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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

OF

SCHOOL LEAVERS

IN A

SOUTHERN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnographic study of white and West Indian-origin girls and boys attending a comprehensive school in the south of England during their final year of compulsory schooling. The study concentrates on gender, race and class effects on school experiences; attitudes towards school; career choices and early employment or training destinations.

Ethnographic data comprise both classroom observations and discussions with 20 informants. These are supplemented by questionnaire data from the entire 5th form year.

Chapter 1 outlines the nature of existing research in this field and argues for the need to look at gender, race and class simultaneously to understand the impact of such factors on the lives of pupils. It also addresses methodological considerations and the problem of gaining access. Chapter 2 describes the process of starting research whilst Chapter 3 describes the school, its local context and its internal organisation. Chapter 4 provides an introduction to the 5th year and their teachers drawing largely on classroom observations.

Gender, race and class receive individual attention in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively. Chapter 5 indicates that gender was a powerful discriminator in classroom and breaktime interactions whilst Chapter 6 shows that racist humour and beliefs were a regular feature of school life despite a lack of racial discord at the school. Chapter 7 demonstrates that class consciousness existed amongst pupils and informed their attitudes towards school and work.

Chapter 8 concentrates on career choices and the quality of careers advice concluding that career choices were both gender and class-specific. Chapter 9 focuses on pupils' early destinations after the 5th form finding that both black and white girls were more likely than boys to utilise 6th form to gain entry into middle-class occupations. For those seeking employment, black girls fared least well being more reliant on YTS and suffering greater unemployment.

Overall, gender and class had greatest impact on school experiences and career choices whilst race in conjunction with gender, affected actual destinations.

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CHAPTER 1

IN SEARCH OF A VIABLE THESIS

INTRODUCTION

Ethnography, that rich and informative tool of social scientists,

has only become an important feature of research in the sociology of

education since the 1960s. Studies by Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey

(1970) are among the earliest examples of participant observation inside

school walls and within the 'closed' confines of the classroom. This is

perhaps surprising, considering the enormous importance of ethnographic

participant observation studies some decades before in the pioneering

anthropological accounts of Malinowski (1922) and Evans-Pritchard (1940)

and in view of the in-depth insights gained by early sociologists such

as Whyte (1955) and Becker (1963) in their respective studies of gangs and

societal outcasts in America.

During the 1970s, however, there was a growing incidence of ethno-

graphic research in the classroom, aimed at understanding the processes

and interactions taking place. These initially followed the traditional

pattern set in both anthropology and sociology, of studying males in a

man's world. Malinowski lived among the Trobriand Islanders of Polynesia

and Evans-Pritchard settled down to village life among the Nuer in Africa.

Being themselves male, they were most readily accepted into the company

of men and male society. As a result, their observations were essentially

of how men's lives operated, tinged with the white middle-class values of

early twentieth century Europe. The reality of life for women occupied

little space in the writings of both men being only descriptions produced

by an 'outsider' and not those of a true participant. The female

perspective and way of life was therefore not projected in their writings

although subsequently, anthropologists began to correct this imbalance.

Similarly, the early ethnographic accounts of American sociologists concentrated on the lives of men. Taking the two examples cited earlier, Whyte (1955) studied a New York all-male gang in <u>Street Corner Society</u> whilst Becker (1963) examined the labelling process in drug-taking males in <u>The Outsiders</u>.

The scene was therefore set, for ethnographic techniques to be employed to examine not only <u>male</u> culture, but exotic male culture. The unfamiliar, different or deviant was what attracted the attention of researchers with a view to providing hitherto unknown rationales to explain the social behaviour of others.

SCHOOL ETHNOGRAPHIES, THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OMISSIONS

In consequence, the earliest school ethnographies followed this line of enquiry, concentrating primarily on boys but also on 'problem' boys. The early work of Hargreaves (1967) concentrated on the school experiences of secondary modern boys and described an emerging anti-school culture among the boys in the lowest streams. Similarly, Lacey (1970) observed the 'differentiation and polarisation' between top and bottom streams in a boys' grammar school, identifying similar pro- and anti-school cultures associated with either academic success or relative failure. The work of Lambart (1976) is one exception to this being research conducted with girls in parallel to the studies of Hargreaves and Lacey, but girls' experiences of education did not receive much attention prior to the 1980s. As a result, research on <u>boys</u> was invariably taken to be research on <u>pupils</u> per se. From this we can deduce that girls were seen either as no different to boys or as unimportant. Either way, they did not require special attention. That this attitude continued late in the 1970s is confirmed by Griffin (1987) who, speaking about her research with school <u>girls</u> conducted in 1979, says:

> "Exclusively male studies pass without comment, accepted
> as perfectly normal, whereas my work was seen as
> unusual from the start." (p.219)

Invisible girls

That this is true for a number of ethnographic researches in schools during the 1970s can be illustrated by the quiet invisibility of girls in the work of Ball (1981). His Beachside Comprehensive was heralded as an important insight into the effects of banding in one of the new comprehensives, and therefore as an important sequel to Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970). It passed virtually unnoticed in the book that the school under scrutiny was a mixed comprehensive and no attempt was made to separate out the different experiences and reactions of girls.

Many other examples exist to demonstrate the preponderance of boys' studies, e.g. Willis (1977), Corrigan (1979), and these have served to highlight a predominantly male, working-class culture and perspective in the literature. Whilst there may well be sound methodological reasons why male researchers should concentrate on male respondents (e.g. for reasons of easier access and better rapport with members of the same sex), it has to be recognised that the early work conducted with boys provided formative frameworks for analysis that were taken to be common truths for the subsequent analysis of pupils from different groups. Thus, later studies on girls laboured under the preconceptions and precedents set by earlier work conducted solely with boys. The problems encountered by Griffin (1987), serve to clarify this point and de-mystify the importance of the pioneering studies.

> "I also felt the pressure to fit young women's experiences
> into the dominant cultural paradigm, ... At first I too
> searched for female equivalents to Willis' 'lads' and
> 'earoles', striving to identify female pro- and anti-
> school cultures .... I tried in vain to fit the young
> women's experiences into this 'gang of lads' format,
> but their lives were far too complex."   (p.218)

Fortunately, Griffin has not been alone in trying to redress the balance by bringing girls' experience of school onto the sociologists' agenda. Many researchers (e.g. Burgess (1986), Purvis (1984), Delamont

(1980)), have highlighted the need for research with girls indicating

that women feature little in the existing literature and some (e.g.

Sharpe (1976), Delamont (1980) and Stanley (1986)) have begun the

systematic observation of young women at school and in the transition

to work/training/domesticity or unemployment in order to understand

their world.

Black and White

Just as gender in general, and girls in particular, have until

recently been ignored in ethnographic studies, so has race received

scant attention. The work of Hargreaves, Lacey, Ball, Willis and many

others concerned not just boys but indigenous white boys. Riley (1985a)

remarks on this gap in the literature in her study of black South London

school girls. She writes:

> "Girls at school are assumed either to be non-existent or
> just pale reflections of the male pupils. Black girls
> are doubly invisible."   (p.63)

Even where researchers have incorporated the male/female dimension in

their work they have more often than not looked only at white pupils

(e.g. Stanworth (1981), Measor (1984) and Davies (1979).

Yet as Wright (1985) states:

> "... Studies on gender and classroom interaction which
> have failed to give some consideration to the parti-
> cipants' race (or ethnicity) as an important variable
> run the risk of either projecting too simplistic or
> distorted a picture of classroom dynamics".   (p.184)

Exceptions to this include Griffin (1985) and Furlong (1984) who

conducted interviews and conversations with both white and non-white

pupils in order to understand the factors important in shaping their

school lives. With Griffin's work, however, there is the problem that

black, white and Asian girls were researched without any comparison with

boys. With Furlong, there is the same lack of comparison but from the

opposite perspective, for in his study white and black boys received

attention without reference to the experiences of girls attending the same school. A similar, but more restrictive problem arises in studies that confine themselves to an analysis of black pupils' experiences alone as in the article by Fuller (1980).   Though much rich data can be obtained in studies that concentrate on one particular group of individuals there is, I would suggest, always the danger that what is discovered is then attributed to that group and that group alone, when comparative research might have indicated that some of the findings were in fact common to other groups of pupils,and not due solely to racial factors.

Wright's (1986) ethnographic study sought to offer a comprehensive account of black and Asian pupils' experiences in comparison with those of their white peers. Male and female, Asian, black and white pupils in two Midlands comprehensives were thoroughly   researched through eighteen hundred hours of classroom observation, formal and informal interviews and school records. This, I would argue, is the most thorough ethnography to date to compare and contrast the experiences of British school pupils according to their race (ethnicity) and gender. Yet here once more there is a deficit inasmuch as class receives scant attention. Indeed, Wright (1986), in describing her two schools where research was conducted merely states:

> "Schools A and B are mixed comprehensives, approximately
> three miles apart. The ethnic compositions of the two
> schools vary considerably .... Despite the variation in
> the percentage of ethnic minority groups in the two
> schools, the school experiences of the Afro-Caribbean
> pupils in both schools appears [sic] not dissimilar."
> (p.218)

A three-mile distance in a British city can spell an enormous difference in catchment area and, in consequence, in the class origins of pupils.

The Class Dimension

Ideally, what is required here is the additional analysis of the social class (or class perspective/aspirations) of the pupils concerned

for as Troyna (1984) says with regard to studies of West Indian underachievement:

> ".... Social class is clearly a critical factor yet
> rarely have the data been standardised to take this
> into account."   (p.162)

Paradoxically, it was the earlier studies of such researchers as Hargreaves (1967), Willis (1977) and Corrigan (1979) which acknowledged the role played by working class values and culture as mediated through parents, family life and peer group influences. Thus, it would appear that as subsequent researchers elaborated on the gender and race dimensions of life in school they allowed the significance of class to recede. King (1987) notes the importance of this oversight as follows:

> "Generalisations about men and women, or boys and girls,
> including their education, without reference to social
> class, are as limited as those about the social classes
> without reference to sex."   (p.298)

This oversight is particularly important in the area of race and education where much research (e.g. Swann (1985), Eggleston et al. (1986)) has demonstrated West Indian children to be underachieving vis-a-vis their white peers. Here, it is argued by such authors as Troyna (1984) and Reeves and Chevannes (1981), that it is crucial to understand the working class position of most West Indian families in Britain and to view the achievements of pupils from such families against a matched sample of working class whites. Reeves and Chevannes (1981) specifically make this point in their critique of the Rampton Committee's Interim Report (later Swann Report, 1985). They state:

> ".... the figures are unstandardised for such crucial
> factors as parental social class or educational level
> .... The only variable mentioned in the case of the
> Rampton figures is that of racial (geographical ?)
> group, but the significance of this factor can only
> be demonstrated after other well-established factors
> affecting educational performance have been allowed
> for."   (p.37)

Since Swann, some researchers (e.g. Brewer and Haslum (1986) and Plewis (1987)) have addressed themselves to the interaction of race and class in affecting pupils' educational performance. Their work has highlighted the importance of home background and social class origins, factors indicated to have some importance in the research of previous authors such as Bagley (1971) and Driver (1980). However, their work has been based on quantitative data (e.g. measurable performance in reading tests and examinations) and not on ethnographic accounts of pupils' lives. Achievement relative to others is therefore established but not explained in terms of <u>how</u> these factors operate to affect life chances. In this respect, both Swann (1985) and Taylor (1981) have indicated the need for detailed research to determine the processes involved, with Taylor advocating studies of:

> "the attitudes of pupils to teachers, and their
> perceptions of home and school differences, especially
> on the issue of differential expectation and aspiration
> which has been postulated."   (p.241)

An additional point concerning these studies is that again, they only take two of the three key variables of gender, race and class into account; in these cases just race and class are assessed without reference to gender.

Burgess (1986) has noted this deficit in the existing literature in relation to gender, race and class stating:

> "... the evidence has been reviewed separately yet in
> reality individuals experience the interaction of class,
> gender and race as the product of their membership of
> different social groups."   (p.126)

Towards integration

It is mindful of this deficit that I have attempted, in the following study, to deal simultaneously with the three variables of gender, race and class as they affected the lives of very 'ordinary' British-born white and black pupils during their final year of compulsory

education (and beyond) at a mixed comprehensive in the south of England.

By 'ordinary' I refer to those pupils who do not have privileged backgrounds or very high academic ability. I use the term in a similar way to Brown (1987) and compare my findings with his in relation to pupils' attitudes to school and their choices after their 5th form year.

By 'black', I refer only to pupils of West Indian/Afro-Caribbean origin unless otherwise stated in the text. Where Asian pupils are involved they are referred to specifically as 'Asian' and not incorporated within my usage of the term 'black'. As Modood (1988) states, this falls in line with the actual practice of many other researchers who use the term black solely to refer to West Indians (e.g. Fuller (1980), Riley (1985a)). It also takes into account the fact that many Asian pupils do not see themselves as black but instead define themselves in terms of an Asian ethnicity and identity (Hanson (1987)).

In my research I have examined race, class and gender issues both individually and in combination with each other, and used an ethnographic and predominantly participant observation approach in order to understand what actually 'happened' in the daily lives of my informants, both in and out of lessons.

I believe that insufficient attention has been paid to the 'consumers' of education and wished to understand the pupils' world, hopes and ambitions by listening to them. In so doing, I hope that I have been able to make some small contribution to the existing literature for as Stebbins et al. (1987) state in reviewing McLaren (1986) on the ritual of school:

> "It is rare for a social scientist to enter and observe the world of the student as this world unfolds both inside and outside the classroom."   (p.86)

SELECTING A RESEARCH TOPIC

Having recognised in myself a research interest in education and the transition from school to un/employment or training, and having determined that an ethnographic study was appropriate for the themes I wished to explore (i.e. the pupils' views and experiences), it remained to decide where, how and with whom to conduct research. Beyond this the likelihood of gaining funding for my research was of some importance as was the likelihood of reasonable access, taking into consideration my own constraints in terms of physical location and availability.

Pollard (1985) refers to similar practical constraints in his reflexive account of the opportunities and difficulties of being a teacher/ethnographer. In his case, it was:

> "a straightforward decision between doing my research
> at the school at which I worked or abandoning my
> desire to do an ethnographic study altogether." (p.218)

In my case, I was free of work commitments but the school needed to be within daily travelling distance of my home to enable me to continue with my existing role of 'wife and mother'.

Looking back six years to when I was first deliberating on an appropriate and interesting research topic, my preference had been to conduct an ethnography among the West Indian community that surrounded me in my home town. At that time I spoke with both anthropology and sociology undergraduate tutors plus local community workers, only to find that, inevitably, due to their own special areas of expertise, I was being channelled towards their narrower fields of interest and encouraged to see things from their perspective. I believe that I resisted their influence, but in subsequent discussions with postgraduate students already engaged in doctoral research in similar fields, I could see that my own research preference was too broad to tackle in the three

years allotted for study to Ph.D. level, and that it lacked direction.

I was also challenged regarding the utility of my proposed topic, and

urged to consider the implications of writing about the personal lives

of ethnic minorities (especially from the political perspective), until

eventually I saw my original ideas as positively detrimental to the people

I was interested in and abandoned the idea of such research.

From there on, a honing down process began. I started to narrow

my line of interest thinking of its eventual 'usefulness' in social terms

and whether it would be deemed worthy of a research grant. I also asked

myself if I could live and breathe the research successfully for the 3 - 4

years it would take. At this stage I was beginning to seek the advice of

postgraduate institutions instead of that of my undergraduate tutors and

there is no doubt that staff perspectives on what was valuable and/or

needed, played a major part in my decision to examine 5th form pupils and

their transition into the 'world of work'. There was always the notion,

amid uncertainty about being able to secure a place for research, that

if those more knowledgeable than oneself could see the value in a parti-

cular area of study, then that area stood a better chance of proving

acceptable and attracting funds than would one's own ideas as a novice.

Looking back now, I see that I maintained my interest in what was

happening among West Indian people, but this was narrowed to study a

specific group within that community, namely school-leavers, and was

developed into a <u>comparative</u> study with whites. This decision was taken

after reviewing the literature discussed on pages 2 - 7. I also

maintained the 'local' flavour of my initial interest, because the

research was finally conducted at the school which served a major part

of my home town's black community, but I incorporated an academic line of

interest, namely the impact of race, class and gender on pupils at school

and in the transition from school to work/scheme/unemployment.

WHO, WHERE AND HOW?

Perhaps the easiest decision in my research concerned the 'type' or age group of pupils I would work with. By virtue of wishing to examine the transition from school to work (or at least 'adult' world) for both white and black pupils, I had already narrowed the range down to those between the ages of 16 and 18 years. Then, in wishing to focus on attitudes to school, choices regards staying on and career choices, 5th formers became my target group. Bearing in mind all these things, and the need to complete the actual fieldwork in a period of 1-2 years, I determined to follow a small group of pupils in their final year of compulsory schooling and beyond. This would enable me to trace their reactions to school, their levels of achievement and their career choices, and would carry me through the period of receiving their exam results (if any), decisions regards any further schooling or other education, and the search for work.

