in recent years have become increasingly aware of the existence of a "hidden curriculum" alongside the formal "taught"

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1. This is shown clearly by university and polytechnic prospectuses. Degree courses in engineering and many other branches of science and technology require applicants to have studied Maths and Physics and, sometimes, Chemistry at 'A' level. Few courses require candidates to have studied Biology. Whilst it is extremely difficult to study Medicine without Chemistry, few Medical Schools insist on Biology having been studied at 'A' level.

curriculum, which has equally important and far reaching consequences for the pupils concerned.

Byrne (1978: 110) defined the "hidden curriculum" as a process

> "... which transmits to young people a collection of messages about the status and character of individuals and social groups."

It manifests itself in many ways, and it can lead to an accentuating of the differentiation of boys and girls implicit within the formal curriculum. Whyte (1981: 264-265) lists several of these manifestations including separate playgrounds for boys and girls, separate duty roles, different forms of punishment, dual ranking system of boys and girls, the staffing structure typical of many schools with a male head and female junior staff and school text books containing illustrations of male superiors and female subordinates, such as managers and secretaries and doctors and nurses. The effect of this is to:

> "exaggerate the differences between the sexes at the expense of what they have got in common as learners."
>
> (Whyte, 1981: 266)

Many of the features contained within Whyte's description of the "hidden curriculum" were visible in Manor and City schools. Both had male head teachers and male and female deputy heads. The male deputies were responsible for the curriculum and timetable matters, whilst the female deputies were primarily responsible for counselling and welfare issues. This is an excellent example of how well qualified women near the top of their profession were still expected to take responsibility for duties which were an extension of women's traditional nurturing and caring role. In each school there was a male Careers Teacher and a female "assistant". One of the tasks of these

teachers was to prepare fifth year pupils for their interviews with the Careers Officer. In both schools, boys were prepared by the male Careers Teachers and girls by the female"assistant". Thus pupils were shown that there was a "male" and "female" dimension to careers guidance. It should be noted, however, that both Manor and City allowed their pupils to be interviewed by a Careers Officer of the opposite sex. This was not the case with all of the Borough's schools, for in certain ones, male Careers Officers interviewed boys and female Careers Officers interviewed only girls !

In both Manor and City, boys and girls were kept apart at several times of the day. They sat apart at morning assembly and were also separated during games lessons. In Manor there was a "quiet" playground which was intended to be used by girls and a "games" playground where pupils, mainly boys, could play football and other games. At Prize Giving Evenings, Parents' Evenings and Careers Conventions, pupils were allocated different tasks according to their gender. Boys usually worked out of doors in the car parks, and helped exhibitors carry and erect their displays. Girls usually worked in doors on the reception desk and made and served refreshments. These different roles are a clear reflection of the sexual division of the labour market which many of these pupils were on the point of entering.

So far in this Chapter it has been argued that male and female pupils in Manor and City usually received different treatment at school and followed different curricula. The ambitions of male and female pupils were shaped by both the "overt" and the "hidden" curricula, with boys generally guided towards traditional male roles and activities and girls towards traditional female roles and activities. In the next section of this chapter, it is intended to show how this process affected the different occupational aspirations of boys and girls.

2. The Influence of Gender upon Respondents' Occupational Aspirations

It was argued in Chapter 4, pp 75-83 that the literature on this subject indicates that child-rearing practices, the "overt" and the "hidden" curriculum at school and the sexual stereotypes created by parents, teachers and the media all contribute to the preparation of young people for their eventual place in a sexually divided labour market. Boys are usually brought up to assume that their working lives will probably be spent outside the home in paid, full-time employment.[2.] Girls, however, do not usually have such a straightforward life plan marked out for them, since most are brought up to expect a considerable number of their adult years away from the labour market looking after children at home. Girls, therefore, face the difficult task of reconciling the demands of an occupation with the stereotyped female ideal as a housewife and mother. This ambivalent attitude which many girls are forced to take towards their future employment is an essential part of the analysis of the occupational aspirations of school pupils. Indeed, Hunt (1980: 25) suggested that many girls regard marriage as their main "career". Hence, it is important that the role of marriage is examined before the analysis of respondents' occupational aspirations is undertaken.

The Role of Marriage

Until relatively recent times, it has only been boys who, on leaving school, expected a lifetime of paid employment outside of the home. For the majority of girls, "work" was restricted to the domestic

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2. With the massive increase in youth unemployment, it is now debatable whether all male school leavers will experience a lifetime of continuous paid employment. However, in 1979/80 when the data was collected, most of the boys expected this to be the case.

duties of housekeeping and child-rearing. Sharpe (1976: 25-42) described how the two world wars brought large numbers of women into the labour market for the first time. Now, most girls seek full-time employment after completing their education. All of the female respondents expected to seek work after leaving school, college or university, and 95.0% of those who expected to marry anticipated working after their marriage until the birth of their first child. There were two main reasons for this. The first was that many of the girls expected to obtain fairly interesting and responsible jobs and felt it would be a waste of their education and training if they stopped work on getting married. Secondly, girls frequently mentioned that two incomes were needed during the early years of marriage so that furniture and household equipment could be bought.

A very large proportion of the female respondents (83.1%) expected to marry. Only 5.8% stated that they did not wish to marry, with the remaining 11.1% either not wishing to commit themselves or else, refusing to answer the question. The vast majority of the girls hoped to obtain interesting and enjoyable work with only a few stating that the job they did on leaving education was unimportant in view of the short time they expected to work before they married. Yet, inspite of the interest shown by the girls in obtaining worthwhile jobs, practically all were prepared to jeopardise their chances of advancement in their occupations by leaving work to have children. When faced with the conflicting demands of a career and a family, most of the girls appeared to be prepared to sacrifice the former for the latter as the following quotations illustrate:

> "After all, its not fulfilling for a woman to be totally committed to a career."
>
> City Girl

"I'm ambitious and I want a good job,
but I don't believe in leaving young
babies and going straight back to work."

Manor Girl

It is clear from such statements that the stereotyped image of the "good" mother at home with children was a powerful factor influencing (and limiting) the occupational aspirations of these girls.

Most of the girls, 86.6% in Manor and 78.8% in City, expected to work after their families had grown up, although many did in fact state a preference for part-time work. Consequently, girls were attracted to those careers which could be returned to on a part-time basis. These included teaching, nursing, clerical and sales work. Hence, the majority of girls expected a "bi-modal" career. The first stage of this was expected to last from the completion of their education to the birth of the first child. Then they expected to leave the labour market to concentrate on child rearing and this phase was expected to last until they were able to return to work, for example, when the youngest child starts school. They second stage of the career pattern then lasts from the return to either full or part-time work until retirement.

The way in which most of the girls anticipated their future lives was, of course, rather optimistic since it did not take into consideration those circumstances where the woman is forced to become the family's sole "breadwinner". This can happen as a result of divorce or the husband's death or unemployment. As was suggested above, teenage girls tend to idealise their marriage prospects and frequently overlook the difficulties which many women experience. Nevertheless, the main point that arose from the discussion of marriage with the girl

respondents was that few expected to support themselves throughout their adult lives on the earnings from their own employment. This, it will now be argued, was one of the contributing factors to why many girls were prepared to accept subordinate and inferior roles in the labour market.

The Differences in the Level of Occupations to which Boys and Girls Aspired

Two approaches were employed in the analysis of the difference in the occupational aspirations of male and female respondents. The first involved an examination of the level of employment to which respondents aspired as measured on the five point scale which was introduced in Appendix 4, pp254-255 and the second was a study of the type of job to which respondents aspired from the perspective of whether these were in traditional "male" or "female" employment.

The differences in the level of occupations to which boys and girls aspired is presented in Table 9.5, and it can be seen that there were statistically significant differences in Manor but not in City. In Manor the most interesting feature was that no girls aspired to upper professional and managerial occupations compared to 12 out of 51 (23.5%) of the boys. A large proportion of girls (41.0%), however, did aspire to lower professional and managerial occupations. It was apparent, therefore that girls in Manor had lower occupational aspirations than their male peers, particularly in respect to the very highest levels of employment. In City, over 75% of both boys and girls aspired to the same two levels of occupation, that is, clerical and technical and skilled manual and service. Although there were interesting differences in the proportions of boys and girls in City who aspired to lower professional and managerial

Table 9.5

The Relationship between Respondents Occupational Aspirations and their Gender

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Male	Female
Upper Professional & Managerial	23.5(12)	0.0
Lower Professional & Managerial	37.3(19)	41.0(16)
Clerical and Technical	25.5(13)	35.9(14)
Skilled Manual and Service	13.7 (7)	23.1 (9)
	100% (51)	100% (39)

$x^2 = 11.14$, df = 3, $< p$ 0.05

CITY

Respondents' Occupational Aspirations	Male	Female
Upper Professional & Managerial	2.4 (1)	2.0 (1)
Lower Professional and Managerial	4.9 (2)	20.4(10)
Clerical and Technical	39.0(16)	32.7(16)
Skilled Manual and Service	43.9(18)	42.9(21)
Semi and Unskilled Manual	9.8 (4)	2.0 (1)
	100% (41)	100% (49)

$x^2 = 6.70$, df = 4 < not significant

employment, these were not statistically significant.