The next problem was how many informants and where would they be taken from. How many was a question not really answered until the research was well underway. Originally I had overestimated the numbers I could successfully engage with in the time available, and only practice and experience in the field gave me the answer to this. As Burgess (1984) states:

> "A central feature of this work involves monitoring the
> research process and the research design. For the design
> will be continually modified and developed by the
> researcher throughout the project."   (p.5)

This statement proved true for me in most aspects of my research, and in my opinion this process of modification highlights the problematic nature of developing hypotheses 'a priori' in ethnographic studies. Whilst a general perspective can be constructive, a pre-formulated hypothesis seems to me to be both inappropriate and a constraint in a

situation where essentially the researcher is observing and 'breaking

new ground'. Here I am in agreement with Humphreys (1970) when he

states:

> "Hypotheses should develop <u>out of</u> such ethnographic
> work, rather than provide restrictions and distor-
> tions from its inception ."   (p.22)

I believe that the researcher should essentially be an investigator

(and later an interpreter) of what is, and that pre-conceived ideas about

the field in question are both arrogant and a potential source of

'blinkering' the observer to the facts. As Dalton (1959) states:

> "I never feel sure what is relevant for hypothesising
> until I have some intimacy with the situation ..."
>   (p.53)

The problem of <u>where</u> the research would be conducted was, for me,

an easy decision bearing in mind the category of pupils I required.

My decision was aided by prior knowledge of the town, the catchment

areas of schools and the various spatial distributions of the different

ethnic minority groups. I had already undertaken a 10,000 word project

on the ethnic minority communities in the town as part of my undergraduate

degree, and had incorporated into this both demographic features and

information on education and employment.[1] As a result, I knew the school

that would give me the highest proportions of black pupils whilst

simultaneously yielding a group of white and black informants who

shared similar surroundings, housing and economic constraints. As I

particularly wanted a sample of predominantly working class pupils in

order to consider the importance of lower-class origins, gender and race

as major potential differentiators, I decided that all my pupils should

come from one school only and have received all their secondary school

education at that establishment. I therefore made no attempt to contact

more than one school for access. Indeed, to locate sufficient numbers of

black pupils in the same age group at any other local school would have

been impossible, such was the spatial segregation within the town. Fore knowledge of this was useful and time-saving, but with hindsight, I can see that a study in two separate schools would also have been prohibitive in terms of the time required to be accepted in both establishments.

There is, of course, an attendant danger in selecting just one school for research, and then only a small sample of informants within that school. That is, that the research which emanates from the study can be said to be idiosyncratic with dubious representativeness of pupils 'in general'. It then follows that if the researcher had any aspirations for the findings being utilised in changing policy or practice within the education system, those hopes are going to be dashed. But I believe that in-depth work of this kind is constructive on two accounts. First, I am content, with Wolcott (1975) if ethnography is used as an individual building block among others in the development of larger structures and theories. Second, I agree with Woods (1979) that it is possible to achieve :

> "Both rich and sensitive description and generalisability.
> The more 'representative' the school, the greater the
> chances of the external validity of the results." (p.268)

In this respect I believe the school I selected can be said to be an 'ordinary' English comprehensive, and the pupils selected as inform-ants to be a representative cross section of their year for the following reasons. The school was neither very old nor brand new, it had a mixture of 'progressive'and 'conservative'teachers, interested and disinterested pupils. It was not in an economically 'run-down' area with attendant unemployment problems, nor was it in a thriving middle-class suburb. It did not have large proportions of ethnic minority pupils such that its ethnic mix could be said to be higher than the UK average. In addition, out of all the possible pupils who could have become informants, I tried

to take great care in avoiding the 'special cases'. For example, I
avoided including in my final group of some twenty informants, two
pupils with special histories of bad attendance linked to (a) brain
damage and (b) poor home circumstances. Similarly I avoided taking on
board too many high-flyers, despite the school's interest that I should
talk to them. In short, a basically common-sense approach was adopted
in developing a good rapport with a group of pupils, some bright, others
not, some keen, others disinterested in school work. I constrained the
numbers of informants according to what was manageable in the time
available, and in order to achieve a balance between the sexes and between
white and black pupils. The 'snowball' effect was resisted when existing
informants were keen to introduce me to their friends and associates.
If anything, the selection of informants was as a result of what Burgess
(1984) terms "Judgement and Opportunistic Sampling". "Judgement sampling"
because certain informants were selected

> "according to a number of criteria .... such as their
> status .... "   (p.55)

and "Opportunistic sampling" because the nature of the work made it
essential to develop a relationship with individuals with whom it was
possible to co-operate. Overall, I make no excuses for the way my
eventual 'sample' of twenty respondents was compiled. Research with
individuals has to be a compromise between what is required in the sterile
world of scientific proof and what is actually feasible in the real world
of human interaction. Thus, providing I have portrayed each of my
informants accurately, with sensitivity and avoiding bias, the main data
gathered should stand in its own right at least as a comparison within
the group, and at best, as an indicator of what may be occurring among
other pupils in similar circumstances. Themes, analyses and theories can
then be overlaid upon these basic data.

ON METHODOLOGY

To say that I intended to conduct an ethnography among a group of school pupils and follow them through their subsequent search for work gives little indication of the methodology to be employed. Whilst observation and participation in their school lives may be assumed there are various ways this could be conducted and to differing degrees. I would classify my main methodology as being a "participant-as-observer", a phrase coined by Roy (1970) in examining his own study of union campaigns in the USA. His words sum it up beautifully:

> "The participant-as-observer not only makes no secret
> of his investigation, he makes it known that research
> is his overiding interest. He is there to observe
> .... the participant-as-observer is not tied down, he
> is free to run around as research interests beckon
> ...." (p.217)

In all my dealings with staff, pupils and other interested parties I always made my research interests clear. This is not to say that all persons received the same explanations from me at all times. Again, common sense dictated the level at which the topic was introduced and just how much information was given. Too much said to someone who was busy and wanted a quick answer could be detrimental, as could hiding behind bland statements when dealing with someone who was truly interested and had time to spare. Overall, however, I can say that I always strived for 'informed consent' amongst both teachers and pupils and that this was of prime importance to my integrity as initial contacts with strangers developed into long and detailed relationships.

The need to "run around as research interests beckon", cited above, was a particularly important feature of my work. To examine a selection of field work notes chronologically, over a period of say a couple of days, would give the impression of 'organised chaos'. The following synopsis of a day in school amply illustrates this point.

<u>Day 4</u> (1) Early morning Fifth Form Assembly

    (2) Periods 1 & 2   - Following one particular pupil to lessons

    (3) Breaktime   - Catch three teachers in staffroom for other observational work. Get invited and accept invitation to after-school teachers' meeting.

    (4) Period 3   - Follow other pupil to his lesson

    (5) Lunchbreak   - Hang around the sheds and make new pupil contacts

    (6) Period 4   - Discuss particular pupils with their form teacher

    (7) After school   - Keep appointment with Careers Officer

Such a schedule appears disjointed, but there was method in the madness. Access to pupils as in-depth informants had to be tackled from a variety of angles. It did not consist of just listening to the informants alone. If their words and actions over the weeks and months were to be properly understood, then the researcher had to thoroughly understand the context. Hence, the school day, as it seemed to pupils, had to be experienced; teachers' opinions of those pupils and vice versa had to be gleaned; the type of careers information and jobs available had to be known and the trust of informants had to be maintained by demonstrating an interest in the things that mattered to <u>them</u>, whether or not such issues were of direct relevance to the study. Hence as the researcher I had to be what Schatzman and Strauss (1973) describe as "a methodological pragmatist".

In order to place my main in-depth work with informants in context, I found it necessary to investigate other areas where the ethnographic, participant-observer role was not appropriate. This mostly occurred in the area of careers information, job placements and 'proving' academic

achievement. Firstly, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the careers advice offered at the school it was necessary to 'interview' careers staff based on questions I wished to raise with them which arose out of observation. Secondly, hard statistical data was required as a backdrop to the individual experiences of informants . As a result, my research involved seeking out and analysing statistical information of exam results for the entire 5th form. A questionnaire was also administered to the entire 5th form concerning their opinions on school and future employment issues.

Thus, although the primary objective and value of the research lay, in my opinion, in the in-depth perspectives of my informants, the data gleaned could also be viewed against the whole of which they were part. This, it was hoped, added to the 'generalisability' and practical utility of the study. It was also further evidence of 'methodological pragmatism' for in seeking to examine the 'reality' of my informants from alternative angles (as well as employing varying methods to get at their own reality), it can be argued that there was an attempt at triangulation which should serve to further validate the research findings.

Overall then, my research consisted of casual observation, discussions, structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation, collection and analysis of statistical data and compilation, administration and analysis of a questionnaire. The intention throughout was to make proper sense of the world of my informants, relating it primarily in their own words but using gender, race and class paradigms. An account of how these various methodologies were put into practice, and how access was gained firstly to the school and subsequently to staff and pupils is the subject of the next section.

GAINING ACCESS

Before the event:

For the first year of my postgraduate studies I was based at the Research Unit on Ethnic Relations linked to the Management Centre at Aston University. There, I was warned that it might be difficult to obtain permission to enter a school and 'observe' because both Local Authorities and teachers were sensitive to being investigated and criticised. It was suggested that staff would be unhelpful and unions positively against their members being burdened with any additional commitments (e.g. having a researcher tagging along and asking questions) at this time of industrial action over pay claims (Oct. 1984 to July 1985). I was also warned that I might actually get nowhere with pupil informants who would either reject me as being part of the school 'system' or simply be disinterested. Finally, and perhaps most daunting, it was suggested that I could not hope to make sufficiently good contacts with black pupils due to being white, an argument also put forward by a number of researchers,(e.g. Carby (1981)). This issue in particular had caused me to consider if I was the right person to under- take such a study. It also made me doubt whether I could get good 'data' out of the boys because I was a female.

However, upon the transfer of my research unit to the University of Warwick at the start of my fieldwork year I found myself jointly supervised by staff in the new Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations and also in the Sociology Department of the University. This brought me into contact with a supervisor who had extensive knowledge and experience of ethnographic methods in educational settings. His advice and assistance encouraged me and served to allay my fears, and in the event, the overriding feature of gaining access and making contacts was that it proved far less problematic than I had anticipated. Certainly some teachers were more forthcoming than others and some pupils gave me the 'brush off', but there was

never any danger of the research project grinding to a halt due to limited or faltering access.

With specific regard to black pupils, I found them to be equally as forthcoming as whites. I believe that my sincere interest in them as people, in what they thought and felt, was something that came across and as a result they were more than willing to discuss their ideas and hopes and grievances. Pupils rarely have the opportunity to express their views and the fact that someone actually cared about their point of view and had time to listen to them made for open and easy rapport with both black and white boys and girls.

It is impossible to say whether gaining good access should be attributed to good timing, good interpersonal skills, appropriate negotiating techniques or simple good luck. Almost all negotiated access must rely to some extent upon external and uncontrollable factors, plus the tact of the researcher. In my case, however, I believe that initial access to the school was massively assisted in three ways:

(1) I already had contacts among the staff at the school, the LEA and among community workers.

(2) I knew a good deal of background information about the school.

(3) I worked from the bottom upwards in securing access.

On prior knowledge and acquaintances

For at least two years prior to requesting access, I had been in touch with community and educational workers with special interests in the local West Indian population. This was due to my earlier interest and concern for the welfare of West Indian (black) families which had in turn led to my undergraduate project topic already mentioned. At the level of personal acquaintances, I had met LEA staff through the local Community Relations Council where I was a member of the Education Sub-

Committee. I had deliberately forged links with the staff at the local

LEA's Centre for Multicultural Education so as to understand their

objectives in the teaching of black pupils and the pursuance of anti-

racist teaching. I had personal friends who lived within the catchment

area of the chosen school whose children either were, had been or would

be attending the school, and I had lived in that area myself for four

months. Finally, for six months prior to my fieldwork I had undertaken

voluntary teaching work at the local West Indian Saturday School and

through that activity had met children from the school, and its Section 11

teacher in charge of ethnic minority issues who taught alongside me at

the supplementary school.

In this context it became impossible not to know what was happening

locally regards black education. I also became accepted by a number of

workers, parents and children as a friend and someone who cared about

them. I have no doubt that this stood me in good stead later on when I

was approaching individual pupils, for I might be known to one of them

and their friendly acceptance of me was a positive influence on their

peers.

My contact with staff at the Centre for Multicultural Education meant

that slowly, over the months and years, they knew of my step by step

progress towards securing a place and an award to undertake research.

They too were interested in my topic and knew how I intended to go about

my research. From them I gained a great deal of information about my

proposed school, about its policies and practices and the innovations

brought in by a newly-appointed Headteacher. Thus, when finally I asked

how I should officially go about requesting access I was told that whether

I went to the Head or the Chief Education Officer, the matter would still

be referred to them for consideration, and that if they were happy with

it 'in principle', there would be no objection. In the event, I doubt

whether the Centre <u>was</u> consulted when I finally wrote a carefully worded letter to the Head, because by that time I had made my important - albeit fortuitous - contact with the school's Section 11 teacher. To my knowledge it was she who dealt with the decision 'in principle', together with other members of staff, and thereafter, 'top level' decisions were handled for me by members of the school. Whether I short-circuited a slow, bureaucratic acceptance procedure or not I cannot say, but I am certain my prior contacts contributed to my gaining access.

The formal request for access

My Section 11 teacher contact raised the matter of my conducting research in the school verbally with the Head at much the same time that I telephoned to see what procedure I should follow. I was advised to put my request in writing and was told that he (the Head) would pass my request onto the next teachers' meeting for their consideration. I was distinctly given the impression that it was <u>them</u> I had to convince because if they rejected my proposal that would be the end of it, whereas if they were happy about it there should be no further problems. I therefore put pen to paper, and, trying to think of the needs of weary teachers ploughing through a stranger's research interests at the end of a busy day, I tried very hard to be concise yet open and informative. In the end, I settled for a formal letter requesting access outlining the research in the briefest possible terms, whilst attaching a longer ($1\frac{1}{2}$ sides of A4) explanation of my research interests and how it could benefit both staff and pupils to have such information. I should state that originally I had no intention of suggesting that my research was in any way 'useful' to the school. In fact, I was guarding <u>against</u> saying such in my first telephone call to the Head for fear that he would think I was trying to be 'an expert' telling him something he did not already know. I was also concerned about protecting my data and informants lest what transpired proved unpopular.

Whilst trying to avoid the direct telephone question of "What's in it for us?", I realised that, in fact, the school (or at least the Head) preferred the idea of a study that could yield information upon which the school could modify future practices. He felt there was little point in having someone around who would observe, record and go away revealing nothing. Thus, in attempting to be as 'little trouble' as possible I had nearly spoilt my chance of gaining access. Ultimately, I think that my incorporation of practical benefits to the school in the resumé to staff, plus the positive verbal representations of the Section 11 teacher, saved the day. Looking back, I should have realised from my knowledge of the Head that he was a practical man, and that someone bound up in 'theory' would not have been appreciated. In addition I knew, both in advance, and from our telephone conversation, that the school was already heavily researched as it was regarded as a superb target for those interested in working class children and progressive, comprehensive teaching methods. Indeed, I later heard that the request for access before mine had been rejected because it was deemed 'unsound' and staff were too burdened. I was therefore fortunate to have ridden the request for access successfully.

It took a period of six weeks from my telephone call requesting access to the telephone call confirming áccess. The teachers met without my being there to put my case, but their decision was favourable. I received no formal letter of approval and simply turned up on the first day after half term in October 1984, as arranged over the telephone.

INITIAL ACCESS

Upon entering the school, it was made clear to me by the Head, that I was "on my own". He and the staff had given permission for me to enter the school because they found my project useful/practical, but it was up to me to forge links with individual teachers and pupils negotiating access with them directly as and when required. There were no constraints

placed upon me, and my query concerning access to school records and reports was answered in the affirmative. Unlike Burgess (1984) who found he had to re-negotiate access to records at a later stage with the school secretary, I was particularly fortunate in that all office staff were very helpful in showing me how things were filed and where. In fact, their knowledge was also immense concerning the whereabouts of individual pupils and if I was having difficulty in tracing a particular 'missing' student I could usually obtain relevant information from the office. Their helpful spirit could well be attributed to my having been introduced to most of them on my first day and that thereafter, I always began my _first_ request for information with a brief explanation of my research interest quoting my permission to examine the records. I would say that it was among the teachers rather than clerical staff that there was some degree of retiscence or resentment, but this did not prove to be a major feature of my interaction with staff. Indeed, most teachers were very welcoming and happy to help me.

Without being made a condition of my entry to the school, it was made clear to me by the Head, that feedback from my research would be appreciated. This, of course, immediately puts the researcher in a potentially difficult situation. Both Richardson (1973) and Collier (1978) have already commented on the extent to which the researcher may become a consultant to the school, and in my case I felt that the major danger was in protecting the anonymity of my informants if I was expected to report back after fieldwork was completed. Reflecting on this, however, I determined that a short report of major findings would not be detrimental to my informants and that any detail eventually written up in thesis form would occur after the pupils had left the school and would never disclose their actual identities.

Later, it transpired that it was _teacher_ identities rather than pupil

identities that proved most problematic in the writing up stage, for many of them would be able to recognise themselves and colleagues from their job descriptions alone and most still work at the school.

The only thing the Head had wished to know in advance was whether I had any intention of administering questionnaires to pupils. He was against such a practice because the school had been inundated with obligatory questionnaires just recently and the 5th form (my year for research purposes) had received the lion's share of these. He had promised staff that there would be no more questionnaires for the rest of the academic year and wanted to be sure that my research would not prejudice his promise. It was perfectly easy for me to answer in the negative at that time. I had no intention of conducting a questionnaire because I anticipated obtaining larger-scale data to act as a background to my small-scale ethnographic data by virtue of school examination statistics. However, at a later stage I was to alter this plan and had to re-negotiate permission to undertake a questionnaire with the 5th form. At the time I considered it wrong to go back on my word and still believe it to be ethically unacceptable. This was compounded by the fact that it was my supervisors, not I, who felt a questionnaire was necessary. Later on, I came to appreciate the value of this data for it provided an essential backdrop to data from informants and provided powerful insights into pupils' attitudes. However, going back on my word to the Head could well have soured our relationship and I think I only managed to re-negotiate permission for the questionnaire for two reasons:

(1) I made it clear I was <u>also</u> unhappy about it, placing myself squarely on the 'side' of the Head in the matter, and

(2) by having a good working knowledge of the time-tables by that time, I was able to suggest a very simple and streamlined way in which the questionnaire could be administered by me without

involving teachers in the exercise.

The latter reason, rather than the former, held most persuasion I feel, as the Head did not need to renege on his promise to staff to fit in with my requirements. Nevertheless, I would argue that such changes in access should not be entertained as a general rule for fear of prejudicing the whole research project.

After a few weeks at the school, it became clear that the Head was a very busy man. Later contacts with him were rushed and infrequent. Often, a few sentences were snatched in the corridor or over a hasty coffee break. The fact that the Head was truly too busy to bother much with me meant that I was not perceived as having any particular link with him and staff did not appear to have any concerns that I might relay their opinions onwards up the hierarchy, judging by the freedom with which they spoke to me. Indeed, from the outset, it struck me that staff were always prepared to speak their mind with candour whoever was listening.

After the first five weeks in the school, I returned to the Head to tell him of my intention to begin in-depth discussion with selected pupils in the near future. I wanted to clarify if any special permission was required and at this stage he decided that I should write and obtain parental permission before going into non-school (e.g. home background) issues with them. This, it could be argued, represented a new imposition upon my fieldwork, but as I had already anticipated that such permission would be necessary, it did not come as a surprise. Neither did it prove too awkward in terms of access to pupils, for a carefully worded letter to parents yielded no refusals. The only way in which it could have become problematic was in the way pupils perceived the need for their parents to be asked before they could engage in discussions with me. It irritated some informants as they felt treated like children, but I was able to smooth things over by telling them that the Head had to cover himself

should any parent complain about a researcher asking lots of personal questions. I also made it clear to volunteer informants that even though their parents might agree to them co-operating in my study, it was still up to each individual pupil I approached to decide whether to become involved in my project or not. As a result, although some were affronted about parental permission, they realised that I was putting their consent first and I lost no potential informants as a result of this new stipulation.

To summarise, it can be said that access to the school and subsequent access to teachers and pupils did not prove as problematic as I had anticipated and the final outcome was that I was very largely given 'carte blanche' within the school.

After some initial fact-finding at the school, and further discussion with my new supervisors at the University of Warwick I developed the following schedule for research:

From Half Term to Christmas 1984	1 week spent alongside Section 11 teacher 4 weeks following one individual pupil per week 1 week of general observation and teacher contacts
January 1985 to Summer 1985	Informal, in-depth interviews with informants Administration of questionnaire to 5th form Recourse to teachers and school records
Autumn 1985 to Christmas 1985	Follow up with school leavers and those who entered 6th form Analysis of questionnaire data

Chapter 2 now describes the process of starting research and how rapport with both pupils and staff was developed and maintained.

FOOTNOTE:

(1) Full reference to this project cannot be made in the interest of maintaining the anonymity of the school.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROCESS OF STARTING RESEARCH

THE FIRST WEEK

For my introductory week at the school I was placed under the wing
of the Section 11 teacher already mentioned. The objective was to
familiarise myself with the geographical layout of the school, the
operational time-tabling, meet staff and various classes by virtue of
following her around for a full school week. This meant that I started
by seeing the school from the teacher's perspective. It was her timetable,
teaching load, break times and staff interactions that I observed, although
during lessons I sat with the class and followed in the text books along-
side the pupils. Nevertheless at this stage, pupils perceived me as an
extension of the teacher, for it was with her that I disappeared after
each lesson. I was fortunate, however, in that this teacher always made
a point of introducing me to the class using my first and second name and
asking me to describe why I was there. I was, therefore, able to explain
that I was just getting used to the school for a week before starting to
talk to pupils about their views on school and work so that I would under-
stand better what people described to me later on. The classes I observed
in that first week were not necessarily 5th form classes, but in every
lesson some pupils expressed an interest in my work and raised a few
questions. It seemed to me that pupils were already quite enthusiastic
about someone being interested in their perspective, and some were
downright disappointed that my interest lay outside their year group.

That first week of observation was for me a sea of alternating images.
I was exhausted by the end of Day Two and wondered how staff could keep
up such a busy pace and varied schedule. I felt bombarded with new data
from all sides as I tried to soak up the pupil relationships and behaviour
in lessons, noticeable friendship groups, actions unseen or unheard by the

teacher, the state (condition) of classrooms and the playground activities,
as well as coping with various introductions to teachers in the staffroom
and desperately trying to remember their names and what subjects they
taught. The events of this first week are described more fully in
Chapter 4.

THE REMAINING FIVE WEEKS OF THE HALF TERM

After the first week's crash course I was reasonably familiar with
my surroundings. Some 5th years had already started to take an interest
in my work and one had volunteered herself already as an informant. She
had approached me after a lesson and volunteered to introduce me to her
friends. I willingly took her up on her offer and incorporated her
co-operation into the next stage of my access to pupils.

I had already decided that I now needed to see the school week as it
appeared to the consumers (i.e. the pupils) and in discussing this with
the Head of the 5th Year, she too felt this to be a good idea bearing in
mind the contacts I wanted. She knew that I wanted to make contact with
both males and females, white and black pupils so as to 'balance' my
sample of informants for ethnicity and gender. I also wanted to meet
pupils who were at different points along the academic ability spectrum.
I agreed to her organising my next few weeks by arranging for me to spend
a week with each of four pupils selected by her so as to yield a week in
the lives of four people who differed along the lines I wanted. I was
given the names of a very bright white female pupil; a clever but 'under
achieving' black female; a low-achieving, poor-attending white male; and,
upon verifying that my one volunteer in-depth informant to date was among
the large group of CSE takers, I took her as my 'average' white pupil.
Apart from this one person selected by me, I had no particular intention
of following any of these initial pupils as in-depth informants. Rather,
I felt that they would be able to give me introductions to their own groups

of friends and that these friends would differ and not overlap. This indeed proved to be the case. Overall then, I continued by spending a further four weeks following the daily routine of three white and one black pupil; three females and one male. I was aware of this gender and racial imbalance but was restrained by the forthcoming vacation and the desire not to continue with more pupils' weeks after the holiday but to concentrate on some detailed discussions. I resolved to actually promote contacts with boys at every opportunity and do likewise with black pupils to redress the balance, although in the event, contacts seemed to evolve quite spontaneously.

School weeks from the perspective of individual pupils were not as chaotic as they had at first appeared when following a teacher from class to class. Their day ran quite smoothly and it was invaluable for me to experience a few weeks as a pupil for it helped me to understand some of the grievances that were expressed in later discussions. Complaints were later heard on a variety of issues ranging from dislike of particular subjects or teachers, to the school hours per se; lack of freedom; dislike of noise levels in class and lack of teacher authority in dealing with this. Having observed a number of different teachers in various subjects, taking different ability groups, I found I was always able to 'see' the problem mentioned to me because I had indeed seen something similar.

During the weeks of following individual pupils I had to develop a trusted relationship with pupils and maintain my credibility with staff whilst distancing myself from them. I tended to spend most break times with the pupil concerned, meeting and talking with their friends, but would slip into the staffroom for part of the lunch break especially if my pupil had gone home to lunch.

The researcher's role

It was during this period that I felt most pleased that I was not a teacher. I do not believe it would have been possible to 'compromise' the teachers' role in order to gain the trust and support of informants as I did. On this point I am in agreement with Corrigan (1979) when he states:

> "Those readers who are teachers and those who remember their school days will be aware, I hope, of the impossibility of actually gaining accurate information from pupils if you are a teacher. Being labelled as such breaks the possibility of gaining certain sorts of information at all. What happens if a pupil smokes?" (p.12)

Corrigan's last comment here about smoking was borne out exactly in my study because smoking was a big issue for some of my informants. They wanted the right to smoke at break times, but took every opportunity to have a quick cigarette between lessons anyway. Teachers on the other hand were quite clear on this issue. Smoking was not to be tolerated. As a result break times could evolve into a 'them and us' situation of patrolling teachers and furtive smokers.

Birksted (1976) has also asserted that teacher status is problematic where pupil accounts are required, and certainly in my study (where pupil perspectives were essential to my research), I would not have gained the respect and trust of many of my later informants if I had not stood with them on the smoking issue. Basically, I had to take risks alongside them, yet being neither true pupil nor teacher, I was neither part of their stand, nor condoning it as a member of staff and could avoid the sanctions of either camp. Over the first week alone, however, word spread among the pupils that I was "alright". Pupils stopped pretending they had something special to do at breaktime in order to get away from me for a "quick fag", but simply said "We're off to "X" for a smoke". I knew I was accepted when I could turn the corner of "X" and not be met with

hurried stubbing out activity! Nevertheless pupils did test my allegiances
over the smoking issue by subtly 'dropping me in it' in front of staff,
presumably to guage my reaction.

"Got any fags Miss?"
asked one boy during a <u>very</u> quiet part of a Geography lesson. I shook my
head and laughed, whereupon a number of pairs of eyes were upon me.

"Just thought you might have, that's all",
came the casual reply. (The teacher in this lesson could not help
overhearing this but very tactfully ignored the episode, mindful of my
position vis-a-vis pupils.)

Being neither pupil nor teacher <u>did</u> pose some problems in maintaining
a good working relationship with staff. For example, once a patrolling
teacher at break time did interrupt a smoking session among a group of
girls I was with. Fortunately this teacher was also sympathetic to my
role as pupil-observer and gracefully retreated from the scene. Never-
theless, I personally felt very split by this 'confrontation' of values,
and made a special attempt to talk through the event with that member of
staff at our next meeting in the staffroom. The feeling of being a go-
between was ever present however, especially as in some instances, pupils
wanted me to make representations to staff on their behalf; and teachers,
(perhaps ingenuously), wanted feedback on pupils' views of their lessons
and so on. At this particular stage of the research it was apparent <u>who</u>
I was following for the week, and I was aware of the need to take great
care in giving away information that would negate the absolute anonymity
I had already promised to pupils. Again,'a sit-on-the-fence'approach
seemed the best. I would discuss topics in general terms with teachers
but not refer to individuals so as to avoid being seen as unco-operative
or hostile. It was at this time, however, that I appreciated the extent
to which teachers valued feedback from pupils, and some articulated how

fortunate they thought I was to be able to get 'closer' to the pupils
than they could. I feel sure some were quite envious of my position.
One teacher in particular was having great difficulty controlling a
particular class and, sat in the staffroom together after one such lesson
I had observed, she was desperate to hold a 'post mortem' in the hope of
gaining some advice for how better to manage the class.

> "What did you think of all that?" she asked me.
> "What else could I have done?"

Becoming Accepted

Viewed from the pupils' angle, I was also seen as fortunate for I could
engage in their world but was free to 'escape' to my own world. Although
many trusted me from the outset and were prepared to be outspoken, others
'tested' me, as in Burgess (1984), in subtle ways. I have already
mentioned the pupil who made reference to smoking in class to see what
my reaction would be. Would I stand with them, or wriggle out of it?
I stood with them and, inevitably, word spread from this too. I was also
tested by being invited out into the pupils' social life outside school
(e.g. invited to go swimming). I was judged according to whether I was
prepared to be a good sport or not.

My original fears of not being able to develop enough contacts among
the boys, and amongst black pupils proved quite unnecessary. Although I
only followed one boy for a week, many others struck up conversation with
me during breaks and the lessons that lent themselves to talking, such as
woodwork and metalwork. I was perhaps assisted in this inasmuch as the
boy I followed was a 'problem' to the school, a persistent non-attender.
This itself gave other pupils cause to comment, and friendships were struck
up out of such initial comments as:

> "Old Terry's a dosser, what you following him for?"

My contacts among the boys developed well and I would say that my breaktime

conversations with them were more informative and constructive than among the girls. This, however, was due to the slant of my interests (i.e. career/work-related) and there was a distinct drying-up of conversation on such matters amongst the girls, but boys could keep up a good rapport. This aspect of a gender divide is discussed later in Chapter 5.

My week following a black girl was also formative in introducing me to a number of her black female friends. All the black pupils knew each other well and they formed a small though not segregated, clique at break-times. Contacts with black boys developed either through white girls or by direct approach. With the black girls, however, there was something of Burgess's 'snowball effect', whereby one contact led to others within the same set. I was therefore concerned about bias in my sample, but later research served to allay those fears because it transpired that whilst this group of girls did socialise together and know each other outside school, they were not necessarily a cohesive unit in terms of friendship groups or ability. Indeed, the black girls spanned the whole range of the academic achievement spectrum and some never saw each other outside school. More importantly, however, my final group of 20 informants included all 10 black pupils in the 5th year. Thus, sampling difficulties were avoided, for the entire cohort of black pupils was included in my study.

It was fortunate that I hit it off with my week's black pupil for here I learned the value, indeed the absolute necessity, of giving of oneself in order to develop a good relationship. I shared with this girl my life history, dislike of racism, activities among the local black community and chatted about my son whom she later met. All of this she appreciated, and it helped her to see me in a favourable light. Only then did her conversations open out and become more honest and did she assist me in getting to know the other black girls.

Burgess (1984) argues that to remain totally 'impartial' and not

comment or give of oneself is impossible if good relationships are to be

maintained. I would agree completely on this point. A two-way flow has

to be perceived by the informant for trust to develop, let alone the

desire to participate further in discussions. I believe that without

giving of myself, many of my later discussions would have been sterile

events lacking in any real depth. Teachers, as I have mentioned, were

keen for feedback from me over different issues, but pupils also required

something of me. Boys frequently asked me for my opinions on unemployment,

girls asked me about my son and my partner. Griffin (1985) had similar

experiences in her study of female school leavers:

> "At school, young women had asked how I had got the
> research job, and how I had felt about leaving school.
> After leaving school, they tended to ask more about
> their ex-school friends, using me as a means of keeping
> in touch. I never treated these questions as irrelevant
> or unwanted intrusions .... Young women used me as a
> source of information .... as well as 'someone to moan
> to' when they were depressed."   (pp. 108-109)

I echo Griffin's sentiments entirely.

My week following a white CSE-taker was particularly fruitful.

This was the girl who had already approached me, and she was definitely

delighted that I spent a week with her, to the point of showing off about

it. On one occasion she chose to taunt a group of boys outside the toilets:

> "My friend Mandy and I are going in 'ere for a chat" (indicating
> towards the girls' toilet).
> "Go on then, go and have your fucking book written about
> you then" derided one of the boys amid other jeering
> and whistling.

Whilst I eagerly absorbed everything she was prepared to do and say, and

appreciated the introductions that followed to her friends and to some

black boys, I tried to guard against alienating myself in this way. To

some extent, other pupils were turned off the idea of talking to me because

they were 'anti' her, but like Woods (1979), I saw this as inevitable.

In developing contacts with one group, the impressions given to others

were unavoidable. I reconciled myself to this on the basis that my

ethnographic data had to be rich and truthful, and that excellent rapport within one group was more fruitful than sketchy contacts with many.

With this pupil, I also wanted to know that I was seeing the 'normal' person during lessons, and that an act was not being put on for my benefit. I therefore made sure that I asked various teachers after lessons if her behaviour had been as usual. To my surprise (for to me she had done some outrageous things) I was told that she was indeed acting quite normally. Nevertheless, the effect of the observer on the observed was something I felt I always had to consider.