Thus, on the basis of the data presented in Table 9.5, gender was not associated with the level of occupational aspirations in City as it was in Manor. This was possibly beause a greater proportion of Manor respondents than City respondents aspired to upper professional and managerial occupations, and women are particularly under-represented at this level of the labour market. For example, Delamont (1980: 110) has noted that women account for only 12% of hospital consultants, only 4% of practising solicitors and only 1% of the members of the Institute of Directors, etc. Several explanations can be offered to account for the tendency amongst girls, especially those in Manor, not to aspire to upper professional and managerial employment. The length of education and training required to become a doctor, dentist or a lawyer often acts as a deterrent to girls from entering such employment. The following quotation is typical of this deterrent effect:

> "You'd still be training in your twenties
> which is a woman's natural child bearing age."
>
> Manor Girl

It was mentioned above that many girls wished to spend their late teens and early twenties in employment in order to prepare financially for their marriages and the birth of their children. Thus, they were usually interested in those jobs which they could enter immediately after completing their education. Boys appeared to be less influenced by this factor possibly because they generally expected to get married at a later age than did the girls.[3] It was also apparent that many

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3. Male respondents were also questioned on how their future occupations were connected to their marriage plans.

of the boys felt themselves under pressure to obtain well paid, professional or managerial occupations so that they could emulate their parents' standard of living as the following quotation illustrates:

> "We've told him that we'll support him through university, but after that its up to him to get a good career. He's not going to be able to live in a place like the Borough unless he gets down to some hard work."
>
> Father of Manor Boy

In contrast to this, girls, possibly because their parents did not expect them to be self supporting throughout their adult lives, did not seem to be under this type of pressure.

A second reason why so few girls aspired to the highest level jobs was that many of them expected to be discriminated against if they attempted to obtain such occupations. They based this belief both on their own knowledge of the job market:

> "You can't hold out much hope if you are a girl. There are hardly any girl managers or judges."
>
> Manor Girl

and on their experiences of elder sisters and friends who were actually working:

> "You can only get so far and then you stay put. My sister is in a bank. She's done all her exams (Institute of Bankers) and can't get off the counter. There's boys being sent on courses and they are not as well qualified."
>
> Manor Girl

A third factor accounting for the lower aspirations of girls in Manor

was the tendency for many of them to internalise the typical characteristics of the female stereotype which was created by parents, teachers and the media. In particular, many of the girls had acquired the belief that, although they were not less intelligent than boys, nor less able at doing difficult (in the sense of complicated) work, girls were not able to withstand the responsibility of managing large organisations. Comments such as "That's not a place for a girl, running a firm", and "I don't think girls are capable of taking on too much responsibility" were scattered amongst their explanations of why they felt it inappropriate for girls to aspire to senior managerial positions.[4] It was apparent that parental child rearing practices and the school's "hidden curriculum" had produced subordinate attitudes amongst many of the girls. These were reinforced by superior attitudes displayed by many of the boys:

> "Girls couldn't handle the pressure. You wouldn't have a girl sorting out Leylands like Michael Edwards does."
>
> Manor Boy

There was also the opinion held by many girls that senior and professional occupations could not be reconciled with successful motherhood. This attitude is illustrated by the following quotation:

> "It'll be unfair to the children if their mothers were always out at board meetings."
>
> Manor Girl

This is an example of many similar comments made by female respondents.

---

4. The work of Broverman et al (1972) suggests that there is a widespread belief in the population that women are not suited for senior positions of responsibility.

Not once during interviews with boys were the demands of looking after children mentioned as a factor to take into account when choosing a career. Several boys mentioned that they would like to obtain well paid occupations so that they could support their future families, and they generally assumed that whilst being a "good" mother meant always being available to look after the children, being a "good" father meant earning as much money as possible, even though this might mean limiting their contact with their children. Implicit in this attitude was the assumption that their career would be more important than their wives', and as was shown above, many of the girls accepted this state of affairs.

One reason which did not account for the lower occupational aspirations of Manor girls was their academic ability. In Manor, as Table 9.6 demonstrates there was no significant differences in the proportion of boys and girls in the very high and high ability ranges which represented the group most likely to obtain upper professional and managerial occupations. Yet Manor girls tended to aspire to occupations at a lower level to those aspired to by their male academic equivalents. Table 9.7 shows the relationship between the occupational aspirations of boys and girls in the very high ability category, the "academic elite" of Manor. It can be seen from this Table that whilst the boys were distributed between both upper and lower professional and managerial aspirations, girls were concentrated in the lower professional and managerial range. Of course, in view of the relatively small numbers involved these figures need to be treated with caution. Nevertheless, they are consistent with the argument presented above. Thus it can be concluded that when compared with boys, of similar ability, girls in Manor were under aspiring.

Table 9.6

The Relationship between Respondents' Academic Ability * and their Gender

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Respondents' Academic Ability	Male	Female
Very High	54.9 (28)	38.5 (15)
High	13.7 (7)	17.9 (7)
Average	17.6 (9)	20.5 (8)
Low	13.7 (7)	23.1 (9)
	100% (51)	100% (39)

$x^2 = 2.68$, df = 3, < not significant

CITY

Respondents' Academic Ability	Male	Female
Very High	14.6 (6)	22.4 (11)
High	9.8 (4)	6.1 (3)
Average	31.7 (13)	30.6 (15)
Low	39.0 (16)	32.7 (16)
Non-Exam	4.9 (2)	8.2 (4)
	100% (41)	100% (49)

$x^2 = 1.72$, df = 4, < not significant

* Very High - Respondent expected to pass 6 'O' levels or more.
High - Respondent expected to pass 4 or 5 'O' levels.
Average - Respondent expected to pass 4 subjects at CSE grade 2, or higher but fewer than 4 'O' levels.
Low - Respondent expected to pass fewer than 4 subjects at CSE grade 2.
Non-Exam - Respondent not entered for external exams.

Table 9.7

Manor School

The Relationship between the Occupational Aspirations of Very High Ability Respondents and their Gender

(numbers in brackets)

		Male	Female
Occupational Aspirations	Upper Professional and Managerial	35.7 (10)	0.0
	Lower Professional and Managerial	53.6 (15)	86.7 (13)
	Clerical and Technical	10.7 (3)	13.3 (2)
		100% (28)	100% (15)

$x^2 = 6.75$, df = 2, $p < 0.05$

It was also shown in Table 9.5 above that there were no significant differences in the levels of occupations to which City boys and girls aspired. More girls than boys did aspire to lower professional and managerial occupations, and this was probably due to the availability of engineering technician apprenticeships which were popular amongst City boys who were capable of obtaining four 'O' levels or more.[5.] However, it can be argued that in City, the level of job to which pupils aspired was not a very useful tool for distinguishing between the occupational aspirations of boys and girls. This was principally because the broad categories used in the classification frequently disguised important differences in the aspirations of male and female respondents. For instance, the category of skilled manual and service employment included both the hairdresser and the motor mechanic. The first is predominantly a "female" occupation, whilst the latter is traditionally a "male" occupation. Consequently it is necessary to examine the type of employment to which respondents aspired from the perspective of traditional "female" and "male" employment and this is done below.

The Type of Occupations Aspired to by Boys and Girls

The labour market can be divided in many ways. It was noted in Chapter 4, pp 81 that the concept of a "dual labour market" has been used to describe the different occupations undertaken by males and females, with most women confined to either the secondary labour market or subordinate positions to men in the primary labour market.

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5. Rather than take 'A' levels, many city boys who were capable of taking 4 or 5 'O' levels opted for these technician apprenticeships. This had the effect of reducing the number of boys who took 'A' levels and were then in a position to aspire to lower professional and managerial jobs.

Sharpe (1976: 55) has conceptualised the labour market in another way by distinguishing "women's" work, which is an extension of their traditional caring roles from "men's" work, which is an extension of their accustomed role of building and manufacturing. Thus, there are quite distinct differences between "male" and "female" work based on the nature of the work done, the conditions of employment and the amount of authority and responsibility held.

In order to examine the extent to which the occupational aspirations of respondents could be categorised as falling within traditional "male" and "female" areas of employment, an occupational classification was devised consisting of three categories. These were:

i) "male" occupations, for example, engineering, building, motor mechanics and industrial and commercial management.

ii) "female" occupations such as nursing, secretarial, catering, hairdressing, sales assistant,

iii) "mixed" occupations, for instance, teaching, Civil Service clerical, bank clerk.

Certain occupations, whilst having strong connections with a particular sex, contained sufficient numbers of the opposite sex to question the validity of it being allocated to an exclusively "male" or "female" category. In areas of doubt, it was decided to place occupations in the "mixed" category. This has, perhaps, resulted in this category being slightly larger than necessary, but it was considered important not to exaggerate the already large differences which exist between "male" and "female" areas of work.