In terms of making good pupil contacts for later in-depth discussions, my most un-productive week was the one spent with a top-achieving female pupil. This girl did not open out to me and was generally too busy with her academic interests to spend time talking to me. I also sensed that she blocked her friends in developing a rapport with me due to her influence among her peers. Timing, however, was of critical importance. For this girl and her main associates, the 5th year was one huge build up to 'O' levels. Primary objectives were getting through the syllabus, completing project work and having enough free periods for revision. Many of her friends voiced their willingness to talk to me "after exams" and made it clear that I was in their way in the meantime. The CSE-takers I met, although similarly locked into a syllabus and time-schedule, did not display the same fervour or interest in their exams and were prepared to take time out to talk to me. Indeed, many positively preferred taking time out to talk to me rather than concentrate on lessons. Brown (1987) found a similar ease of access with his 'tidy lads' who did their 'own thing' at school and were always ready for a chat. As a result, I concentrated initially on the CSE-takers and potential Easter leavers making arrangements to talk at length with a number of top achieving pupils upon their return to the 6th form after the summer break.

INTERACTION WITH PUPILS

General approach

Overall, throughout the weeks of following pupils, I used a general
"would you help me?" approach. I made my research interests clear,
promised everyone absolute anonymity at the outset, and explained what
I wanted from them (i.e. a long term commitment to discussions on school
and work). I made it clear that my work could succeed only if they were
prepared to talk to me openly and asked that anyone interested should let
me know. The response to this was far better than I had anticipated.
Many pupils were only too pleased that someone wanted to hear their point
of view. The problem was eventually one of selecting out some volunteers
without offending them or prejudicing desired contacts with others.

As a general principle, I made every attempt to speak to my future
informants at any opportunity. If we met in the grounds of the school,
out in the street, at the local weekend market, or on the way out of school
in the afternoon, I would engage in conversation. I capitalised on the
fact that I could be useful to some of them by giving them lifts home or
to the local leisure centre or out for a quick lunch. There was a stage
when in my domestic life, I required a general builder, electrician,
plumber and joiner due to moving house, and I asked around among my
contacts for any parents they knew in these trades. This consolidated my
relationship with some of the white boys who then saw me as a more 'real'
and practical person, instead of some 'researcher'. It gave us, in short,
a tangible link, just as my community activities gave something to the
black pupils.

The in-depth discussions/interviews

I made it clear to pupils that discussions would be unstructured and
conducted on a one-to-one basis. I used initial participant observation
in the classroom to arrive at eventual contacts for informal interviews.

I decided at an early stage that group discussions would not give me enough detail at the personal level and this was corroborated by a rather dry, impromptu discussion among five pupils during one English lesson. I also bore in mind the effect the one achieving girl had had in squashing her friends' interest in my study. Woods (1979) discusses the value of the group urging each other on to say more, versus the likelihood of one person dominating or inhibiting the rest. From my experience the latter was more likely to be the case, and as I wanted fairly personal, family information I felt that individual discussions were best on both these counts. My rationale for personal, informal interviews and discussions was similar to that of Zweig (1948). In Labour, Life and Poverty he decided against a questionnaire and formal questions in favour of

> "casual talks with working class men on an absolutely equal footing and in friendly intercourse."   (p.1)

As a result, he obtained

> "an exchange of views on life ..."   (p.1.)

and it was such that I required to make sense of the pupils' world of schooling, exams and the search for work.

It then remained for me to conduct a number of informal discussions with a group of some twenty informants, bearing in mind that these talks needed to verge on the 'informal interview' so as to cover the areas and issues of particular relevance to my work. As a pre-requisite, I had a check list of issues that should be raised during our discussions although I anticipated that some issues would fall flat and others develop into deeper conversation according to the interests and perspectives of each informant.

The rationale for selecting twenty informants was simply one of time constraints. I had to arrive at a 'feasible' number bearing in mind the length of time required for undertaking the discussions, follow-up, subsequent analysis and eventual writing up in time to submit a doctoral thesis.

Reflections on the in-depth interviews

One of my first problems in setting up informal discussions was the venue. Pupils had already complained to me that they had "nowhere to go" during free periods at school, and this shortfall came home to me when I wanted privacy with them on a one-to-one basis. The school was able to offer me the Interview Room (a small office near the Careers Adviser's room). I inspected this and found it formal, very school-like and not at all relaxing. Similarly, individual teachers offered me their classrooms if not in use, but these too seemed forbidding and were not necessarily available in the flexible way I required. Eventually, I 'thought on my feet' with each would-be informant and offered them something to their liking. In the process I discovered that pupils were much more forthcoming and willing to talk to me outside school. In fact, given that space for conversation, pupils who appeared to have little to contribute in class (judging from participant observation of them), were transformed into individuals with plenty to say about school, their own interests and ambitions. This concurs with Griffin (1985) who found a similar response among her school informants, she writes:

> "The young women felt more relaxed talking to me outside
> of school, and more able to look back on their experiences
> at school after they had left."   (p.109)

This second point of Griffin's was also true for me, inasmuch as my informants could also be more articulate about their education after they had left.

Concerning a suitable venue for interviews and discussions, I was fortunate that my home was only a walk or cycle-ride from the school and that it had a private study with armchairs so that privacy was easily arranged. It also meant that I could offer drinks easily to create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. However, I had not thought that the interviews would be conducted there, rather thinking I should be on my

informants' 'territory', but some pupils expressed an active interest in wanting to see my home, which I saw as an extension of the two-way flow and giving of oneself that is necessary in the research situation.

From the data contained in discussions I am quite certain that being away from the school and home environment was essential for pupils to have the confidence to speak their mind. It was also of paramount importance to some pupils that they were treated as complete individuals in their own right without reference to parents or the school who were still legally responsible for them. This was, I would argue, their need to be independent. One of my earliest ideas involving interviewing both parents was therefore dropped, for it became apparent that contact with them would undermine my credibility with pupils. As pupils' views and experiences were of paramount importance to me I was not prepared to jeopardise their trust and responsiveness by extending the research beyond the limits of what seemed 'acceptable' to my informants.

The initial informal discussions took $1\frac{1}{2}$ - 2 hours to complete. I deliberately introduced a check-list of topics for discussion so as to gain information on my informants' home background; brief school history; views of school, exams and particular subject likes/dislikes; views on future employment and what they wanted for themselves in general. Conversations were then allowed to move onto broader social issues - (e.g. unemployment, how school operated and teachers taught). Subsequent discussions were a mixture of follow up in the 6th form or job market, plus self-reports on what was happening to them and how they viewed their lives and futures.

No-one refused to be taped during discussions, although I noticed that I was frequently expected to take the lead and not give them options such as this. Indeed, overall there was a lack of assertiveness and decision-making among informants. This sometimes made for poor rapport

in discussions. I could ask a question and be met with an interminable

silence and an eventual "Don't know". Listening to tapes after the event

I noted that I had a tendency to 'rescue' the conversation by altering

the question or even answering it for them! e.g.

"Do you feel there's no point in doing that?"

I had to try hard to guard against leading informants into my way of

thinking but sometimes, in sheer human terms it was necessary to recon-

struct the two-way flow rather than leave someone stranded. Interestingly,

perhaps my suggested answers to questions did not lead people as much as

might be thought. Whilst some informants would then agree with my

suggestion, it was equally likely that they would respond with

"Oh no! Not that, it's just that ...."

At best perhaps, my interjections could be regarded as catalysts, although

I would not deny that there is a fine line between encouraging informants

and leading them.

One final reflection upon these in-depth interviews is that I had not

allowed, at the outset, for the profound effect some of my informants

would have on me. Sometimes, the hard 'data' crowded in on me when it

related to their home backgrounds and unhappiness with their situation, or

with aspects of racism. I felt emotionally involved, taking on their own

perspectives. Whilst good ethnography should be precisely this, I had

not expected to feel so involved and to care so readily. I would say,

however, that it was difficult to be a caring listener and a detached

observer simultaneously. In consequence some part of oneself has to be

given to the real-life situation and only afterwards can the data be viewed

impartially having distanced oneself again from informants. In Woods'

(1979) appendix to The Divided School he warns against developing

"macroblindness" (p.271), but whilst working directly with informants I

believe the narrow, individual's view had to be absorbed. Larger, external

issues bearing on that individual's life view could only be overlaid at a later stage. Detachment returned later when analysis of the data was undertaken.

THE 5TH FORM QUESTIONNAIRE

Another more formal and quantifiable part of my research was the administering of a questionnaire to all 5th year pupils. This was given or sent to all pupils registered in the 5th form whether attending school or not.

The questionnaire was administered in March 1985, before the Easter vacation when some pupils would be officially leaving school. It was at this time of year, that the Head had a brief interview with every pupil about their future plans. The interviews were, indeed, very brief, approximately three minutes each. However, in this time the Head would establish whether each pupil was fixed up with a job or YTS, had taken advantage of the various careers services available both in school and at the local Careers Office, or intended to continue with education in the 6th form or College of Further Education.

It was whilst waiting for this interview that I asked all pupils to complete my questionnaire. Of the 251 pupils in the 5th form 155 were present for the Head's interviews and of these, 152 completed the form. Of the remaining 96 pupils, some 41 were known to be absent for long term reasons as follows:

13 Poor attenders

10 School refusers

2 Suspended

2 Pregnant

3 Special Needs Education out of normal classrooms

11 On long term work experience

Postal questionnaires were sent out in May 1985 to these 96 pupils

and after a second reminder 41 postal replies to the questionnaires were received.

Thus in total 193 replies were received representing 77% of the entire 5th form.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish pupils' likes and dislikes about school and their opinions of the careers advice available to them. It was also aimed at obtaining data on their work experience (if any), job choices and work aspirations upon leaving school. A sample of the questionnaire appears as Appendix I. It was intended that larger-scale data for the entire 5th form could then be compared and contrasted with data from the in-depth discussions conducted with my twenty informants. In the event, the questionnaire data was most useful in setting the scene and identifying trends in pupils' opinions and job choices that could then be illustrated and explained by the more descriptive data gained from in-depth informants.

In administering the questionnaire to the 155 pupils who attended the Head's interviews, I approached students by explaining my research interests and indicating how useful their co-operation in completing the form would be. Whilst some pupils were very willing to participate, others did so with clear non-verbal signals of boredom or disinterest. I felt sure that the main reason why only three pupils failed to complete a questionnaire was because the Head was present and pupils saw my activity as being sanctioned by the school and a non-voluntary part of the session. On this basis, I anticipated a number of spoilt forms but subsequent scrutiny of the replies revealed no deliberately 'spoilt' forms and in the main, pupils had provided a lot of information in answer to my questions. This data was later coded for input to a computer so that any gender and racial differences in pupils' opinions and aspirations could be analysed.

INTERACTION WITH STAFF

Although the views of staff and observation of them was only peripheral to my line of study, teachers themselves played an important part in access to pupils, records and operational matters and so relationships with them were of vital importance.

The Head

I have already intimated that the Head was a busy person and that I was left to my own devices to develop whatever contacts I needed. I therefore benefitted from not feeling that those in control were watching me – they were, after all too busy to pay me much attention. The only negative effect of this was that I felt like an unnecessary hindrance every time I needed to consult the Head on extending my access (e.g. re-negotiating permission to administer a questionnaire), or to gain his approval of my draft letter to parents asking permission to interview their children. In addition, it took some patience and fortitude to wait until the Head was sufficiently free of work commitments to spare me the time for an interview. A spare slot would be weeks, rather than days ahead. However, I was always treated with candour and felt that my presence at school was of interest to him.

The teachers

The general atmosphere among staff was one of being able to speak one's mind. I largely managed to circulate and gain the co-operation of everyone I approached. Only two teachers refused me permission to sit in on their lessons with pupils during the weeks of participant observation. (An advance notice had been pinned up in the staffroom asking for any dissenters to notify me or the Head of 5th Year immediately.) One teacher's

reason was that she was having difficulty with the particular pupil I wished to follow and felt that my presence would be detrimental. The other had not read the advance warning notice, and turned me away from his classroom before the lesson began. I was told afterwards by my pupil of that week that he was a real stickler for discipline and probably did not want me to see the way he treated his class. It came as <u>no</u> surprise to my pupil and her associates that he did not want me there. In fact, it served to confirm their negative opinion of him.

There is no doubt that my first week spent following the Section 11 teacher around gave other staff a 'label' with which to brand me. This teacher was definitely in the 'progressive' camp (see Chapter 4) and early introductions via her were to like-minded members of staff, predominantly but not exclusively female. She was sufficiently sensitive to this to advise me not to be seen constantly in her company and suggested I deliberately sit elsewhere in the staffroom for the next week or two. This I did, and found myself explaining my research interests to different staff in different ways. I always told the truth, but not the <u>whole</u> truth, trying to judge their own stand on such matters as class-origin of pupils, ethnicity and the current job market before saying too much. I can find no better words to describe this than Woods (1979) who states:

> "I accepted the practical fact that I could not present
> the same face to all the people all of the time, and
> that from then on I had stronger relations with some
> staff and weaker relations with others. It is another
> indication of becoming part of the scene, and how one's
> own interaction in it pulls one in certain directions."
> (p.263)

Thus, some staff were positively helpful in not only granting me access to their lessons, but also granting me valuable lesson time in which to describe my research interests to pupils and answer their questions about it. Others gave me their own opinions on how sexism and/or racism was operating in the school, giving me useful hints on things to follow up.

Then again, simple conversation and eavesdropping in the staffroom was often very informative, especially for knowing the reputations of individual pupils, the attitudes of various teachers towards teaching and pupils and towards the futures of the pupils they taught.

Approach with staff

My usual approach with staff was one of interest and innocence whilst gently probing. I tried to appear uninformed without being ignorant, and tended to ask for their advice or assistance rather than bluntly ask for their views on specific issues. Some of the teachers were form teachers for pupils who were destined to be my in-depth informants and of them I required a teacher's overview of individual pupils' academic performance, special fortés or shortcomings. It was noticeable that the teachers' opinions did not necessarily match my views of the same pupils. This could be attributed to differences between my and the teachers' perspectives, or to the pupils reacting differently to me than to the teachers. It was not intended to dwell on teacher attitudes towards pupils in my study, and my main reason for involving staff was to give me a starting point - a bit of background on my pupils - before entering 'cold' into discussions with them. Nevertheless, in some cases, the teacher's view of an individual was known to pupils or had relevance to how they were perceived. Such cases are discussed in later chapters.

Just as I gave something of myself to pupils and allowed them to know about my private life, so I also got involved with teachers and helped them out on occasions. I 'rescued' the Home Economics teacher on one occasion by collecting some plates urgently required for an evening school function; lent props for the school play; donated goods to an auction designed to raise money for the forthcoming school trip to Africa and donated photographs and material on Africa towards specific class projects. I also attended post-school meetings on curriculum planning, community

projects, outreach to young single parents etc., not because such meetings were essential to my work, but because they broadened my general understanding of the ethos of the school and helped form good staff relationships.

Relationships with staff

I have already mentioned that staff were very keen to have feedback from me and from my pupils and that this posed a problem of confidentiality (see p. 32). From a different angle, however, this demonstrated their acceptance of me and that my opinion was valued. The most usual area where my opinion was sought, was over pupil control. A few female staff had problems of control in lessons I observed and they were truly anxious to know if I could see "what went wrong" and how they could have handled the lesson differently. As a non-teacher I felt unable to help or advise, but I could at least commiserate and show sympathy. I could not offer advice but equally I was not pretending to know better than them and so threaten them. I could only be a friend, and for my own research purposes this was an ideal, neutral role. I noted, however, the insecurity of some staff.

My relationships with staff ran smoothly throughout my two terms spent in the school, but I noted with interest a withdrawal of co-operation and a mild irritation at my presence during the height of the teachers' industrial action of 1985. When the time came for this school to close for one-day strike action, and NUT members were advised to undertake no extra duties and be off campus during the lunch break, it proved very difficult to see people for a quick word as I had done previously. Ill-feeling between staff was also more noticeable at this time, the staffroom having a smattering of non-union supporters and those who found it inconvenient to leave the premises. Others clearly felt the conflict between abiding by union decisions and the opportunity that the staffroom

afforded in terms of attending to urgent marking and small administrative tasks. I was fortunate that the vast majority of my need for staff contact had passed by the time union action escalated, but if I had been at the <u>early</u> stage of my research this 'external factor' would have impeded my access, if not set it back completely.

POST-SCHOOL REFLECTIONS

Looking back after the event at the way access was gained to first the school, and then the pupils, I can identify what I see as key factors in the successful development of the research. I can also look back and regret avenues that were not explored during the course of the research. Briefly the main points that remain with me are as follows:

(i) I have always been grateful that I was well-informed before contacting the school and that I was (and still am) a local person. This proved invaluable in talking to pupils who expected me to 'know' certain local things. I, therefore, avoided having to get to know a number of basics before research could get underway.

(ii) I am pleased that I did not enter the school as a teacher and that I am not a teacher by training. Being 'independent' of the process of schooling I posed no threat to either pupils or teachers and this enabled me to operate successfully in both groups.

(iii) I regret my general inability to be in two places at once, and regret two specific events missed for different reasons. One was the local YTS Open Day, missed due to the death of my father, the other was a 'lightning' Students' Day of Action against YTS that occurred without notice on a day I chose to stay away from school and write up notes. It is 'one-off' things of this nature that make social science research so 'unscientific' if they are missed, and so unique if they are incorporated.