The data as presented in Table 9.8 shows that there was a statistically significant tendency for boys and girls to aspire to different

Table 9.8

Type of Employment Aspired to by Male and Female Respondents in Manor and City

(numbers in brackets)

MANOR

Type of Employment	Male	Female
"Male" Occupations	56.0 (29)	5.0 (2)
"Female" Occupations	0.0	48.5 (19)
"Mixed" Occupations	44.0 (22)	46.5 (18)
	100% (51)	100% (39)

$x^2 = 43.1$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$

CITY

Type of Employment	Male	Female
"Male" Occupations	80.4 (33)	0.0
"Female" Occupations	0.0	57.0 (28)
"Mixed" Occupations	19.6 (8)	43.0 (21)
	100% (41)	100% (49)

$x^2 = 66.5$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$

areas of the job market. In Manor, 29 out of 51 boys (56.0%) wished to enter "male" occupations, whilst none wished to enter "female" occupations. Almost half of the girls in Manor (48.5%) wished to obtain "female" occupations, with only a few (5%) aspiring to "male" occupations. In City the differences were even greater, with the vast majority of boys hoping to enter "male" work and the majority of girls (57.0%) wishing to enter "female" work. In City there were no pupils who aspired to occupations traditionally associated with the opposite sex. Thus pupils who did not aspire to occupations associated with their own sex aspired to "mixed" occupations. In both schools, approximately 45.0% of male and female respondents aspired to "mixed" occupations apart from boys in City. Of these only eight out of 41 (19.6%) aspired to "mixed" occupations. This was probably because large numbers of City boys were keen to enter the engineering industry and, to a lesser extent, the building industry. The factory floor and the building site are predominantly male environments and, as Willis (1977) has shown, young working class males often use traditional manual employment as a means of expressing their masculinity. Whereas many of the boys in Manor were interested in "mixed" occupations such as teaching or clerical work, the strong working class influences to which many of the boys in City were subjected, "directed" them towards manual employment in traditional "male" areas. It can be argued that the most rigid divisions between traditional "male" and "female" work is present in the minds of working class boys.

The most popular jobs amongst Manor boys were law, medicine, scientific research and financial management with nearly two thirds of male respondents aspiring to these occupations. In City, the most frequently mentioned jobs amongst boys were engineering apprenticeships,

car mechanics, building apprenticeships and draughtmanship with nearly 70% of male respondents aspiring to such occupations. In contrast to this, most City girls (over 70%) aspired to sales, hairdressing, catering, clerical and routine office occupations, whilst in Manor, the most popular jobs amongst the girls were teaching, working with languages, nursing and clerical work. Over 65% of girls aspired to these types of jobs.

3. Summary

Dual labour market theory suggests that, to a large extent, males and females occupy different positions in the labour force. Although some might argue that this is due to the discriminatory practices of employers, a survey by Ashton and Maguire (1980) shows that, although employers still recruit according to traditional definitions of "male" and "female" employment, few young people apply to jobs normally associated with the opposite sex. Employers, therefore, do not need to undertake massive discrimination because boys and girls have already been channelled into their separate sections of the labour market. On the basis of a review of the literature and data collected from respondents in Manor and City, four factors appeared to contribute to this process:

i) child rearing practices,
ii) the dual curriculum at school,
iii) pupils anticipation of discrimination,
iv) the influence of male and female stereotypes.

The differences between boys and girls have their roots in the different treatment given to them by their parents when they were young children. At school these differences are often accentuated by means of the dual curriculum in both its "overt" and "hidden"

manifestations. Thus by the time that boys and girls leave school, most are extremely aware of the different expectations that will be placed upon them as adults. In particular, their choice of different subjects at school frequently channels them into different areas of the job market. To some extent, schools and the Careers Service could try to break down these divisions, but both agencies in fact contribute to its original formation, since many teachers and Careers Officers never question the sexual division of labour. Furthermore, many of those pupils who manage to withstand the pressure to apply to gender-appropriate occupations, do not apply for jobs on the other side of the sexual division for fear of being discriminated against by employers.

As a consequence of the attitudes of parents, teachers and other influential adults, sexual stereotypes of gender-appropriate occupations are created. These form powerful factors influencing the occupations of school pupils because many teenagers use their occupational aspirations as a way of expressing their masculinity or femininity. In addition to this, many are particularly keen not to aspire to a job normally associated with the opposite sex for fear of ridicule by their peers, teachers and even parents.

The data presented in Chapters 6 to 9 described how school pupils' occupational aspirations are shaped by several key factors namely, their social class background, school performance, peer group influences and gender. In the following Chapter, Chapter 10, the findings of each of these "data" chapters are drawn together to form a number of general conclusions. This Chapter also contains a series of recommendations on how the Careers Service might improve its work in the light of these research findings.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

1. Summary of the Research Findings

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse some of the main factors involved in the formation of school pupils' occupational aspirations. It was hypothesised in Chapter 2, p 33 that these aspirations are realistic, are the product of a process that extends over several years and that pupils have varying degrees of occupational choice available to them. Whereas some pupils are able to aspire to a wide range of occupations, others have only a limited number of possibilities. It was further hypothesised that these aspirations are the product of young people's social class background, school, peer group and gender and are formed within the context of the local opportunity structure. It is the intention of the first section of this Chapter to present the main findings of the research and to discuss whether the hypotheses outlined above are supported from the data obtained from the study of pupils in Manor and City schools. The main findings of the research were as follows:

i) The occupational aspirations of respondents were generally realistic in that they aspired to jobs that their expected examination results suggested they could attain (see Chapter 7). Respondents who were expected by their school to pass six or more 'O' levels tended to aspire to professional and managerial jobs, whilst those who were expected to obtain middle and low grade C.S.E. passes were more likely to think in terms of service or manual jobs.

ii) Respondents had differing degrees of occupational choice. Some were in a position where they were able to "choose" from a relatively wide range of occupations, others had no real choice at all, but could only expect to enter one of a very limited range of jobs. Generally, and not surprisingly, the amount of occupational choice pupils enjoyed varied with the type and level of qualification they were likely to obtain. Those capable of passing 'O' levels and who then wished to proceed to 'A' levels and possibly higher education had a far wider selection of jobs from which to choose than those who left school at the statutory school leaving age with few or no formal qualifications. The type of course followed also affected the amount of choice enjoyed. For instance, those who chose science subjects were able to aspire to more jobs than those who took predominantly arts subjects, and this was the case at each level of qualification. Science qualifications normally allowed entry to both scientific/technical and non-scientific/technical occupations, whilst arts qualifications generally led only to non-scientific/technical jobs. Male respondents, therefore, had a wider choice of jobs than females because boys were much more likely than girls to study science subjects (see Chapter 9, pp 119-202).

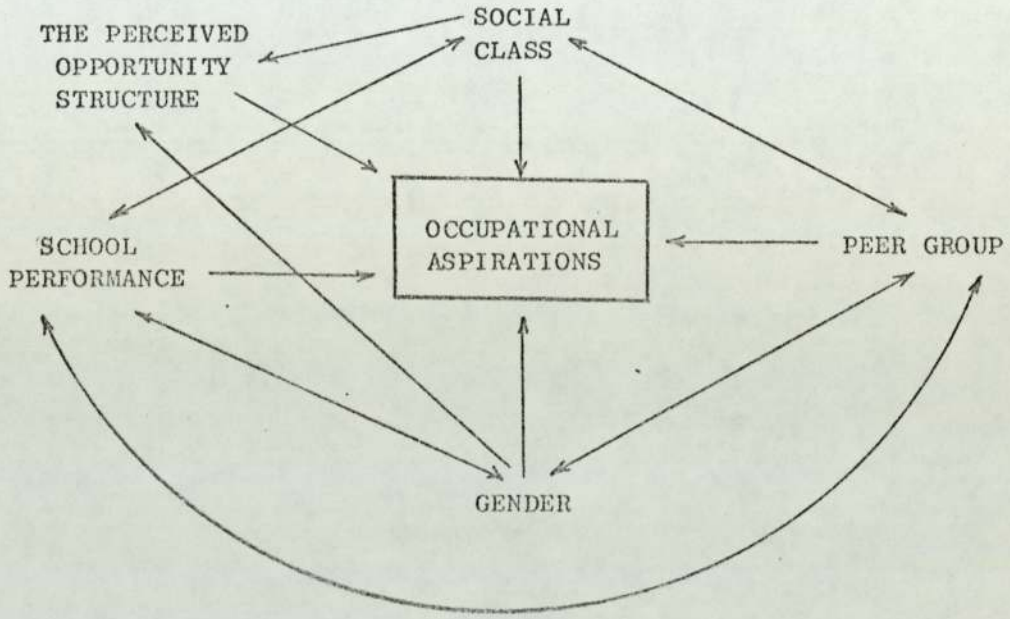
iii) It was apparent that respondents' occupational aspirations were not the product of a single decision, but were formed gradually over a number of years, being shaped by their social class background, school, peer group and gender (see Chapters 6 to 9). Respondents from different social class backgrounds tended to develop different attitudes to and expectations about work. In turn, these attitudes and expectations were further

influenced by the school which pupils attended, which differentiated and stratified pupils according to the subjects they studied and their expected exam results. It was shown in Chapter 8 that school friends also played a role in shaping pupils' aspirations. Throughout their time in secondary school (and before that in their pre-school years and in primary school) boys and girls were treated differently because of their gender and so came to aspire to occupations normally followed by members of the same sex (see Chapter 9).

The influences listed above did not operate separately, but were inter-related to produce a "cluster effect" as is illustrated in Figure 10.1. No attempt was made in the research to explore or measure the complexities of these inter-relationships. This was because the prime concern was to show that occupational aspirations are shaped by social structure and to throw light on the wider issue of the role of the Careers Service in the formation of pupils' aspirations. An analysis of the inter-relationships of these influences would have required another approach with a different methodology. This would have been one which concentrated more on the formation of pupils' occupational aspirations and less on the work of the Careers Service. Nevertheless, though not examined in detail, it was apparent that important inter-relationships existed between these variables. For example, pupils in the top sets at school were more likely than those in the bottom sets to be from middle class homes and to have middle class friends who also studied in the top sets. On the other hand, pupils in the lower sets were more likely to come from working class homes and have friends who were also located in the lower

Figure 10.1

Inter-Relationships Between the Influences Shaping Occupational Aspirations



sets (see Chapter 8, p175). Thus, the combined effects of these influences directed pupils in the upper sets towards professional and managerial jobs, whilst the aspirations of those in the bottom sets were shaped towards typical manual working class jobs.

It was also apparent that there were certain similarities in the way in which different groups of pupils formed their occupational aspirations. Indeed, it can be argued that the way in which respondents formed their occupational aspirations fell into three broad patterns which have been termed the "high", "intermediate" and "low" patterns of aspiration. These different patterns are discussed in detail below.

2. Three Patterns of Occupational Aspiration

The three patterns of aspiration could be distinguished from each other in respect of the type and level of job to which pupils aspired, the length of time they were prepared to spend in full-time or part-time education beyond the statutory school leaving age and the degree of control which they were able to exercise over the choice of occupations which they entered. Each of these broad patterns is now analysed from the perspectives of respondents' social class background, school performance, peer group influences and gender. Even though it was evident that there were some differences between the boys and girls in each pattern, these differences were not of a magnitude to suggest that separate categories are needed for male and female pupils. Nevertheless, the differences between the boys and girls within each pattern are commented on in the discussion which follows.

"High" Aspiration Pattern

Respondents within the "high" aspiration pattern were those who aspired to professional and managerial occupations. As can be seen from Table 10.1 a third of all respondents fell into this category, which is a reflection of the overwhelmingly middle class socio-economic composition of the Borough (see Chapter 2). It was shown in Chapter 6, p 111 that the vast majority of pupils who aspired to such occupations were from middle class homes. In Manor 44 out of 47 pupils (96.3%) within the high aspiration pattern were from middle class homes, whilst in City nine out of the 14 respondents (64.2%) were from middle class backgrounds. These respondents mainly came from the top end of the academic scale as was discussed in Chapter 7, p 157 . In Manor 46 out of the 47 (97.8%) were classified as being

Table 10.1

The Three Patterns of Occupational Aspirations in Manor and City Schools

(numbers in brackets)

		MANOR		CITY	
Patterns of Aspiration*	"High"	52.2	(47)	15.6	(14)
	"Intermediate"	47.8	(43)	78.8	(71)
	"Low"	0		5.6	(5)
		100%	(90)	100%	(90)

* "High" - respondent aspires to professional or managerial occupation.

"Intermediate" respondentaspires to clerical, technical, skilled manual or service occupations.

"Low" - respondent aspires to semi-skilled or unskilled manual occupation.

in the very high or high ability range, that is, likely to obtain four 'O' levels or more. In City 13 out of the 14 respondents (92.8%) were also in these ability ranges. Almost all wished to continue with their education beyond the statutory school leaving age and mainly made friends with pupils who were from similar academic and social class backgrounds.

Thus, respondents within the "high" aspiration pattern formed a distinct group of pupils. They had a far greater amount of occupational choice open to them than did respondents within the other patterns. Whereas the majority of pupils within the other aspiration patterns tended to view future occupations in more instrumental terms, that is, chiefly as a means to an income, pupils within the "high" aspiration pattern were generally concerned to develop careers which would be of central importance to their adult lifestyles (see Chapter 6, p 115). Most could expect to enter occupations which offered opportunities for advancement. This was the case even for the girls within this pattern who anticipated leaving the job market for a period to bring up their children. Most were aware that this could lead to a reduction in their career prospects, but they also realised that women professionals and managers still had the prospect of some career advancement (see Chapter 9, p206). The extent of this advancement might well be less than that of the typical male professional or manager, but it was likely to be more than could be expected by those pupils who entered clerical or technical occupations. However, girls within the "high" aspiration pattern did tend to aspire to a narrower range of jobs than boys. Generally, they hoped to enter those professions normally associated with their gender, for example, teaching, physiotherapy, speech therapy, nursing. Far fewer girls than

boys aspired to engineering or managerial careers in industry or commerce, as was discussed in Chapter 9.

"Intermediate" Aspiration Pattern

Pupils in the "intermediate" pattern of aspiration were those who hoped to enter occupations where there was some amount of formalised training and advancement, for example, a clerical job within the Civil Service or an engineering apprenticeship. The distinguishing feature between these jobs and those within the professional and managerial range is that whilst the latter offer promotion prospects over a number of years, the former have a more limited promotion ladder, for example, to senior clerical positions, or skilled status within the engineering industry.

Within the "intermediate" pattern as a whole, it was possible to identify two strands. The first consisted of those pupils who aspired to clerical and technical occupations, whilst the second hoped to enter skilled manual or service jobs. Respondents in the first strand tended to come from middle class homes. In Manor 22 out of the 27 (81.4%) pupils in this category were middle class, whilst of the 32 pupils in City there were 18 from middle class backgrounds and 14 from working class ones. This was in contrast to pupils in the second strand who were mainly from working class homes (see below). Most of the pupils in the first strand (33 out of a total of 59 from both schools) were reported by their teachers to be of average academic ability, that is, capable of obtaining one or two 'O' levels and some high C.S.E. passes. Yet there were others in this strand who were expected to do better than this in their public exams. These were mainly girls who tended to be under aspiring

and who could, on the basis of their expected examination results, have aspired to professional and managerial rather than clerical work (as was discussed in Chapter 9, p213). Approximately a quarter of the pupils in this first strand planned to continue with their education beyond the statutory school leaving age. This was less than was the case with respondents in the "high" pattern of aspiration. They tended to make friends with pupils in the same sets who were also expected by the schools to obtain the same level of examination results.

Respondents in the second strand of the "intermediate" pattern tended to come from working class homes. In City 34 out of 39 respondents (87.1%) were from working class backgrounds, though in Manor there was a more equal balance with nine middle class pupils and seven working class pupils in this second strand. Most of the respondents were expected by their teachers to obtain average to low grade C.S.E. passes, that is, they were of "low" ability. Few wished to continue with their education beyond the statutory school leaving age, three out of 39 (7.6%) in City and two out of 16 (12.5 %) in Manor. Instead they preferred to leave school at 16 years and seek jobs in the apprenticeship range, for example, toolmaking, bricklaying, hairdressing and catering. Again respondents in this category made friends with peers of similar academic standard. The main difference between boys and girls was in the type of job to which they aspired. Boys preferred technical and skilled manual jobs in the engineering and building industry, whilst girls aspired to jobs in catering and hairdressing, etc.

It can be seen from the data presented above that there was a greater

proportion of pupils from the first strand in City. This suggests that of those pupils in Manor who did not aspire to managerial and professional occupations, most aspired to other non-manual jobs at a lower level on the occupational scale used in this study. In City, however, pupils in the "intermediate" pattern were more likely to aspire to the manual occupations than they were to non-manual ones.

"Low" Aspiration Pattern

There were some pupils in the study who were prepared to take any job after leaving school and these appeared to form a "low" aspiration pattern. From a total sample of 180 respondents, however, only five could be allocated to this pattern, and such a small number as this does cause some problems for the analysis, since it prevents firm conclusions from being drawn. Yet, on the other hand, it is important to draw attention to these pupils since they had characteristics which were different to those in the other two patterns described above. Moreover, the fact that there were so few of these respondents in the sample should not be interpreted as evidence that the "low" pattern of aspiration is typical of only a small minority of school leavers. Many writers (as was discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) have argued that large numbers of pupils leave school each year quite prepared to take semi-skilled and unskilled jobs as machine minders, labourers and cleaners. The small number of such pupils in this study is, perhaps, a reflection of the overwhelmingly middle class socio-economic composition of the Borough which was discussed in Chapters 2 and 6.

Bearing these limitations in mind, it is possible to make a few general comments about these pupils. They were all from City school, four

out of the five were from working class homes with three from lower working class backgrounds. Three were expected to obtain low C.S.E. passes, whilst the remaining two were not considered by the school to be capable of sitting for public exams. At the time when they left school in 1980, they had a reasonable chance of obtaining semi-skilled and unskilled work, but now they would probably be able only to obtain a place on a Youth Training Scheme. Only one out of the five was a girl, who hoped to get a job in a factory packing rubber car hoses.

Thus, pupils in the "low" pattern of aspiration form a group distinct from those in the "high" and "intermediate" patterns. Indeed, important differences exist between pupils in all three patterns in respect of the range of occupations open to them, the degree of occupational choice they have and the type of assistance they require from the Careers Service. The implications of the research findings for the Careers Service are now considered.