(iv) I wish the study could have been more longitudinal so as to follow the educational or career paths of my informants over a number of years.

Whilst teacher and pupil oral accounts can provide past history and current events, longitudinal data seems to offer greater utility in practical terms in understanding what happens to pupils at school and how it affects them well into adulthood. In this respect, I subsequently became part of a team that followed the lives of female school leavers from the area, over a period of three years.

(v) At the theoretical level, I was never certain that reading other school ethnographies prior to undertaking research was constructive. Now I feel that to do so creates a bias towards already recorded features of school/pupil life as legitimate areas for concentration of one's efforts. As a result I suspect that the novice may well down-grade their own themes and perspectives as being unworthy when they may indeed be exciting, new areas to explore. I therefore remain glad that I 'blocked out' the literature and discovered the issues that were important direct from the consumers themselves, i.e. the pupils.

(vi) Finally, I see the ethnographic situation as fluid and requiring a common-sense approach from the observer. As such the researcher must not adhere too rigidly to a pre-formulated structure. This was brought home to me by my own field notes. My first impressions took me in certain directions, in search of certain 'relevant' data, but later 'informed' impressions caused me to scrap some avenues of observation and rely more heavily on others. Burgess (1984) reflects on the fluidity of the research process and Corrigan (1979) discusses the distance between the researcher's expectations and the reality as experienced by one's informants. At the operational level I can only describe the on-going quest for data as being one that relied massively on common sense decisions and the flexibility to explore whatever avenues seemed profitable. If this renders ethnography unacceptable, then I can only suggest that the criteria used for judging ethnographic research are not relevant to the task.

Ideally, an ethnography is both rich and varied whilst also having wider applicability via comparison with larger scale data of which it forms part. I hope that my study fulfils such a requirement. If it does, then it is due to both 'a priori' methodological decisions and 'ad hoc' ones, plus the goodwill of many patient pupils and teachers.

Having discussed, at length, the process of gaining access and starting research, it is now necessary to describe the school selected for study and its environment. Chapter 3 begins with such a description then Chapter 4 incorporates my earliest impressions and reactions based on both observation and what pupils and teachers were prepared to share with me.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO BRIDGEHURST AND LEAFIELD COMPREHENSIVE

THE CITY OF BRIDGEHURST

Bridgehurst is a small city of some 100,000 inhabitants in southern England. The city features three industrial estates, central and suburban shopping areas, various private colleges and a university. It has a popular football team and offers various cinemas, theatres and leisure centres. Bridgehurst is not noted for high levels of unemployment, nor does it have a run-down inner-city area with high concentrations of ethnic minority families. Data from the 1981 Census (OPCS 1982a,b) reveals that the New Commonwealth and Pakistan-born population is around the $3\frac{1}{2}$% mark from which an estimate of some 7% can be made to include British-born black and Asian citizens that remain invisible in Census statistics.

Ethnic minorities are not evenly distributed throughout the city and its suburbs. An unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (1975) [1] examining spatial segregation in the city demonstrated that the early post-war Indian immigrants were, by the mid-1970s, settled into a highly fashionable suburb characterised by expensive and spacious Victorian properties. Arriving slightly later, West Indian (black) families had settled initially in inexpensive rented accommodation near the city centre but had, by the 1970s, shifted towards Council housing, primarily on Leafield Estate on the southern edge of the city. Subsequent arrivals from Pakistan and Bangladesh were clustered in private rented and private owner-occupied run-down Victorian terraced houses close to, but not in, the city centre.

Leafield Estate

Leafield Estate is a housing estate initiated by the City Council in the 1950s as part of their Development Plan subsequent to the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. Originally the objective was that this

estate should provide rented accommodation for the expanding workforce of major industries situated nearby. By the early 1980s some 10,000 people were resident on the estate and some houses had passed into private owner-occupation due to the City Council's policy of selling to tenants. Nevertheless the vast majority of families remained as tenants of the Council.

In a further unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (1967) [2] there were no "coloured" (sic) children on the school rolls in the older part of the estate in 1967. At that time there was only one "black" member of the Social Club and two "West Indian" boys in the Boy Scouts. By 1983, some 10% of pupils at the local middle school were of West Indian origin, there was a thriving West Indian Youth Club, and varied services offered to the black community including a supplementary Saturday School initiative [3]. Two interesting features of this estate were its youthful age structure and increasing proportion of West Indian-origin families. As the estate developed during the 1960s it was mostly younger couples with small children who were housed there. As a result, in 1983 the retired population was still low, and the estate still comprised mainly middle-aged families plus their now-adult children and their respective very young children. In addition, the number of West Indian-origin families on the estate had risen out of proportion to the figures for the city as a whole. Using the 1981 Census data cited above, the number of Caribbean-born persons in the city as a whole totalled 1.2% of the total population. Yet, taking the estate alone from the OPCS Small Area Statistics, no less than 7% of the estate's population was Caribbean-born. Furthermore, one third of the city's Caribbean-born population was clustered on Leafield Estate giving it the highest density of black families of any area in the city.

Hillrise

This area was, in effect, two council estates, providing some 20%
of the intake at Leafield. It comprised mostly pre-war council housing
of concrete unit construction together with other 1930s brick-built council
houses. Towards the city-side edge of the estates the houses gave way to
larger 1930s semi-detached properties in private ownership. Originally
the estates were totally council-owned but in accordance with council
policy, a small proportion were sold to tenants and eventually entered the
house market. As the origins of Hillrise were some twenty to thirty years
earlier than Leafield, the area had a higher proportion of elderly residents.
In addition, the Caribbean-born population stood at less than 1% of the
total population. Situated just a short cycle ride from the industrial
area and major factories, this estate also served as housing for many
manual workers.

Rushmead

The once separate village of Rushmead was by 1984, hardly distingui-
shable from the various suburbs of Bridgehurst. In the 19th century it had
comprised both stone and brick-built terraced cottages, a Sanatorium for
mentally ill patients, and a cluster of wealthy land-owners, clergy and
squires. At that time the Sanatorium provided a good deal of unskilled
employment for the local residents and children attended the typically
Victorian village school. Leafield School was located on flat meadow land
between Rushmead and Leafield Estate and was the 'natural' choice of upper
school for both these areas. Rushmead itself had a large council estate
of pre-war origins. Houses were mostly constructed of concrete slabs with
asbestos-tiled roofing, giving a bleak appearance. These houses abutted
one side of the school premises.

The population characteristics of Rushmead were similar to those of
Hillrise only with a slightly increased elderly population and higher

proportion of detached properties where it adjoined open countryside and farm-land. The proportion of West Indian-origin families was, like Hillrise, under 1%.

Leafield School's catchment area

The major council estates of Leafield, Hillrise and Rushmead, inhabited as they were by predominantly manual and unskilled workers (OPCS, 1982b), provided a solidly working class catchment area for Leafield School. Houses that had been purchased by tenants still remained mainly in the hands of manual workers such that Leafield School's intake included a majority of pupils from working class backgrounds. Indeed, a study of the occupations of 5th formers' parents taken from school records revealed something close to 90% of all pupils having an unskilled, manual working father and/or mother. Half of Leafield's intake came from Leafield Estate with a further one fifth coming from Hillrise. Rushmead accounted for a further one tenth of the school intake such that these three heavily working class areas provided the home environment for 80% of Leafield pupils.

LEAFIELD SCHOOL

Leafield School was formed in 1968 when the two co-existing grammar and secondary modern schools, on sites adjacent to each other, were merged to form one, new comprehensive school. Local Government Reorganisation in 1974 created a new County Council responsible for the school and by 1977 a major building programme was completed turning the original grammar and secondary modern blocks into part of an integrated and modern complex of buildings and quadrangles.

By 1984, the school accommodated some 900 pupils with approximately 100 in the two 6th form years combined. There were some 60 teachers and 30 support staff including office, technical, cleaning and kitchen personnel.

To the newcomer, the school appeared to be a strange mixture of 1960s-style 'modern' concrete and glass blocks, two to four storeys high with open plan staircases,in combination with single storey unit-construction or timber-framed buildings reminiscent of army camps and Nissen huts. These contained Maths, Science and Technical Blocks, a library and 6th form Centre, specialist subject suites and leisure/study facilities.

Figure 3(1) provides an impression of the sprawling layout of the school which, although modified to secure anonymity, still indicates the facilities that were afforded, their relative size and proximity to each other.

Pupils were very aware of their surroundings and the most vociferous comments concerned the upkeep of buildings and condition of the classrooms. For example, one lesson I observed was interrupted as follows:

<table>
<tr><td>Eileen:
(out loud)</td><td>"This place is a dump, have you seen
the state of it?"</td></tr>
<tr><td>Liz:
(to teacher)</td><td>"Look at this disgusting roof", [the teacher
agrees].</td></tr>
</table>

Indeed the room we were occupying at the time <u>was</u> depressing. Located in a dark-stained, ship-lapped timber, single-storey building in the middle of the school site, it looked, from the outside, like a large Boy Scouts' hut. My field notes at the time say about the classroom:

"Rather drab and austere by first and middle school
standards I have seen locally. Ceiling construction is
soft-board panels and the paint on 50% of these is flaking.
There are holes in the ceiling; large, brown water stains
and black mould on 2 of the 6 panels (roof leaking?) and
one such bad patch surrounds a fluorescent light.

The walls and radiators are acid yellow/green and the
latter are old-fashioned, 'institutional' radiators.
There is a lot of visible, chunky pipework. Wood block,
herring-bone flooring and partition walls complete the
room. Tables are wood-grain formica on 4 metal legs, chairs
to match on metal legs, the room seats around 30 people.
Desks are slightly damaged at the edges, some edging strips
are missing but there is <u>very</u> little graffiti, no cuts or
inking on table tops. Windows go the length of one wall
making it hot and stuffy today with the radiators on.
Windows open in pairs using a winding handle soon creating
a cold draught. Two thin blue curtains hang at one set
of windows but they are missing from the other.

FIGURE 3(1):   PLAN OF LEAFIELD SCHOOL TO SHOW FACILITIES AND TYPE
OF BUILDINGS

MATHS
BLOCK
plus
SPECIAL
NEEDS

6TH
FORM
CENTRE

GARDEN

GREEN
HOUSE

TECHNICAL   BLOCK

NEEDLEWORK, ART
AND CATERING
STAFF
ROOM   OFFICES

SCIENCE
BLOCK

TO
SPORTS
FIELDS

HALL

LANGUAGES AND
HUMANITIES
BLOCK

TO
SPORTS
FIELDS

ENGLISH BLOCK

MISCELLANEOUS
OFFICES

LIBRARY
MUSIC
ROOMS

GYM

SWIMMING POOL

TO CAR
PARKING

COMMUNITY EDUCATION
CENTRE
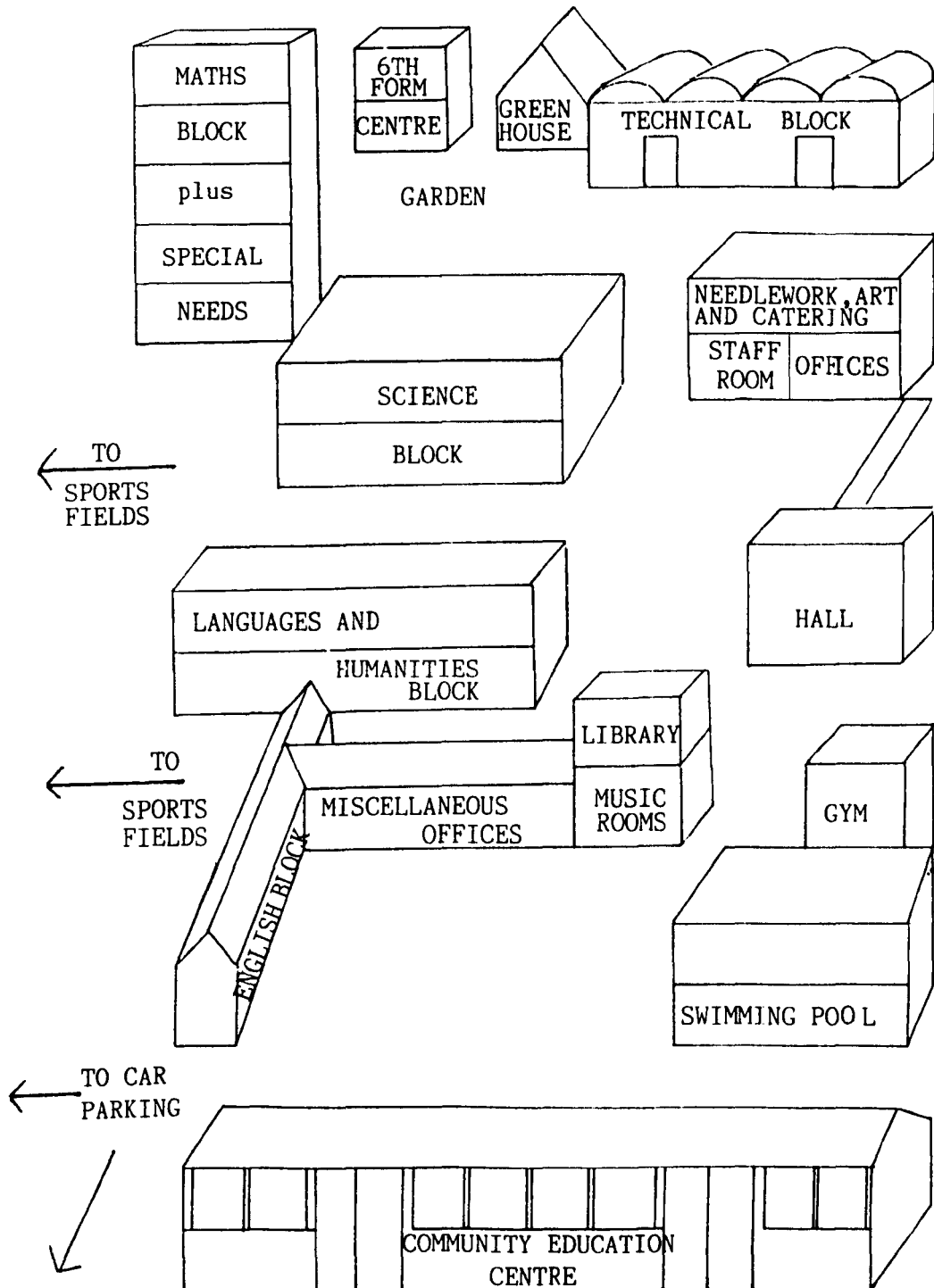
Teachers have begun to brighten the room with posters
but it has a transient population all day long. Posters
are of pop stars, local maps for community work projects,
pregnancy and health care, racing cars, planets and press
cuttings about Pete Marsh [the recently discovered Iron
Age Man].

The three lockable cupboards housing text books are a
mixture. One old, dirty-looking tall pine cupboard; one
modern, glass-topped low cupboard and a further white
laminated one. The teacher's desk is a light oak table,
very plain, standing directly in front of the chalk
board.

A connecting door to another classroom (presently
unoccupied) blows open because the door jamb is split
and the lock cannot connect into its housing. It is
wedged shut with a chair."   (Field notes 8.11.84)

AIMS OF THE SCHOOL

The aims of the school, as stated in the 1984 handbook to parents were

"to provide the best possible secondary education for every
one of our pupils".

Emphasis was placed on giving each pupil a good start in adult life not

only in terms of qualifications obtained at school but also in

"equipping them for continuous education at Further or
Higher level, for their work, for their leisure-time, for
their relationships with other individuals and for their
community responsibilities".   (A Guide for Parents, 1984)

The school handbook went further to explain in detail the skills and

issues it hoped to promote during each pupil's time at the school. An

extract read:

"Listed below are the skills, the concerns and the various
kinds of awareness that we wish each student to acquire in
the maximum measure that intelligence, temperament, aptitude
and supporting background make possible.

Numeracy, literacy and the communication skills associated
with them.

Respect for the worth and dignity of all people whatever
their race, nationality or creed.

Respect for truth and the ability to exercise the human
capacities for curiosity, criticism, reasoning and sensiti-
vity in establishing it over falsehood and in making
judgements about the values of different truths.

A good general knowledge drawn from areas of human learning that are generally accessible and that our society has deemed important. These are likely to embrace the arts, sciences, humanities and the social sciences and to include moral, political and aesthetic learning.

The capacity to develop a concern for what is important and worthwhile and to persevere in the pursuit of such excellence.

The capacity to find enjoyment in all good learning experiences.

Appreciation of the sensitivity and the social skills that are likely to lead to successful relationships with others.

A respect for Beauty and a concern to enjoy it and, if possible, help create it for others in whatever activity the individual may discover talent or ability.

A regard for the natural environment and a determination to preserve it for future generations.

A regard for healthy recreational activities and a willingness to participate in and promote these in the interests of human wellbeing, co-operation and higher endeavour.