3. The Implications of the Research Findings for the Careers Service

This research has attempted to show that pupils' occupational aspirations are structured by their social and economic environment. By the time most young people reach 15 or 16 years of age, their future occupational pathways have been largely defined by the combined effects of their home background, school performance, peer group influence and gender. Moreover, these pathways are limited by the nature of local opportunities, the "opportunity structure". For many young people, especially those in the "low" and "intermediate" patterns of aspiration, there is not a very wide range of jobs from which to

choose. It is the pupils within the "high" pattern of aspiration who usually enjoy the luxury of occupational choice, and even then boys appear to have more opportunities open to them than girls. However, as was suggested in Chapter 1, the Careers Service tends to operate on the basic assumption that all young people have occupational choice and that all young people, therefore, require a similar type of professional help in order to exercise this choice. It has been suggested by some commentators outside the Careers Service that this assumption is incorrect and that the Service has mistaken its role because it has based its mode of operation on a theoretical model that exaggerates the amount of choice pupils have (Chapter 1, 13-14).

The usefulness of the Developmental Theory as a basis for building a careers guidance programme in the U.K. can be challenged on two grounds. First, much of the work of the Careers Service is with pupils who fall within the "intermediate" and "low patterns" of aspiration, and these pupils have relatively little occupational choice. This was the case even before the recent collapse of the youth labour market. They require help from the Careers Service, but that help consists in assistance with finding jobs or training opportunities rather than with choosing jobs or training opportunities. As has been argued throughout this thesis, the occupational aspirations of these pupils are the product of the combined effects of a number of complex factors located deep in the social structure. By the time young people first meet a Careers Officer (usually in their final year of secondary education) their attitudes to and expectations about work are fairly rigidly set. Furthermore, they are unlikely, at this stage, to be able to substantially increase or broaden the number of qualifications they will obtain. In fact, it

might be argued that there is little they can do at this stage at which they first come into contact with the Careers Service to make themselves more "marketable". Moreover, most have arrived at a set of realistic occupational aspirations and need little further assistance from the Careers Service in this respect.
They simply need help in obtaining a suitable job or training place. Such help, it was argued in Chapter 1, is regarded within the Careers Service as a sub-professional duty which comes within the orbit of the employment assistants rather than trained Careers Officers.

Secondly, even for those pupils in the "high" pattern of aspiration who do have several occupational pathways ahead of them from which to choose, the effect of meeting a Careers Officer is often of little consequence because it lasts for too short a time.
Twenty five minutes of contact with a Careers Officer is insignificant when measured against the accumulated influence of young people's experiences during the previous fifteen or sixteen years.
This is not to say that such pupils cannot benefit from vocational guidance, but to do so they require a long term programme of guidance spread over a number of years rather than a single, fleeting interview with a Careers Officer. This could possibly start from the third year of secondary school onwards before pupils choose those subjects they wish to study to 'O' level or C.S.E.[1].

One of the consequences of the massive increase in youth unemployment is that the work of the Careers Service is "in the public eye" and more a matter of public concern than ever before. This, coupled with the fact that the Careers Service can no longer provide the majority

of its clients with what they really want (a job !), means that the Careers Service must adapt to the problems of the current situation or else risk having its role challenged. In the light of the findings of this thesis three recommendations are formulated which could improve the way in which the Careers Service responds to its clients' needs:

i) The Careers Service should seriously question the important role which Developmental Theory plays in its work.[2.] It should recognise that there are different groups of pupils who require different kinds of help from the Careers Service. Pupils within the "high" aspiration pattern are in a significantly different position in many important respects to those in the "intermediate" and "low" patterns (see the discussion on specialist posts within the Careers Service below). In particular many of these pupils wish to continue with their education and so, to some extent, still have time

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1. School Careers Teachers have responsibility for such programmes, but they work under considerable difficulties. Only a few are full-time Careers Teachers, the vast majority combine this with other duties and, inevitably, "Careers" takes on a rather subordinate role to their other duties. In the Borough, there was not a single full-time Careers Teacher at the time of the research. Since leaving the Borough, I have worked in two other Careers Services and in 15 more schools. In that time I have only worked with one full-time Careers Teacher. As a result of their pressures of their other duties, Careers Teachers have little time to make contact with employers and so most lack "first hand" experience of the job market. Furthermore, "Careers" is only one of many topics that are cramped into a weekly lesson which is called "General Studies" or "Personal Development". "Careers" has to share this slot in the timetable with such other topics as, sex education, personal hygiene, drug abuse, responsibilities of citizenship, etc. In my experience, pupils tend not to gain much knowledge from "Careers" lessons.

2. From discussions with recent entrants to the Careers Service, it appears that Developmental Theory still forms a substantial part of the theoretical content of Careers Officers' training courses.

for their occupational aspirations to develop further. For them, the Developmental Theory has some relevance. They have real choices ahead of them, and the traditional guidance technique, the careers interview, is a useful way in assisting them in making these choices. However, a single interview is likely to have only a marginal impact on their future career plans. Consequently, the interview should represent only one stage of a far more comprehensive and long term careers education and guidance programme.

Pupils within the "intermediate" and "low" patterns of aspiration have fewer jobs from which to choose and mainly need help in identifying, and then obtaining, the jobs or training schemes which are open to them. They could be better served if the Careers Service spent less time on vocational guidance with them (in the sense of helping them develop their aspirations) and more time in providing them with those practical and pragmatic skills which would give them a better chance of obtaining the best jobs or training opportunities available. For example, how to impress an employer via an application form or in an interview. This could be achieved not only in careers guidance interviews, but also in groups via role playing, videos and by inviting local employers into the school so that pupils can find out how employers actually recruit their staff. In particular, it might be possible to show to pupils that a lack of formal qualifications can be offset, to some extent, by making an employer aware of personal

qualities such as drive, ambition, ability to work with the public, etc.[3] These, seemingly commonsense, ideas are not at the forefront of the work of many Careers Officers because they do not have the professional status which careers counselling does. This, it is possible to argue, is precisely because they are grounded in "common sense" observations rather than in an intellectual theoretical base and, as such, do not contribute to the Careers Service's goal of recognition as a "fully-fledged" profession.

An essential feature of such a package would be to broaden pupils' occupational horizons so they consider occupations they would not normally have thought of, such as those normally associated with the opposite sex. A fundamental mistake which Careers Officers make, I believe, is to persuade young people to narrow their aspirations down to a single job. They do this partly because it is the obvious end product of the developmental approach (that is, clients should be guided towards the occupation for which they are most suited), but also because they are under pressure from their colleagues to do so. It would seem "unprofessional" to state on a young person's Careers Service file that he or she should attempt to obtain <u>any</u> job which is approximately in line with the qualifications they possess. Yet this is often the best advice that can

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3. Ashton and Maguire (1980: 156-157) have recommended that Careers Officers pay more attention to the processes whereby some employers recruit school leavers who have few formal qualifications. Personality and motivation are other important factors which employers take into account when recruiting staff.

be given to young people in the current economic climate. The first job a school leaver enters is often the hardest to obtain. It is sometimes better to first obtain any employment and then seek a better second job afterwards, when the school leaver has experience and a record of some success in employment behind him or her.

It was argued above that pupils need different types of help from the Careers Service according to their different circumstances, with pupils in the "high" aspiration pattern having different requirements to those in the "low" or "intermediate" patterns. However, it is not suggested that Careers Officers should go through their caseloads allocating pupils to one category or another. It is one thing to do this as part of a thesis where the objective is to highlight broad patterns and trends, but quite another to do it in practice. The purpose of this recommendation is to sensitise Careers Officers to the fact that there are different groups of pupils who enter employment in different ways and so require different help. The three patterns outlined above illustrate the broad difference which exist between pupils. It would be left to individual Careers Officers to decide how to help each particular client.

ii) The work of specialist Careers Officers in the Careers Service should be encouraged. Specialist posts within the Careers Service include, "older leaver" specialists who work with sixth form and college students, "handicapped"

specialists who help those with physical or mental disabilities, "ethnic minority" specialists, "unemployment" specialists, and "careers information" specialists. There is considerable disagreement within the Careers Service about the need for specialists with some being of the opinion that they are an unnecessary luxury (Fox, 1981). Some Careers Officers feel that there is no need to specialise because Careers Officers' chief skill is the ability to create a rapport with the client and then counsel him or her from this position of trust. If the Careers Officer lacks particular occupational knowledge, this can be obtained from reference books. This view on specialism can be questioned on a number of fronts. First, it exaggerates the ability of Careers Officers to create a rapport with clients. In my experience, some Careers Officers are very good at this, some achieve a limited degree of rapport and others appear incapable of forming a relationship with a young person. Therefore, it is a mistake to diminish the need for specialist knowledge and detailed occupational information by stating that the ability to create a rapport somehow compensates for this, for not all Careers Officers have the skills or personality to create such a rapport. Secondly, it is wrong to claim that careers information can be easily obtained from reference books. The information in such books is general and intended as a broad guide. It is only by specialising in a particular field and dealing with day to day problems that Careers Officers acquire detailed and realistic information. For instance, careers manuals still tell

the reader that it is possible to obtain a job in a bank with 4 'O' level passes. They do not tell the reader that one particular bank requires applicants to have three 'A' level passes at grade C or above to obtain a job in its Midland region ! Thirdly, the dynamics of a careers interview do not permit the Careers Officer to constantly "look up" careers information. Doing this would make the client think (perhaps correctly) that the Careers Officer does not really know what he or she is talking about and would, anyway, destroy any rapport between Careers Officer and client. It is only possible to conduct a successful careers interview if one has a thorough knowledge of the field.

The Careers Service is now called upon to give information and advice on a much wider range of topics than ever before. Clients range from potential University entrants to those leaving school with no academic qualifications whatsoever. There is the ever increasing complexity arising from "credentialism", with more and more occupations having quite precise academic entry requirements and complicated sets of post-entry professional examinations. For example, it is quite usual today to advise a student who not only wishes to know which particular 'A' levels would increase his or her chances of entering Accountancy or Banking, but also which 'A' levels would provide the best foundation for the subsequent professional examinations. It is also no longer a matter of "knowing about jobs", since Careers Officers are also called upon to provide advice on higher

education courses, Youth Training Schemes and social security payments (for example, the number of hours an unemployed person can attend college before their entitlement to benefit is affected). Further complicating the task of the Careers Officer is the need to become familiar with the occupational and training opportunities for adults. With the disappearance of the Occupational Guidance Units of the Department of Employment, adults are turning increasingly to the Careers Service for assistance, and a growing number of Careers Services now offer an "adult service". In the light of these developments and the findings of this research which show that even the Careers Service's traditional clients - young people - do not form as homogeneous a group as some Careers Officers believe, it is essential that the Service offers specialist functions. Specialist posts are not a luxury, but provide the mechanism by which the Careers Service can keep abreast of a rapidly changing situation of growing complexity.

iii) The first two recommendations represent what are essentially minor changes in the structure of the Careers Service, although they might well entail quite major changes in the attitudes, orientations and training of Careers Officers. The final recommendation of this thesis envisages a new approach to Careers work. In 1981/82 the Careers "world" was taken by surprise at the far reaching changes which took place within the Coventry Careers Service.[4]

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4. Having worked in the "new" Coventry Careers Service, I am familiar with its structure and operation.

These represented a fundamental change in Careers Service practice and procedures. The traditional way for Careers Services to work (as indicated in Chapter 1) is for teams of Careers Officers to be based within a Careers Office and to visit different schools to interview pupils in their final year of statutory education. The Coventry Careers Service has been restructured along quite different lines. Careers Officers are now attached to a single school in which they work exclusively. This provides them with the opportunity to become very familiar with one set of clients, and because they now work in one rather than three or four schools, they can advise second, third and fourth year pupils as well as fifth years. They can also form close relationships with the parents and teachers of the school in which they are based.

The "Coventry system", therefore, offers Careers Officers the chance to advise pupils during the period in which their occupational aspirations are formed rather than just near the end of it. This earlier and increased contact enables Careers Officers to make pupils aware of a broader range of opportunities before access to these opportunities is closed to them. This is not to suggest that Careers Officers have become the single most important factor in the development of pupils' aspirations, but the Coventry situation does increase the ability of Careers Officers to provide continuing advice over a longer time period.

There are some features of the "Coventry system" which even those Careers Officers who are attracted to the general

philosophy may have doubts about. For instance, there is the danger that the Careers Officer in a school may become an isolated figure who lacks the support and advice from colleagues. Indeed, systems have had to be imposed upon the Coventry structure to ensure that Careers Officers remain in contact with one another. For example, several working parties comprising Careers Officers from different schools have been formed to consider such matters as careers literature and industrial liaison. This is a mechanism by which Careers Officers continue to communicate with colleagues and share ideas.

One aspect of the Coventry "system" which has not yet been finalised is the role of specialist Careers Officers. The Coventry "philosophy" stresses the pastoral approach to careers guidance with Careers Officers concentrating their attention on just one school so that they really "get to know" their clients over a number of years. This would seem somewhat in conflict with the role of the specialist who is not attached to a particular school, but offers advice to those clients who need specialist help. This "conflict" between the pastoral and specialist approaches highlights a fundamental dilemma in the Careers Service as a whole. On the one hand, there are Careers Officers who attach most importance to the "caring" aspect of their work, that is, the way in which they form relationships with clients and "care" for them during the difficult and worrying period when they leave school to enter a world of extremely high youth unemployment. Yet on the other hand (as has been suggested), careers advice is becoming so complex that a "generalist" Careers Officer

based in a single school cannot be expected to be an expert in all aspects of careers guidance, and many clients, it seems to me, have a greater need for practical and specific advice on how to overcome a particular difficulty than they do for a "sympathetic ear". Thus, it is important to produce a system of careers advice which combines the benefits of both the pastoral and specialist approaches. One possible way is to follow the medical practice of having both General Practitioners and Specialists. School based Careers Officers would act as G.P.s and would refer to specialist Careers Officers pupils requiring detailed advice on university courses, employment opportunities for the disabled, and so on.

The Coventry "system" is still evolving and does not claim to have all the answers. Nevertheless, other Careers Services may find it profitable to examine it as it appears to be more suited to the way in which pupils' occupational aspirations do form. As this thesis has attempted to show, pupils' occupational aspirations do not develop just within careers interviews, but are shaped by almost every aspect of their lives.

4. Some Final Thoughts

The recent history of the Careers Service can be interpreted as the quest of a relatively new "occupational group" for recognition as a "fully fledged" profession. The search for a theoretical base for its work can be seen as an essential part of the Service's drive for professional status. Unfortunately, the Careers Service adopted a

theoretical base - Developmental Theory - which is inappropriate to the way in which many young people in this country form their occupational aspirations. Nevertheless, inspite of its limitations, Development Theory does have some merit. First, it has some relevance for pupils at the top end of the academic hierarchy and secondly, it was largely responsible for assisting the Careers Service in its transition from the former Youth Employment Service. It raised the expectations of clients, their parents and teachers about what the Careers Service could do and there is no doubt that the Careers Service has a more prominent position in the system of local education than was the case 20 years ago. Paradoxically, a side effect of this is that, having raised expectations, a Careers Service which bases its practices upon Developmental Theory cannot really meet these expectations. Thus, having moved towards the centre of the stage, the Careers Service must find other ways of staying there, because much of its work might just as easily be done by others, for example, Job Centres, Careers Teachers in school, Further Education lecturers and the managing agencies which have developed with the introduction of the Youth Training Scheme.

The recommendations listed above should go some way toward strengthening the Careers Service's position and increasing the effectiveness of its service to clients. More research is needed, however, into how the Careers Service might, first, survive its present crisis - for it is my view that the Service is "in crisis", as was argued in Chapter 1 - and then move towards a more professional guidance service. Areas in which research is needed include:

i) The training of Careers Officers. How far is this still influenced by Developmental Theory and to what extent are

trainee Careers Officers introduced to other theories of occupational choice ?

ii) The "professionalisation" of the Careers Service. It was argued in Chapter 1 that much of the recent history of the Careers Service can be interpreted as the desire of an occupational group to obtain recognition as a profession. There is an enormous literature on professions and "professionalisation", but there appears to be little research on the Careers Service from this perspective. Research is needed into the reasons why many members of the Careers Service desire professional status and the difficulties it faces in obtaining such status, for example, its short and non-mandatory training, its subordinate place within the local government bureaucracy and the failure of the Institute of Careers Officers to obtain "licencing power" over new entrants.

iii) The use of computer guidance techniques. Careers Officers now have a range of computer programs which are able to recommend a variety of occupations which clients may wish to consider. It is not known how effective these are, nor whether Careers Officers are using computer techniques in an appropriate way. Furthermore, the use of such computer programs might represent a 'de-skilling' of the work of the Careers Officer with he or she just providing information on recommendations generated by the computer.

iv) Future employment trends for young people. The Careers Service is aware of the opportunities which currently

exist for school leavers, but if it is to advise younger pupils during the formation of their occupational aspirations, it should attempt to acquire data on likely employment patterns several years ahead, especially the effect which "new technology" might have on future employment trends. Careers Officers are so burdened down dealing with the immediate problems arising from their case loads that they have little time to plan ahead.

v) For the reasons given in the Introduction and Chapter 2, this research was based on pupils in two schools drawn from a single town in the Midlands. It would prove useful if other researchers (hopefully including Careers Officers) undertook comparative studies in other parts of the country.

APPENDIX I

THE PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was undertaken in a school not included in the subsequent research in July 1979, prior to the start of the main study in Manor and City Schools in September 1979. A group of 30 fourth formers were selected because the fifth formers had, by this time, left school following the completion of their 'O' level and C.S.E. exams. The pilot study was based on a registration group rather than an academic set, so that pupils of a broad range of academic ability were included. The pupils were first asked to complete the pre-interview questionnaire (see Appendix 3) and were then interviewed using the main schedule, the final version of which is at Appendix 2.