An understanding of those communities at home and at work in which our students are likely to find themselves and a readiness to work constructively within those communities."   (A Guide for Parents, 1984)

From this it is clear that the school was far more than a strictly academically-orientated one. There was a keen desire to broaden the nature of the education the pupils receive particularly in the area of awareness of, and sensitivity towards, the needs of others, especially in the community. There was a desire to make the education on offer relevant to the needs and aspirations of the mostly working class pupils who attended the school.

Much of this could be attributed to the appointment of a new head teacher in 1982. His philosophy was one of removing traditional boundaries between academic disciplines aiming instead for an integrated syllabus. In addition, he favoured mixed ability teaching and had implemented a common core curriculum in some subjects. Details of this are contained in the next section.

The Head also favoured the idea of the 'community' school, the objective being that Leafield should be open for local residents to use its facilities and that parents should be actively encouraged to have a say in their children's education via the Parents Association. Whilst there was some local uptake òf the school's swimming pool, coffee mornings and adult learning centre, there was little parental involvement in school matters save for the conscientious efforts of a committed few. Indeed, such was the low level of parental involvement that teachers often judged a good, supportive home background by whether or not a mother or father bothered to turn up on parents' evenings, there being little or no expectation that any other involvement would be forthcoming.

> Form teacher: "Oh yes. Nice family, plenty of
> (said of Sylvia   encouragement. Mother always
> - a white pupil)   comes to parents' evenings and
>   responds to letters."

Leafield school then, set out to 'reach' its public and provide useful community services. From my observations, however, this meant little to the pupils attending the school.

THE CURRICULUM

All pupils joining the school followed courses in the following areas:

        English Language and Literature
        Expressive Art - (Art, Drama, Music and Dance)
        Science and Technology
        Modern Languages
        Mathematics
        Community Studies - (incorporating History, Geography,
                                    Religious Education)
        Home Studies - (incorporating Needlecraft and Domestic
                            Science)
        Games and Physical Education

All the main examination subjects were offered at G.C.E. O-level and/or C.S.E. together with a variety of courses in Russian, Latin, Environmental Studies, Economics, Humanities, Sociology, Social Studies, Statistics, Computer Studies, Commerce, Parentcraft, Engineering Drawing, Motor Mechanics, Control Technology, Photography, Movement Studies and Christian Ethics.

Apart from this, the school also offered its own local Certificate of Educational Achievement to all students joining the school after September 1983. This certificate provided an assessment of qualities other than pure academic abilities and ensured that each pupil left school with some measurable assessment of their achievements. The certificate did not, however, relate to the pupils in this study who were the last year to come through under a more traditional system. Apart from the Certificate of Educational Achievement, the new pupils after September 1983 also had greater lateral flexibility in the subjects offered. Either exam or non-exam modules could be followed in a way not possible before. However, as curriculum content was not the focus of this study, and indeed this new initiative did not affect the informants in my research (viz: students finishing compulsory education in 1985), I do not intend to discuss it in any detail. Suffice it to say, that in the Head's opinion, subsequent pupils would have a better deal out of their subjects and more choices open to them. Whether this affected levels of satisfaction with schooling is impossible to say, and could have only been ascertained by a further study of my informants' younger peers finishing their compulsory schooling in 1986. However, judging by early observation of the 4th year who were following this revised curriculum, they found school equally as boring as their 5th form peers. School was still compulsory, it had set hours and set lessons. Pupils did not appreciate the niceties of curriculum reform and integrated studies, failing to see any relevance in the new-style syllabus and the good intentions of teachers.

In the 6th form, pupils could follow a fairly standard range of 'A' level subjects including English, Mathematics, Science subjects, Languages, Art, Music, Religious Education, History, Geography, Woodwork, Economics and General Studies. Special tuition was also available for those sitting Oxford and Cambridge University entrance examinations but no-one aspired to such heights from the 5th form year that I observed.

Pupils were also very much encouraged to stay on in the 6th form to re-take 'O' levels if necessary. Business Education Council (BEC) courses, Secretarial (RSA) and City and Guilds courses were also offered. These two factors contributed towards the high uptake of 6th form studies for a school which had very few high-flyers.

Indeed Summer 1985 'O' level results revealed only four grade As out of 280 entrants. Nevertheless the two 6th form years usually totalled some 100 - 120 pupils, approximately half of the number in the 5th form year. The precise reasons for this high uptake, including whether 6th form was utilised to avoid YTS or unemployment is considered later in Chapter 9.

In addition to the standard curriculum, the school prided itself in a number of special projects and activities. The school had its own residential centre for weekend and holiday ventures, conducted field studies at County-run outward bound centres as well as engaging in ski-ing, hill walking and surfing expeditions. Foreign exchange visits were available to language students and school trips abroad were organised for the summer vacations. In 1985 there was a major study trip to a school in East Africa and many school projects were organised around this theme, including major fund-raising events. Beyond this the school presented dramatic and musical productions throughout the year and had an excellent reputation for its sporting achievements.

One particularly interesting feature of the school calendar was an Activities Week. Held every year after the summer examination sittings, all lessons stopped and students could sign up to learn various skills or participate in a multitude of activities offered according to the interests and expertise of members of staff. 1985 Activities Week included cycling trips in the local countryside, mural painting, foreign foods, sailing, fantasy adventure games, pottery, bridge and egg races. (This list is by no means exhaustive.)

CAREERS ADVICE

Leafield offered careers advice to its pupils in a number of different ways. The school had a "Head of Careers and Industrial Liaison", a full-time member of staff with additional responsibility for:

(a) arranging and timetabling visiting speakers from a variety of industrial and commercial employers who recruit new staff in the area,

(b) organising talks in school by the local careers officer,

(c) industrial liaison both to secure work experience placements for most members of the 5th form and, occasionally, to lobby for equipment or finances to assist the school,

(d) individual career interviews with every member of the 5th form to advise on their interests and ambitions.

In recognition of all these duties, the teacher concerned received an additional two hours per week on his timetable, but the work load involved many more hours than that. Many of his free periods were spent telephoning prospective visiting speakers and setting up work experience opportunities. In addition, throughout their final year of compulsory schooling the 5th form had career talks on average one period per week which required the career teacher's presence.

Pupil perspectives on the careers advice and world of work are contained in Chapter 8 together with observational and interview data on the careers service. Discussion of this important area is therefore postponed until then. For the present, suffice it to say that staff appreciated the importance of both work experience and careers advice and operated a system designed to benefit the pupils in this respect. This system was found to be lacking by many of my informants, confirmed also by my observations and responses to the questionnaire.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION

The Form Group System. Each year group, which numbered around 250 pupils, was split into form groups each with its own Form Tutor. The Form Tutors were responsible for checking the daily registers and for giving out twice-weekly bulletins and messages to their classes before they left each morning to attend various lessons in both mixed-ability and ability groups. Each Form Tutor had prime responsibility for the care and counselling of students in his/her group including giving praise and encouragement, collecting merits awarded by other teachers to members of the class, and effecting any sanctions (see next section). The Form Tutor was also responsible for inviting parents to organised meetings and contacting them personally at other times as deemed necessary. During the course of this study, the 5th form contained 251 pupils and was split into ten form groups, giving each member of staff responsibility for, on average, 24 to 26 pupils.

One step up from the Form Tutors were the Senior Tutors. They had responsibility for supervising the effectiveness of a group of tutors and checking that all agreed procedures were duly carried out whilst also operating as a Form Tutor themselves. The Senior Tutors also formed the next stage in the referral system of sanctions discussed in the next section. In general there were two Senior Tutors for each year group.

The final link in the form group system was the Year Tutor. The Year Tutor chaired regular meetings concerned with organisation and administration of the year group and also had responsibility for initiating school report programmes, assessments, and parental contacts. Further responsibilities included bringing issues to the attention of the Head that could not be resolved at year group meetings. This person also organised their year group's assemblies and allocated pupils to their form groups.

Overall, the form group system represented a hierarchical system of control through which matters arising at the level of the classroom could

be referred upwards for decision making or action where necessary, and
through which matters of policy and practice could be filtered downwards
from the Head and Deputy Heads to all members of the teaching staff.
A series of fortnightly team meetings preceded by Senior Year Staff
Meetings created a channel for the dissemination of information. Similarly
in (subject) Departments, there were fortnightly departmental meetings
running alternately with the form team meetings at which matters arising
at a preceding Head of Departments meeting could be discussed. Throughout
the term then, all staff, whatever their status in the Department or
Form System, attended weekly meetings at which they could inform others
of events and be informed themselves.

The School Council. The School Council represented the pupil voice in
the decision making process at Leafield. Each form had an elected
representative on the council which met four times each term and was
chaired by a senior pupil. The Staff also had two representatives and the
Head and other Senior Staff were ex-officio members.

On a large range of matters directly concerned with the interests of
the pupils (e.g. school rules, punishment) its views were fully accepted
and the Council offered its opinions on other matters of wider concern.
Its agenda arose from proposals, recommendations and requests for
information formulated by Form Groups. Although the Head had a veto, it
was rarely, if ever, used.

The Council also had full control over the spending of the School
Fund (yearly contribution by parents). This normally amounted to about
£350 annually.

Each Form Tutor was responsible for ensuring that the election of
the form's representative was carried out in a serious manner, and that
the representative attended all meetings. The tutor had also to provide
opportunities for the group to discuss matters important to them and

encourage them to use the Council to voice their opinions/grievances. In practice, however, very few pupils had an interest in participating in this 'pupil voice'. Volunteers to be form representative were not always forthcoming and few of my informants knew or cared who their representative was.

RULES, REGULATIONS AND REWARDS

Rules and regulations were kept to a minimum at Leafield, and those that were in force concerning conduct had been agreed between the Head, teaching staff and School Council as being acceptable norms of behaviour both within the classroom and around the school generally. They included rules of courtesy and politeness, attention in lessons and orderly conduct at all times. There was no school uniform although pupils were expected to attend suitably dressed in a neat and tidy condition. Smoking was completely forbidden and being found smoking led automatically to detention.. Other forms of misbehaviour outside lesson time (e.g. fighting) could also lead to detention. Within the classroom situation, disruptive behaviour was first dealt with by a verbal warning from the teacher. From there, a referral system operated whereby a further offence led to the pupil being sent out of the classroom to report to the Year Tutor, the Deputy or Head teacher. Cases of persistent underachievement or misbehaviour were reported to the Senior Tutor for investigation and corrective action.

Where necessary, a pupil could be placed 'on report'. This involved the pupil carrying a pro-forma to every lesson over a specified period for each teacher to enter comments concerning the pupil's behaviour in their class.

Extra work could also be set as a sanction for messing about and low output, but instructions to staff stated that this must be of a "constructive nature" (Folder of Supplementary Information for New Staff).

The same document also stated

> "The Head insists that there be no corporal punishment in
> this school".

Instead, pupils who perpetually misbehaved or who were repeatedly in

detention were considered for suspension. Such action was, however,

considered drastic and would not occur without much staff and parental

consultation. During my time at the school there was just one suspension,

of a boy who let off a shot gun near a girl pupil injuring the side of her

face. Even then, the Head had been reluctant to suspend the boy but felt

he had no option but to impose the ultimate sanction.

The other side of the coin to sanctions and discipline was praise

and rewards. Staff were at all times urged to give verbal praise where it

was due and to consolidate this by awarding merit points for individual

pieces of work

> "deemed to be of very high standard for the pupil concerned"
> (original emphasis). (Folder of Supplementary Information
> for New Staff.)

When five merit points had been achieved the Senior Tutor could endorse

them by awarding a commendation. Twelve commendations in one year

qualified for a School Prize. In addition, there are several school cups,

shields and trophies that could be won for outstanding achievements in

sport and other competitions throughout the year. The school always tried

to bring good achievements to the attention of both parents and the pupil's

peers by announcing such things in Bulletins and at meetings. From my

observations, such rewards meant nothing to my informants and were not

regarded as motivators. My pupils stood little chance of receiving

twelve commendations in a year and did not actively strive to do so. Far

more likely for them, was the chance of being placed in detention for

smoking or insolence. Overall though, Leafield presented itself as a

school largely unencumbered by petty rules and regulations although its

pupils did not have a point of comparison that helped them appreciate this.

School Hours

To the utter dismay of many pupils, school started at the early hour

of 8.30 am each day and the only redeeming feature of this was that it

provided a half day on Wednesdays when school finished at 1.00 pm.

Officially this early finish on Wednesdays gave staff time to plan future

lessons on half a day per week, whilst also affording time for pupils'

extra-curricular sporting activities. In reality most teachers were

exhausted at 1.00 pm, having crammed four shortened periods into the

morning session, as a result they were soon off the premises. Leaving

the premises did not of course necessarily mean that teachers were not

working and some told me that they relied on the peace and quiet of their

homes for marking and preparation, there being little time set aside in

their timetables for such duties. In addition, space was at a premium

at the school and only a small room attached to the staffroom was available

for paper work. This was totally inadequate to meet the needs of sixty

teachers.

Each school day (except Wednesday) consisted of four periods. There

were three 1 hour 10 minute periods in the morning and a longer 1 hour 20

minute period in the afternoon. No bells rang to signal the end of each

lesson and in consequence, both teachers and pupils watched watches. The

lack of school bells was a feature of Leafield that developed more out of

default than design. The Head explained to me that the sprawling site had

never been fully fitted for bells in every area and so, when one of the

major bells broke down, staff were already familiar with guaging the

time for themselves. During attempts to repair the bells, it became

apparent that lesson changes carried on as normal without their clanging,

and so they fell into disuse.

However, pupils were not slow to exploit the opportunity for 'skiving'

that this lack of a school bell afforded them. Pupils arriving late for

lessons were able to blame their watches, and in one particularly

disruptive afternoon lesson I observed, two boys contrived for their

lesson to finish 10 minutes early. This they achieved by climbing onto a

cupboard and altering the hands of the classroom clock while the teacher

was out in the corridor sanctioning another boy for rude behaviour. Their

sense of amused victory was apparent as they sauntered nonchalently off the

school premises past the windows of other classrooms where other pupils

were still working and puzzled teachers looked on.

In general, however, it was with great precision that all classes

would erupt from their classrooms and spill out into the corridors and

thoroughfares at exactly the right time, pivoting themselves 'en masse'

towards their next port of call.

Noise levels in the corridors along with the general bustle was a

striking first image for me. The sheer volume of people milling about was

quite overpowering to an uninitiated observer.

"Organised or disorganised chaos?"

This is a comment I wrote in my field notes on Day Two of my initial

observation period whilst I was waiting with 25 boisterous teenagers for

their teacher to arrive. As someone who had attended an all-girls'

Convent Grammar School 25 years earlier, the 'casualness' of the pupils

seemed striking. My memories were of walking silently and calmly in single

file, speaking only when addressed by a teacher and working quietly and

diligently until the bell rang. This was not the mode of operation at

Leafield.

This movement between lessons did in fact eat into teaching time to a

considerable degree in many of the classes I observed. To begin with, all

classrooms had to be unlocked by the teacher upon occupation and locked

again upon vacation, even if the gap between two teachers being in attendance

was only a matter of minutes. This gave early arrivals the opportunity to

lounge around outside locked doors, and as they stood there, leaning
against the wall talking and shouting in groups with their bags blocking
the corridor, there would frequently be a hold-up for other pupils and
teachers trying to get past 'en route' to other destinations. Pushing and
shoving would break out causing a 'domino effect' on those standing in
line and general disruption ensued, such that other classes, perhaps
already settled, could not concentrate because of the rumpus.

I also noted that it often took five or ten minutes for a new group
to settle down before a lesson could begin. A typical entrance would be
for the boys to crash into the room first, thumping bags down on the
tables, scraping chairs across the floor and tussling with each other for
the seats they wanted to occupy. I timed this process at the start of
one lesson in which the class arrived to find the tables rearranged in an
unusable configuration. The teacher asked the pupils to put the tables and
chairs back into the normal 'U' shaped formation, whereupon the noise of
the upheaval became quite deafening. It was some twenty minutes into the
lesson before all was quiet and the lesson content could be started.

Similarly, at the end of lessons, pupils would start to check their
watches regularly within the final ten minutes of the period. Restlessness
set in and some would start to pack away their pens, shuffle their papers
and reorganise their bags. All of these ploys were aimed at time-wasting
for pupils knew precisely what the time was and some teachers would make
a stand about packing up by insisting that all books remained open and all
bags on the floor until they gave permission to pack away. However, many
either did not, or could not, control this time slippage, and combined
with their own need to call in books and lock them away in classroom
cupboards before the end of the lesson, the net result was that a seventy-
minute period was often reduced to fifty minutes of actual teaching time.

Similarly in transit, pupils knew precisely how much time they could

take getting from A to B. A number of pupils intent on 'getting the odd fag in' between lessons would be first out of the door, speedily behind the sheds for a few drags on a shared cigarette, and back among the final stragglers arriving for the next lesson.