The main purpose of the pilot study was to ascertain whether sufficient information for the research could be obtained from a single interview with each pupil, which was also to serve as the official school careers interview. Another purpose of the pilot study was to test the suitability of the various classifications for those variables where data was to be collected by means of pre-coded questions. The pilot study was also seen as an opportunity to "polish up" the wording of questions asked in the interviews with respondents.

After a third of the interviews had been completed, it was apparent that a single 30 minute interview (the standard length of the schools careers interview) was an insufficient period to both collect data

for the research and give the respondent careers guidance. A longer interview of 45 minutes duration was tried with 10 more pupils but this was not entirely successful because pupils' concentration appeared to lapse during the latter stages of this longer interview. Therefore, a decision was made to give each respondent in the main study two 30 minute interviews. This was tried with the remaining 10 pupils in the pilot sample and it appeared to work successfully.

APPENDIX 2

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

First Interview

School

1. Subjects taken at school.
2. Level at which subjects are taken ('O' level, C.S.E., Non-exam).
3. Favourite school subjects.
4. Least liked school subjects.
5. Attitude to homework (coded as: in favour, not sure, against).*
6. Posts of responsibility at school (e.g. prefect, team captain).
7. Sets in which subjects are studied.

Future Plans

1. Attitude to continued education (coded as: keen, not sure, Not Keen).
2. Type of continued education course considered (e.g. 'A' levels, secretarial).
3. Occupational aspired to.

* A full explanation of the classification of data is given in Appendix 4.

APPENDIX 2 (CONTINUED)

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Second Interview

Home background

1. Parents' occupations.

2. Parents visit school to discuss respondents' progress (coded as: often, sometimes, rare).

3. Parents discuss school at home (coded as: often, sometimes, rare).

4. Parents give help and encouragement with homework (coded as: often, sometimes, rare).

5. Number of siblings, ages, education, occupations.

6. Special factors e.g. family own business in which job is available.

Friends at School

1. Names of three best friends at school.

2. The influence of these on respondents' occupational aspirations.

Relatives and Neighbours

1. Occupations of three relatives (e.g. uncles, aunts, cousins)

2. The influence of these on respondents' occupational aspirations.

3. Occupations of two next door neighbours.

4. The influence of these on respondent's occupational aspirations.

Marriage and Future

1. How will marriage effect your future occupations?

APPENDIX 3

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Name ..... Date of Birth .....

Address ..... Tel. No. .....

.....

.....

School .....

School

Which subjects do you study at school ?

Which are the subjects you enjoy the most (if any) ?

Which are the subjects you dislike the most (if any) ?

Hobbies and Interests

What things do you like to do in your spare time ?

If you have a part-time job what is it ?

Are you a member of a public library ?

Which type of books do you normally read ?

Future Education

Do you wish to carry on studying full-time after you have left school ?

If so, where and which courses have you thought of studying

Future Job

Which job would you like to do when you have finished your education ?

APPENDIX 4

THE QUANTITATIVE DATA: AN EXPLANATION OF THE CLASSIFICATIONS AND CODINGS USED

The purpose of this Appendix is to provide an explanation of the classifications and codings used when recording and analysing the quantitative data in this study. In addition to this, the Appendix also presents the number of respondents from Manor and City schools who were recorded for each of the main variables used in the research. On those occasions where the classification used is self-explanatory (e.g. gender), no explanation is given.

Variable 1	Classification	Manor	City
Respondent's Social Class	Upper Middle Class	50	7
	Lower Middle Class	25	26
	Upper Working Class	10	31
	Lower Working Class	5	26
		90	90

It was decided to adopt the conventional approach of allocating respondents to a social class category on the basis of their fathers' occupations. Father's occupation as an indicator of a family's social class position has its limitations, but it is the most convenient single indicator that can be used. It must be acknowledged that the use of just the father's occupation undervalues the importance of the mother's occupation and a study which concentrated solely on the relationship between a school leaver's social class background and his or her occupational aspirations would be advised to include mother's occupation in the analysis.

It was decided not to include mother's occupation in this research because social class was but one of several influences on young people's occupational aspirations that were studied. Thus, father's occupation was used as the best single indicator.

Respondents with fathers who had professional or managerial occupations (e.g. Accountant, Solicitor) were allocated to the Upper Middle Class category, whilst those with fathers who undertook clerical or technical occupations (e.g. Draughtsman, Wages Clerk) were allocated to the Lower Middle Class category. For the Working Class jobs, skilled manual occupations (e.g. Toolmaker) were included in the Upper Working Class category, with semi-skilled and unskilled occupations (e.g. Car Assembler, Labourer) in the Lower Working Class category.

Respondents whose fathers were deceased were allocated to a class on the basis of their father's former occupation. The same method was adopted for those fathers who were unemployed. Only two respondents had fathers who were deceased and four had fathers who were currently out of work.

Variable 2	Classification	Manor	City
Respondent's Occupational Aspirations	Upper Professional and Managerial	12	2
	Lower Professional and Managerial	35	12
	Clerical and Technical	27	32
	Skilled Manual and Service	16	39
	Semi-skilled and Unskilled Manual	0	5
		90	90

It was decided to classify respondents' occupational aspirations using a fivefold classification based on that used by Jackson and Marsden (1962: 23). It was decided to use a single scale for both boys and girls in spite of dual labour market theory (see Chapter 9, p 216) for two main reasons. First, a single scale was needed to contrast the differences in the occupational aspirations of boys and girls. Secondly, this variable was primarily concerned with the level rather than the type of occupation to which respondents aspired. A second variable on occupational aspirations (Variable 3) was used to highlight the differences in the types of jobs to which boys and girls aspired.

Variable 3	Classification	Manor	City
Type of Job to which Respondent Aspires	Male	31	33
	Female	19	28
	Mixed	40	29
		90	90

The purpose of this variable was to show the differences in the jobs aspired to by boys and girls. "Male" jobs were those normally associated with men (e.g. Engineering, Construction), whilst "female" jobs were those normally undertaken by women (e.g. Nursing, Secretary). "Mixed" jobs were those which had no strong links with either gender (e.g. Teaching, Civil Service).

Variable 4	Classification	Manor	City
Social Class First Neighbour	Upper Middle Class	44	7
	Lower Middle Class	26	15
	Upper Working Class	10	28
	Lower Working Class	2	31
		82	81

Missing Data, Manor (8) City (9)

Variable 5	Classification	Manor	City
Social Class Second Neighbour	Upper Middle Class	41	5
	Lower Middle Class	29	19
	Upper Working Class	8	25
	Lower Working Class	4	32
		82	81

Missing Data, Manor (8) City (9)

Variable 6	Classification	Manor	City
Social Class First Relative	Upper Middle Class	42	12
	Lower Middle Class	19	19
	Upper Working Class	16	21
	Lower Working Class	5	24
		82	76

Missing Data, Manor (8) City (14)

Variable 7	Classification	Manor	City
Social Class Second Relative	Upper Middle Class	35	11
	Lower Middle Class	25	20
	Upper Working Class	14	20
	Lower Working Class	8	25
		82	76

Missing Data, Manor (8) City (14)

Variable 8	Classification	Manor	City
Social Class Third Relative	Upper Middle Class	37	10
	Lower Middle Class	22	23
	Upper Working Class	17	22
	Lower Working Class	6	21
		82	76

Missing Data, Manor (8) City (14)

Data was collected on the occupations undertaken by two neighbours named by respondents and three relatives. From this it was possible to allocate each neighbour and relative to an appropriate social class in accordance with the method described for Variable 1 above. The relatives named by respondents included uncles, aunts, cousins and grand parents.

Variable 9	Classification	Manor	City
Parents Visit School to Discuss Respondent's Progress	Rare	11	15
	Sometimes	15	38
	Often	64	37
		90	90

Rare - Uncommon for either parent ever to visit school

Sometimes - At least one parent visits school at least once a year

Often - At least one parent visits school on most of the occasions when invited to do so (e.g. Parents Evenings, Careers Interview, Careers Convention, etc.)

Variable 10	Classification	Manor	City
Parents discuss School at Home with Respondent	Often	48	29
	Sometimes	36	40
	Rare	6	21
		90	90

Often - Parents discuss schoolwork at least a month

Sometimes - Parents discuss school work occasionally but not on a regular basis

Rare - Parents discuss schoolwork rarely, once or twice a year at most

Variable 11	Classification	Manor	City
Parents give Help and Encouragement with Homework	Often	23	11
	Sometimes	48	46
	Rare	19	33
		90	90

The classification for this variable is the same as for Variable 10 above. However, it proved to be of limited use because many of the parents who were quite willing to discuss homework with their children were not required to do so because their children had little difficulty with their homework.

Variable 12	Classification	Manor	City
Type of House in which Respondent Lives	Detached	22	1
	Semi-detached	43	11
	Town	25	55
	Council	0	23
		90	90

The classification of housing type was one used by Estate Agents in the Borough. "Detached", "Semi-detached" and "Town" were houses which were privately owned. "Town" houses are small, modern houses usually with two to three bedrooms which were built in rows of five to six. They were a common feature of the housing found in the City catchment area, but were also found in part of the Manor catchment area.