The smoking issue

The main bone of contention between pupils and staff that I could discern was about smoking. There was a total ban on smoking throughout the school premises with an automatic detention for pupils caught in the act. This rankled and was a hot issue with many 5th formers who were now sixteen (or nearly so) and wished to smoke. A hard-core of smokers existed both male and female, and these were exclusively lower-achieving CSE and non-exam pupils.

Smoking went on in the toilets, behind the bicycle sheds, behind the Technical Block at the far end of the playing fields and in other odd corners. Cigarettes were often handed around and here girls would 'cadge a drag' off the boys and vice versa according to who had supplies.

This appropriation of school time and property for personal purposes was to reveal itself in other ways (see Chapter 4, pp.81-82). Furlong (1984) refers to a West Indian male appropriation of school space in this way, which suggested that this was a peculiar feature among West Indian youth. However, my observations revealed that both male and female, white and West Indian pupils would make space for themselves in this way. The opportunity was taken by many separate groups of friends who could be categorised more by their negative attitude to school and its petty rules than by gender or racial groupings. Thus, black and white pupils hung around together and would be involved in 'passing around'. The pupils that would come together to smoke at any one spot at a given time tended to be a loose group based on who they were teamed up with from the last lesson and where they were heading next. These spots, however, were only

frequented by those who wanted a quick smoke, and their friends, and not by other "goody-goodies" as Natalie, one of my informants, put it.

My acceptance by the pupils was demonstrated by my reception the first time I turned the corner behind the Technical Block and was confronted by seven boys sharing a smoke. I arrived with Natalie and two of her girl friends. The boys' immediate reaction was one of being 'found out'. Their faces dropped, one neatly passed the smouldering cigarette to his mate who placed it behind his back whilst turning his head away to exhale the smoke.

> "Ah, shit!" exclaimed another, thinking I was a teacher on
> duty checking things out.

> "It's OK, Mandy's with us" explained Natalie, "She won't
> say nothing".

This testimonial from another pupil was sufficient for everybody. They immediately relaxed and continued their cigarette. Natalie and friends lit up and offered their cigarette to me also. I felt fortunate in being able to refuse on the truthful grounds that I did not and never had smoked so would not enjoy it. (I had no wish to compromise my delicate position betwixt staff and pupils by risking being caught on a staff check both witnessing and participating in a forbidden activity.) The pupils found my refusal acceptable.

> "You're lucky then"

I was told, for many of them had been smoking whenever they had enough money to buy a packet of cigarettes for two, three or even five years.

Although I was pleased to be accepted so readily and trusted by the group on this occasion, I was nevertheless tested to see what I would reveal later on in a classroom situation as has been discussed in Chapter 2 concerning gaining the trust of pupils.

Another favourite place for smoking was the girls' toilets. Many of these in different blocks were supposed to be closed at break or lunch

times to avoid vandalism and general mucking about, but smokers were well-informed about which ones tended to be left open by omission or design. The girls would lean on the basins smoking and chatting with one non-smoking girl strategically positioned to see who came in the door. A non-verbal signal of stiffening and trying to look innocent was sufficient to send the smokers shooting into the cubicles to douse their cigarettes and pretend to be using the toilets. False alarms were always treated with relieved amusement.

One small clique of girls had a good routine sussed out with the school caretaker:

> "He's OK is Leonard. He gives us 10p to stay in here and
> make sure no-one bungs toilet rolls down the loo or breaks
> the seats and then we buy ciggies with it."

Leonard was indeed party to letting the girls have untroubled access to a particular set of toilets on the basis that they would "look after them for him". However, some of the tricks these girls got up to could easily have led to the accidental damage or vandalism he wanted to avoid (see p.81).

It was striking that these persistent smokers were not just working class youngsters but low-achieving or non-achieving into the bargain. Johnson et al. (1985) found a link between school pupils' smoking and social class with peer group influence also playing an important part in encouraging smoking as part of a desired image of adulthood the pupils wanted to project. At Leafield it would appear that being a non-O-level taker was another important variable in combination with a working class background. I would suggest that being an 'academic failure' gave the pupils more need to 'prove' themselves in other spheres, and that displaying adulthood via the right to indulge in a habit forbidden to children was an important part of 'being somebody'. Smoking provided an assumed adult status and also defied the school rules in line with an anti-school culture that most non-achievers and less-achievers ascribed to. It was also a way of rejecting the control

of teachers whom they saw as having no right to dictate their actions outside the realm of the classroom.

The smoking battle was therefore not simply about the right to enjoy a cigarette, it was about larger freedom and autonomy and about being accepted as an adult on equal terms with teachers. Chapter 4 now takes up this theme of freedom and autonomy via an exploration of pupil/teacher interactions and the accommodation and resistance employed by pupils in negotiating their way through each school day.

Footnotes

(1) This thesis cites the actual name of the city which is described here under the pseudonym of Bridgehurst, therefore full reference to it is withheld to preserve anonymity.

(2) Similarly, more detailed reference to this thesis cannot be made for its title reveals the true name of Leafield Estate.

(3) This data was gathered locally by me for the undergraduate project mentioned in Chapter I (p.26).

CHAPTER 4

THE FIFTH FORM AND THEIR TEACHERS

For their part, pupils could and did have some choice and flexibility
in their daily lives at school. Both legitimate and 'illegitimate'choices
were exercised in the classroom, and 'illegitimate' choices were made at
break times to appropriate school space for their own ends. This chapter
explores some of those choices and pupils' needs before moving on to a
discussion of teachers' perspectives and staffroom life.

THE 5TH FORM IN ACTION

The most noticeable evidence of pupil choice within the classroom was
seating arrangements. Pupils <u>always</u> sat with their friends, although
sometimes a teacher would split a group who were not working. They chose
to sit with friends in order to chat or 'have a laugh' as they worked.
Naturally enough, teachers' styles and tolerance levels varied between
individuals, but there was a large degree of free and easy discussion,
even banter, permitted in most lessons. Pupils clearly appreciated this
freedom evidenced later by the questionnaire returns from the whole 5th
year in which pupils rated friendly and fair teachers quite highly. Woods
(1983) emphasises the fact that pupils value teachers according to whether
they are fair, can take a joke and teach. Certainly Leafield pupils
utilised similar criteria in evaluating their teachers.

Pupils it seemed were no longer in awe of their teachers and felt
free to voice their opinions and feelings in the classroom situation. As
a result, dissatisfaction was rarely contained, taking instead the overt
form of either disruption, open criticism or complaint.

Responses to teachers

One unintended consequence of this more open style of teaching was
that pupils who chose to had plenty of scope to muck about. Events observed
ranged from throwing bags across the room to uncontrollable laughter at
an in-lesson joke, from doodling and chewing gum to telling the teacher to

"Fuck off!"

Beynon (1984) cites all of these ploys as means of 'sussing out' teachers
and establishing just how far they can go. Leafield pupils were adept at
testing teachers in this way.

Individual teachers coped in different ways and with one particularly
authoritarian male teacher there was no overt mucking about, or so the
pupils told me. (This was also the only teacher to refuse me access to
'sit in' on his lessons). My general conclusion from six weeks of
observations in the classroom situation was that female teachers had to
fight harder to be taken seriously by pupils and so gain control, and that
their reliance on shouting led to greater 'winding-up' and derision from
the class, not greater authority and control. Pupils would indeed, take
a teacher's shouting as an indication that they (the pupils) had 'got her
to lose her rag', a victory for them. Male teachers on the other hand
could raise their deeper voices and be authoritative. Whether this led
to work being achieved was debatable, but classroom order was maintained
allowing peace and quiet for those who wished to work.

However, some male and female teachers using a quiet, gentle approach,
could obtain the respect and co-operation of their classes. One male
science teacher in particular never raised his voice or appeared angry
yet he never had problems of control. He would explain, wait quietly,
mention that breaktime would be lost if work was not completed, and slowly
the lesson would progress satisfactorily. Another female English teacher
was able to maintain an orderly class by means of quiet sarcasm. For example,
in one lesson a boy was day dreaming and not paying attention to the class-
reading of the book Animal Farm. The teacher spotted this and asked him
a question which he could not answer:

"That's great isn't it!" she replied.

"A few weeks off the exam but you've got time to gaze out
of the window and not listen. Brilliant!"

Suitably shamed this boy at least looked at the book for the rest of the lesson.

Teachers who shouted to display authority or gain silence rarely achieved their objectives. Indeed, a few minutes of silence could be extracted from pupils by such techniques but the feeling of resentment from pupils was all too apparent in my observations, leading to further disturbances.

> "How dare you come into my lesson like this still?" shrieked one female teacher as her class rolled in, talking loudly and making a great deal of noise over the settling in process.

She eventually got silence from rows of dead-pan, resilient faces, had bags placed on the floor and pupils sat 'nicely' waiting to start the lesson, but she did not have the respect of the class and her lesson kept erupting in minor incidents to do with pens, rubbers, comments from the class and expressions of boredom.

Pupils, for their part, could really dish out the hard treatment if they chose to. The constant barrage of noise, insolence, mucking about, and general resistance to doing any work reduced some teachers (female) to tears. One such teacher left shortly after my in-school observation and she was deeply disillusioned about teaching teenagers. She was genuinely distressed and hoped that, as an observer, I would have some valuable advice to offer on how to avoid such situations or deal with them. I felt her anguish but knew I was powerless to help. Not only was I an independent observer there for other purposes with no wish to be seen by pupils as giving advice to teachers on how to 'tackle them', but I also knew that a whole set of complex antecedents had evolved between this teacher and the pupils such that she was now 'written off' by them and stood little chance of gaining their respect.

On another occasion, Julia, a girl now designated as 'brain-damaged'

and 'difficult' following a car accident, erupted in fury during a lesson

on Parentcraft. The female teacher was taking an all-girls class for this

subject – the only sex-segregated one in the school apart from P.E.

During the teacher's explanation of the various signs of pregnancy, Julia

vehemently disagreed with the teacher over whether or not menstruation

ceased during pregnancy. Her friend sitting next to her had raised the

query but Julia persisted with it, getting louder and louder.

"You're talking out of your arse !" she yelled at the teacher.

"I'm not fucking listening!"

Julia was challenged to behave or be sent to the referral tutor as part

of the disciplinary system. She quietened down on the following conditions:

"Only if you'll stop lying".

The teacher explained to me afterwards that she was more lenient with

Julia because of her 'problem' and because all staff agreed that her

outbursts should be tolerated to enable her to stay in mainstream

schooling. She had never behaved this way before her accident so staff

could forgive her.

I spent many an interesting break time talking to Julia and found her

intelligent and inquiring. From me she wanted to know about politics and

discuss CND (she sported a CND badge) and bore all the marks of an angry

and frustrated teenager wanting to know and do things and not knowing how

to go about it. With this girl in particular I found myself being used

as a source of information in the way Griffin (1987) describes. Schooling

certainly was not fulfilling her needs, and with me she was always lively-

minded, soul-searching and friendly. Three years later I spotted her in

the city centre enthusing to a friend she had met on the street about the

date of her forthcoming marriage. She was full of life and exuberance,

looked good in some 'smart casual' clothes and was clearly looking forward

to the change of status in her life. I made no enquiries into the actual

medical evidence of Julia's condition but knew that if I had not been told by staff that she was 'brain-damaged' I would never have taken her for anything other than a boisterous and over-zealous teenager with a penchant for bad language. Her change of 'mood' I would have put down to the onset of adolescent dissent. Staff, however, felt protected by her label of 'brain damaged' and it assisted them in coping with her otherwise embarassing and unacceptable behaviour.

Pupils engaged in other forms of disrupting or delaying lessons, and in testing the teacher.

> "Miss can't teach!" stated an Asian boy from the back of
> one class in a mischievous tone.

This created great amusement and the female teacher, struggling for command of the class, sent him out of the room to stand in the corridor.

> "It's Guy Fawkes Day today" announced one girl out of the
> blue in a Parentcraft lesson.
>
> "I'm going to the pub tonight to get pissed. Excuse my
> language, Miss!"
>
> "No I don't Sheila, so watch it please" came the teacher's
> warning shot.

This lesson was punctuated with other tests of endurance aimed at the teacher and it slowly disintegrated. After some non-effective shouting the teacher wrote up a long passage from a text book on the board and obtained some degree of orderly copying work by initiating this rote task. Comments like

> "I'm bored" or
>
> "I can't bloody see"

came and went for the rest of the lesson with a minimum amount of commitment and effort displayed by most of the 25 girls present.

Pupils would confide pieces of information in me and give me supplementary background to classroom incidents such as these, usually with a

view to putting _their_ side of a situation forward or putting down the teacher. For example:

> Natalie: "I bet you think we're all awful after yesterday", (referring to Julia's swearing incident over the pregnancy issue).
>
> A.M.   No, not really. I'm just interested that's all.
>
> Natalie: "We just get bored sometimes, but we're interested in what you're doing. Are you going to follow me?"

Yet again, after I had been turned away from observing a geography lesson:

> Toni: "Mr Stedman's always like that, strict he is. Not surprised he didn't want you in his class, he didn't want you to see how he treats us".

Another pupil volunteered the following after a particularly chaotic lesson:

> Anne: "Miss can't control us really. The men have got better control I think, but some female teachers can do it."

Control is discussed further in Chapter 5, but for now, the point is that as I began to talk to these pupils I felt very aware of being privileged inasmuch as they were allowing me to gain insight into their other selves. The self of friend, confidante, humorist, trouble-maker and 'dosser'. I felt (and still do feel) beholden to those pupils who allowed me into their private circles, and my feeling of responsibility towards them regarding usage of the data gathered remains with me also. All informants were guaranteed anonymity yet I was aware that graphical accounts of their activities and opinions would lay open areas of operation and points of view that were previously unknown to staff, even though individuals would never be discovered. Pupils were also aware of this but their concern was for their own personal protection _now_, not for whether I later wrote up events that took place. Overall I was pleasantly surprised and flattered at the trust pupils placed in me , and delighted at their candour in talking about life in school.

Coping strategies

Boredom was something frequently alluded to aloud in class and also in later private discussions with me. I cannot emphasise enough the great meaning and weight that pupils attached to verbalising the word "boring" by drawing out the sound, droning and sighing.

> "I'm so bored" sighed one young man rocking back on his chair and gazing at the ceiling.

> "Why's that?" I asked.

> "Cos I'm at <u>school</u> of course. That's boring".

Pupils told me that <u>teachers</u> were boring, <u>lessons</u> were boring and that coming to school <u>altogether</u> was boring. Such statements came predominantly from less-achieving pupils not involved in preparing for 'O' levels. A full discussion of their boredom appears in Chapter 7 , but for the present, suffice it to say that 'turned off' pupils had a whole repertoire of verbal and non-verbal signals ranging from sighs to insults and fiddling to falling asleep over the desk by which they conveyed their lack of interest.

However, some pupils were prepared to challenge the status quo rather than acquiesce or 'cut off' from the proceedings. Such challenges took the form of criticism or complaint and with these the appeal was still very definitely <u>to</u> the teacher with a view to obtaining modifications or assistance to 'improve' the work in hand. Sometimes, the appeal fell on deaf ears and pupils would mutter and curse to themselves and friends, but on other occasions some amendment of the task in hand was achieved. Pupils sought to re-negotiate the task in hand, for example:

> Female pupil: "Miss, why can't we read something else
>   that's interesting. This is <u>boring</u>"
>   (said in an English lesson).

and:

> Female pupil: "Why can't we have a film?"
>   (said in a geography lesson)

Frequently the criticism seemed justified and the suggested alternative a viable option, but in my observations teachers did no more than pay lip service to such appeals. Teachers might nod sympathetically or directly agree with a pupil's comment but took no steps to alter their lesson plan or content. As a result, the less academic pupils, (who will be discussed in Chapter 7) were the ones who lost interest in their lessons and failed to see their relevance. Such pupils then opted for other diversions including mucking about in class.

The library represented another way in which pupils could exercise some choice over the day's activities for teachers would sometimes ask for volunteers to go and work in the library. Invariably most hands in the class shot up at such a proposal and difficulty ensued over who should be privileged enough to be chosen to go and who should remain. The unlucky, unselected ones frequently groused about it. I noted that both boys and girls would elect to go to the library to work, but the majority chosen tended to be girls. The teachers I spoke to about this were inclined to think that the girls could be trusted to work quietly in the library without supervision. Boys were more likely to turn it into 'a doss', especially collectively and it was for this reason that the library was out of bounds for 'ad hoc' usage and locked at breaktimes.

On two occasions I joined the pupils sent off to work in the library some fifteen minutes after their departure. I found them talking quietly amongst themselves but also working, having already selected relevant books from the shelves.

A.M.:	Why did you want to come here to work?
Female Pupil	"Because of the noise in class, you can't think in that row."
A.M.:	Why did you choose to work in the library?
Another Female Pupil	"The boys just muck about in class, I can't concentrate and the teacher can't do anything."

It was clear to me that most pupils valued the opportunity to 'work on their own' out of the classroom environment, and that whilst some just wanted more freedom to chat quietly whilst they worked others deeply wanted a more peaceful, undisturbed working environment and saw the library as a means of achieving this. From pupils' comments and responses on the questionnaire there was a great deal of concern about the control of noise to assist studying, especially from the more able and achieving pupils. This use of the library was one small way in which pupils could take control of noise for themselves and so 'manage' their own interests.