Variable 13	Classification	Manor	City
School's Assessment of Respondent's Academic Ability	Very High	43	17
	High	14	7
	Average	17	28
	Low	16	32
	Non-Exam	0	6
		90	90

Data on the number and type of public examinations respondents were likely to obtain were taken from the school reports given prior to the careers interview. It was decided to use teachers' forecasts of potential examination results rather than actual examination results because the latter were not known until the end of August, well after respondents' Careers interviews. Respondents, therefore, form their occupational aspirations upon what they think they will obtain and on what their teachers believe they will obtain. Teachers in both schools were usually extremely accurate in their predictions of exam results. The classification for this variable is as follows:

Very High - Respondent expected to pass 6 'O' levels or more

High - Respondent expected to pass 4 or 5 'O' levels

Average - Respondent expected to pass at least 4 subjects at C.S.E. grade 2 or higher, but fewer than 4 'O' levels

Low - Respondent expected to pass fewer than 4 subjects at C.S.E. grade 2

Non-Exam - Respondent not entered for external exams

Variable 14	Classification	Manor	City
Respondent's Attitude to Homework	In Favour	48	33
	Not Sure	31	34
	Against	11	23
		90	90

In Favour - Respondent feels that homework is in his/her interests

Not Sure - No firm view on homework

Against - Respondent feels that homework should not be set

Variable 15	Classification	Manor	City
Respondent's Attitude to School	Positive	56	38
	Indifferent	29	35
	Negative	5	17
		90	90

Teachers were asked to comment on respondents' general attitudes to school. They were given three categories in which to place respondents:

Positive - Generally interested in school, participates in school activities

Indifferent - Periods of interest in certain school activities interspersed with periods when no interest is shown

Negative - Respondent shows no interest in school, does not participate in activities

Variable 16	Classification	Manor	City
Respondents' Attitudes to Continued Education	Keen	63	25
	Unsure	15	19
	Not Keen	12	46
		90	90

Respondents were asked whether they wished to continue with their education at the Sixth Form College or the Technical College.

Keen - Respondent wishes to continue with his/her education beyond the minimum school leaving age.

Not Sure - Respondent uncertain whether to continue with his/her education

Not Keen - Respondent does not wish to continue with his/her education

Variable 17	Classification	Manor	City
Respondent's English Set	Set 1	30	28
	Set 2	20	18
	Set 3	18	13
	Set 4	12	17
	Set 5	10	14
		90	90

Variable 18	Classification	Manor	City
Respondent's Maths Set	Set 1	30	31
	Set 2	17	14
	Set 3	20	21
	Set 4	16	19
	Set 5	7	5
		90	90

Pupils in Manor and City were not taught in streams, but in sets for different subjects (see Chapter 7,p 144). Thus, it was impossible to use a single indicator for respondent's position in the school academic hierarchy. It was decided to use two indicators, pupils' English and Maths sets, as this was believed to provide a good reflection of respondents' overall academic performance.

Variable 19	Classification	Manor	City
Patterns of Physical Science Study	Pattern 1	27	40
	Pattern 2	30	29
	Pattern 3	33	18
		90	87
	Missing Data, City (3)		

It is generally believed that division of the school curriculum into its "male" and "female" components is most apparent in the study or non-study of the Physical Sciences. It was anticipated, therefore, that boys would study Physical Science in greater proportions to girls.

Pattern 1 - No Physical Science studied (Respondent studies Biology only).

Pattern 2 - Respondent studies either Physics or Chemistry

Pattern 3 - Respondent studies both Physics and Chemistry

Variable 20	Classification	Manor	City
Respondent's Favourite Subject	English/Geography/ History	24	32
	Modern Languages	5	2
	Maths/Physical Sciences	18	14
	Biology	13	4
	Commercial Subjects	7	10
	Practical Subjects	18	21
	Games	2	3
	None	3	4
		90	90

Variable 21	Classification	Manor	City
Respondent's Least Favourite Subject	English/Geography/ History	22	13
	Modern Languages	19	5
	Maths/Physical Sciences	22	37
	Biology	5	4
	Commercial Subjects	2	11
	Practical Subjects	3	9
	Games	1	1
	None	16	10
		90	90

Respondents were asked to name their favourite and least liked subjects. This was because it is generally believed that many pupils aspire to occupations which have similarities with their favourite subjects at school (e.g. Physics and Engineering). It is also widely believed that pupils do not aspireto those jobs which have common features with their least liked subjects.

Variable 22	Classification	Manor	City
Occupational Aspirations of First Friend	Upper Professional and Managerial	4	1
	Lower Professional and Managerial	41	16
	Clerical and Technical	25	28
	Skilled Manual and Service	14	34
	Semi-Skilled and Unskilled Manual	2	6
		86	85

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (5)

Variable 23	Classification	Manor	City
Occupational Aspirations of Second Friend	Upper Professional and Managerial	4	2
	Lower Professional and Managerial	38	17
	Clerical and Technical	31	20
	Skilled Manual and Service	13	43
	Semi-Skilled and Unskilled Manual	0	3
		86	85

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (5)

Variable 24	Classification	Manor	City
Occupational Aspirations of Third Friend	Upper Professional and Managerial	4	2
	Lower Professional and Managerial	34	8
	Clerical and Technical	29	36
	Skilled Manual and Service	15	32
	Semi-Skilled and Unskilled Manual	4	7
		86	85

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (5)

Data was collected on theoccupational aspirations of the three friends named by respondents. The classification used is the same as for Variable 2 above.

Variable 25	Classification	Manor	City
Social Class of First Friend	Upper Middle Class	48	6
	Lower Middle Class	22	28
	Upper Working Class	4	19
	Lower Working Class	12	32
		86	85

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (5)

Variable 26	Classification	Manor	City
Social Class of Second Friend	Upper Middle Class	55	13
	Lower Middle Class	25	22
	Upper Working Class	4	25
	Lower Working Class	2	25
		86	85

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (5)

Variable 27	Classification	Manor	City
Social Class of Third Friend	Upper Middle Class	40	8
	Lower Middle Class	28	20
	Upper Working Class	5	25
	Lower Working Class	13	32
		86	85

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (5)

The social class of friends was obtained by gathering data on their fathers' occupations (see Variable 1 above). The fourfold classification of friend's social class outlined above was reduced to a simple twofold division during the subsequent analysis of data (see Chapter 8,p 173). Friend's social class thus became either middle or working class.

Variable 28	Classification	Manor	City
School's Assessment of First Friend's Academic Ability	Very High	33	12
	High	25	9
	Average	20	30
	Low	12	33
	Non-Exam	0	6
		90	90

Variable 29	Classification	Manor	City
School's Assessment of Second Friend's Academic Ability	Very High	28	9
	High	27	10
	Average	22	34
	Low	13	30
	Non-Exam	0	7
		90	90

Variable 30	Classification	Manor	City
School's Assessment of Third Friend's Academic Ability	Very High	31	13
	High	22	14
	Average	25	28
	Low	12	31
	Non-Exam	0	4
		90	90

Explanation for Variables 28-30 as for Variable 13 above.

Variable 31	Classification	Manor	City
Attitudes to School of First Friend	Positive	59	46
	Indifferent	22	21
	Negative	5	18
		86	85

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (5)

Variable 32	Classification	Manor	City
Attitudes to School of Second Friend	Positive	58	43
	Indifferent	19	29
	Negative	9	13
		86	85

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (5)

Variable 33	Classification	Manor	City
Attitudes to School of Third Friend	Positive	49	43
	Indifferent	30	26
	Negative	7	16
		86	85

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (5)

Explanation for Variables 31-33 as for Variable 15 above.

Variable 34	Classification	Manor	City
Attitudes to Continued Education of First Friend	Keen	63	29
	Unsure	11	14
	Not Keen	12	41
		86	84

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (6)

Variable 35	Classification	Manor	City
Attitudes to Continued Education of Second Friend	Keen	62	24
	Unsure	13	22
	Not Keen	11	38
		86	84

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (6)

Variable 36	Classification	Manor	City
Attitudes to Continued Education of Third Friend	Keen	58	23
	Unsure	18	18
	Not Keen	10	43
		86	84

Missing Data, Manor (4) City (6)

Variable 37	Classification	Manor	City
Respondent's Gender	Male	51	41
	Female	39	49
		90	90

Variable 38	Classification	Manor	City
Type of Curriculum Respondent Studies	Male Curriculum	39	32
	Female Curriculum	28	34
	Mixed Curriculum	23	21
		90	87

Missing Data, City (3)

The curriculum was divided into its predominantly "male" and "female" components to highlight the tendency for boys and girls at school to study different types of subjects. In both Manor and City there was a core curriculum of English and Maths and pupils were permitted to choose other optional subjects. It was in this choice of optional subjects that the differences between boys and girls were evident (see Chapter 9).

An explanation of what constituted a "male", "female" or "mixed" curriculum is given below:

Male - Respondent studies two or more optional subjects from the range Physics, Chemistry, Metalwork, Woodwork, Technical Drawing.

Female - Respondent studies two or more optional subjects from the range Biology, Typing, Shorthand, Commerce, Home Economics, Needlework, Modern Languages, Child Care.

Mixed - Respondent studies a mixture of subjects traditionally associated with both genders.

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