Other things pupils found important included greater freedom of subject choice and more flexible time-tabling. Greater personal freedom and being treated like an adult was also very dear to many pupils' hearts, including the removal of what they saw as petty school rules. Many wanted more work experience or lessons related to the real world (e.g. how to secure employment). Lessons in general were seen as largely irrelevant to their adult lives, except Maths, and even there a lot of the work in Geometry and Algebra was viewed as useless. (These issues receive further attention in subsequent chapters.)

Breaktime Appropriations

I have already mentioned that breaktimes and short gaps between lessons provided other opportunities for pupils to appropriate school facilities to their own ends. In particular, I have already cited smoking as one major way in which less-achieving pupils in particular challenged the school rules and created for themselves a space of their own during breaktimes. Other pursuits included ribbing or ridiculing other pupils, gossiping and playing rough, but Natalie and her friends had another, rather unusual way of passing the time.

One favourite entertainment these girls indulged in to pass away lunch-times was induced fainting in the girls' toilets. A volunteer would stand

by the basins   with a trusted friend standing behind her. She would take

a few deep breaths and then be clasped tightly round the chest from

behind holding a deep breath whilst also being tilted backwards off her

feet, the friend taking her entire body-weight. A few seconds in this

position led to a physical collapse/faint signalled by a slumping of the

body and release of the breath whereupon the friend would slowly let the

volunteer, now unconscious, sag to the floor and lie down. The rest would

watch to see how long it took for the girl to come round. This process

was frequently accompanied by involuntary twitching and little unintelli-

gible vocal noises. Details of these would be recounted to the volunteer

upon coming round, who would find it fascinating to hear what they had "been

like". A pounding headache often followed these little escapades and

sometimes the girls would double check that their mates had aspirins before

fainting. Dousing with water was often called for.

The girls treated this activity quite lightly yet there was always

an acknowledged element of risk-taking which they seemed to enjoy. Danger

was an implicit part of the game, both physically to self and in terms of

being 'caught' by a teacher. I saw these fainting exercises as partly

bravado and testing of one's nerve but also as a direct relief from boredom.

There was nowhere to go locally at lunch-time if they left the school

premises and nowhere to go on site, except to the main hall which would

have been crowded if everyone had done that. These girls felt very strongly

that they should have their own common room on site where they could sit

and smoke and listen to music. The 6th formers did have such a place

including pool tables, music, public telephone (broken by vandals) and

coffee machine, but 5th formers and lower age groups were barred and they

resented this.

Pupils - an overview

The above incidents highlight a clash of interests between the school institution and the needs of pupils. There were many other areas of minor discord but these did not necessarily take the form of any overt challenge to the status quo, rather pupils expressed opinions on things they wanted to see changed and in the meantime, simply 'cut off' from the learning experience to a greater or lesser degree. There were some volatile incidents but in the main pupils either accepted the education on offer or rejected it with passive indifference, creating other moments of excitement in their lives during their spare time. The latter response is reminiscent of Willis' (1977) 'lads' who sought alternative criteria against which to judge themselves rather than the accepted school norm of academic achievement.

However, I feel that the way in which pupils were prepared to engage with staff in a constructive way by making suggestions in lessons and querying the way in which things were done was an important factor indicating the possibility of 're-engaging' such pupils in education by effecting changes in line with their interests. Teachers, however, did not appear to respond to such pleas.

Here it should be borne in mind that the main focus of my study was underachieving pupils and their perspectives of school and work, and that I was, therefore, mostly in the company of either CSE or non-exam takers. I did make observations of and talk in depth with a few top-achieving pupils by way of comparison but my major interest,and hence time spent,was with the lesser-achieving group. These pupils did not live for school but they valued it for the opportunity it afforded to meet their friends and they hoped it might help them in finally securing work.

Regarding friendships, I noted that although these were largely taken for granted, each pupil had a clique of friends that came together at

various parts of the school day. Some teamed up on the way to school, others would wait for each other in the school grounds before first lesson and others would deliberately arrange to meet at a certain favourite spot at break or lunch time. School was therefore a guaranteed meeting point and focus of social contact albeit an enforced one. Friendship groups among the 5th form remained fairly constant with some pupils having 'been mates' since Middle School days. Whilst pupils clearly rated school as an opportunity to see their friends daily, they still viewed school itself negatively as boring and irrelevant.

Regarding the later search for work, I found that a great number of pupils already had part-time jobs. Whenever I asked, I was always told that they did it for the money which they then spent on themselves. Clothes, records, saving for a bike at 17 years of age, cigarettes, 'booze' and going out were the main items mentioned in this respect.

Many did Saturday jobs, sometimes combined with a few hours after school during the week (e.g. late-night-shopping Thursdays plus Saturdays in a shop). Many others did evening work waiting at table at a large residential centre nearby. Others helped out in garages, butchers shops, newsagents, hairdressers, did cleaning or fast food preparation. Apart from waiting, most part-time jobs were gender segregated with girls taking shop work, hairdressing and cleaning, whilst boys worked in garages, butchers shops, fast foods, or small industries. For some, this was creating contacts with employers that led to later offers of full-time employment upon leaving school, but others hated what they were doing and defined it as 'boring'. At Leafield, virtually all pupils not intending to carry on in the 6th form were interested in all forms of work experience. They saw it as valuable and practical and wished they could do more via the school. School work experience schemes were frequently not liked,

but still, great emphasis was placed on wanting to try more _types_ of work to see if something 'interesting' could be found. Such issues are mentioned just briefly here in order to set the scene but they receive greater attention in subsequent chapters relating specifically to gender and employment factors. Meanwhile, an overview of the 5th form would not be complete without some information on their teachers. This is the subject of the next section.

THE TEACHING STAFF

As teachers have been implicated as part of 'the problem' via pupils' criticisms of their lessons, no study of Leafield would be complete without an introduction to the teachers, their policies and their staffroom.

The Teachers in Action

From my observations, the sixty-plus teachers at Leafield led busy, if not hectic lives. My first week spent following the timetable of the Section 11 teacher led me to wonder how staff could keep up such a pace and my field notes over the first few days contained asides such as "Phew" and "Knackering" as I rushed from lesson to lesson with her across the school campus, locking and unlocking classrooms as we went, pushing against waves of pupils in corridors and trying to settle down quietly for some work each period.

A clue to this high speed pace was offered in the staffroom at 8.20 am on my first morning in school. The large, square room could seat some forty people but at this early hour chairs were hardly in use at all. Staff were collecting letters and notes from pigeon holes, dashing out of the little adjacent marking room, double-checking notices of relevance to them on the board and passing hurried messages and up-dates to each other. Often two of these activities would be tackled simultaneously and, with something close to military precision, the room became virtually abandoned about two minutes before class registration began.

The hustle and bustle of the staffroom took me very much by surprise. From this and many later observations I learned that staff had to do a lot of 'thinking on their feet'. There was very little free time to plan work or mark. I noted that at break times, teachers would catch up on their internal mail, speak to each other about particular pupils (e.g. where a subject tutor had to report some misbehaviour to a form teacher), or rush off to photocopy something necessary for the next lesson that had been prepared the night before at home. At lunchtime, there might be some marking or more lesson preparation and there were after-school curriculum or staff meetings each week, excluding any extramural activities and clubs individual teachers might be involved in. That the teacher's life seemed utterly hectic to me at that time, offering no time to think and plan ahead is something of an understatement. I had a great deal of sympathy with staff in coping with the daily bustle and came to believe that simply controlling each class was a major drain on their resources.

My impression time and again in making the transition from staffroom to classroom was one of being wound up like a clockwork machine ready for the next spate of action. The two worlds appeared very distinct, that of staffroom being adult, hectic yet in control, with consultation and fraternisation amongst equals. That of the classroom was one of intended control of pupils, a world of non-equals that threatened to be both hectic and out of control on many occasions. The difference in 'personality' between staffroom and classroom was noticeable with some teachers but not all. Some struggled with their classes, others coped, whilst others thrived. Female more than male teachers failed to 'cope' with the matter of classroom control, a feature of school life which only became apparent to me through later observations and discussions with my informants. This matter is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5.

In addition, I noted that most of the staff's knowledge about pupils

came about over coffee or lunch, often in the form of rapidly delivered messages or anecdotes in the staffroom. Hammersley (1981) has indicated the importance of the staffroom for the sharing of ideology and information about pupils whilst Woods (1979) has said of the staffroom:

> "This is indeed a haven in stormy seas, and recourse must be had to it at regular intervals."   (pp. 211-212)

Certainly, at Leafield, the staffroom was a place to wind down, a place of comfort and support from colleagues in which opinions and frustrations could be aired.

It was also a place where I made many fruitful contacts with staff. Teachers, for the most part were keen to 'fill me in' on additional background concerning certain pupils. For example, on different occasions I was told that:

- Julia was brain-damaged - hence her abusive behaviour and bad language in class.

- Ian had been fined £300 in the juvenile courts the week before thus explaining his antisocial and racist remarks to me (to be discussed in Chapter 6).

- Jenny got uptight about finding sufficient library books because she wanted to do well at school, unlike her mother.

- Sonia (a black pupil) has a tragic family background which explains a lot of her disruptive behaviour in class.

I was also told that:

> "Wet days are the worst".

Sometimes I would be provided with snippets about a class as a whole, often before meeting them.

> Teacher: "They're a strange bunch, nasty with each other. You'll see".

But more frequently, I would receive background information on individual pupils which, in the teachers' eyes, served to explain unwanted classroom behaviour. Such information was part of the teachers' own elaborated 'knowledge' about pupils (Hargreaves, Hestor and Mellor, 1975) and they were keen that I should also have this information so that I might gain

insight into what 'went on'. I listened to this staffroom news with interest, pleased that staff were prepared to confide in me for it signified their acceptance of me. However, I stood back from the judgements and connections they made about pupils as a result. In this I was uniquely placed between teachers and pupils for I and not teachers had access to pupils' own explanations and rationales for incidents that took place.

Old Righties and Young Lefties?

During one interview with the Head, designed to increase my background knowledge of the school and the changes that had been implemented since his arrival in 1982, the conversation turned to his analysis of staff attitudes. During his attempts at curriculum reform which included more mixed ability teaching, less demarcation between disciplines and mergers between previously separate departments he had met with opposition from those already polarised politically "to the right". He felt that politics lay at the heart of the stance taken by staff on the issue of curriculum reform stating:

> "All reforms and objections to them are centred on this
> [politics] .... and age is not a factor".

The Head felt that there were both "old righties" and "young righties", as he termed them, and that these were opposed by both "young lefties" and older teachers who were prepared to consider reforms out of "benevolence" and a belief that education should be "child-centred".

From my observations of staff both with their colleagues in the staffroom and in lessons I would agree that age was not necessarily a factor, although most teachers who resisted notions of change, preferring instead the status quo, were generally the older ones most of whom had taught for most of their school days in either secondary modern or grammar schools. However, I would suggest that there was something of a clearer gender distinction with <u>female</u> teachers and a smaller number of <u>young</u> male

teachers being the most likely to entertain curriculum innovation and equal opportunity issues. Indeed, it was discord over equal opportunities that provided me with the chance of seeing for myself what the Head had tried to indicate to me.

The Equal Opportunities Issue

During my time at Leafield the school had no official, written equal opportunities policy and no specific guidelines for staff to follow. Thus, should staff find themselves witnessing a racist incident or suspect a gender distinction of any kind their was no policy statement or code of practice to refer to as a starting point for action. The only written indication of the school's stance on racial and sexual equality was the broadly worded statement in the school prospectus which read:

> "We aim, at Leafield, to provide the best possible secondary
> education for every one of our students .....[plus] ......
> respect for the worth and dignity of all people whatever
> their race, nationality or creed".

Source: A Guide to Parents, Leafield School (1984)

There was, however, an Equal Opportunities Group at the school, which pre-dated the arrival of the new, reforming Head in 1982. This group consisted of individual members of staff who came together on a voluntary basis in view of their mutual concern about racial and gender inequalities and sexist practices in both education and job opportunities. The group held its meetings after school and whilst all staff were welcome to attend, few did so. The vast majority of teachers were soon off campus after 3.00 pm and whilst I might have attributed this to the union industrial action taking place in 1984/1985 I was assured by a long-standing member of the group that attendance at meetings had been low from the outset with only a few committed teachers participating.

During my time at the school, this Equal Opportunities Group were busy compiling an equal opportunities statement with a view to it becoming the school's official policy, subject to discussion among all staff. Their

draft statement caused a minor storm among some of the older, male

teachers who could be placed in the Head's categories of "old righties",

when it was first circulated for discussion.

I was present in the staffroom one afternoon when three of these

male teachers were complaining about its content. The document suggested

that there was a need to actively combat discrimination through anti-sexist

teaching practices. The following rumblings were overheard somewhat

disjointedly as it was difficult to listen in overtly at the time.

> First: "We've got the royal "We" here but nobody's
> Teacher   consulted me about it".

> Second: "Yes well, there's no such thing as democracy
> Teacher   here you know".

And again, a few minutes later:

> Second: "(But) the girls have had the option of a five-
> Teacher   a-side football team for the last four years!"

> Third: "..... it only serves to highlight things".
> Teacher

The three teachers involved were clearly aggrieved that such a statement

could be developed without them being consulted. Yet the draft was being

circulated specifically for consultation. As one of the three men

involved in complaining was the careers teacher, I found it very

surprising that he in particular, had not been an active member of the

Equal Opportunities Group.

This group of three continued to grumble about the approach suggested

in the draft statement and were soon joined by two female members of staff

who were similarly unimpressed by the stand advocated. The general feeling

of this group was that the extent of sexism in school was overestimated

and that direct anti-sexist education was 'overreacting' to the point of

highlighting sex differences,creating trouble. Giving publicity to sexism

was tantamount to encouraging it and they preferred to:

> " .... operate in an ordinary way"

as one teacher put it. Operating in an ordinary way meant maintaining

the status quo which was taken to be 'neutral'action. For these teachers,

and others at Leafield, too much fuss was made about sexism and it would

be less of a problem if people did not cause trouble by drawing special

attention to it. Racism, they felt, was also subject to being 'overplayed'.

This example illustrates the diversity (if not polarity) or opinions

among staff, opinions which informed attitudes, and affected curriculum

content and actions in the classroom.

Wags and Drags

In the staffroom it was plain to see the split between the 'old

righties' and 'young lefties'. The former were predominantly older male

teachers, and a high proportion had taught in secondary modern schools

prior to the introduction of the comprehensive system. A large sub-section

of this group was an all-male, smoking fraternity that appeared even more

apart and separated from the main body of teachers by their relegation to

the 'smoking' area of the staffroom. This group had a distinctly 'macho'

image with conversation and humour centred around football, pupil anecdotes,

their subject areas (technical, scientific and mathematical), and a

distinctly male-view of the world. Burgess (1983, 1987) remarks upon a

similar scenario at Bishop MacGregor School where first gender-segregated

seating and later a male sports ethos dominated in the staffroom.

My presence in this section of the staffroom was made to feel like an

intrusion into 'their' domain. Conversation would cease upon my arrival

and get going again limply, on new, 'neutral' topics. Alternatively I

would be set up as a target for their humour or their negative remarks

about researchers. For example, as I took a seat next to them one lunch

time I was greeted with the following:

> "I don't know George but these research people get younger
> all the time" (smiling at me condescendingly). "Amanda was
> in my class this morning and it was over half an hour before
> I realised".

Such flattery was absurd as I was a mature student, not a young postgraduate. From my conversations with these teachers they generally hankered after old principles and values that they felt were crumbling (or had crumbled away totally) in schools today. Preferences were stated for a school uniform, corporal punishment, 'realism' over academic achievement and job attainment, a return to the basic three Rs and a practical grounding without a lot of "fancy stuff".

'Problems' in education were seen as more created than real with researchers such as myself clearly responsible for making much out of small issues. I was frequently challenged (albeit in a polite and curious way) to defend what I was doing in the school and how I thought what I saw could be put to good use in educational terms. This group represented the disbelievers, those who saw little benefit in new ideas on pedagogy or educational reform. They were quite fixed in their ideas consolidated by their reflections over many years of teaching.

This group of three aided and abetted by other older male members of staff were also responsible for much of what passed as staffroom humour. They were the 'staffroom wags' who enjoyed jovial criticism of the school's bureaucracy and shared jokes about pupils and classroom anecdotes. Sexism and racism crept into their humour much of which was gained at the expense of other members of staff whom they perceived as being humourless and what I have termed as 'the drags'.

The 'drags' were the more serious minded 'young lefties' who did not find sexist remarks funny. Here the teachers were mainly younger and female although not exclusively so. To these teachers, pastoral care was important, as was developing good relationships with all pupils and assisting them to reach their full potential. Their opinions on teaching expressed to me included the following:

Young male: teacher	"They've got to like you otherwise they won't listen. Shouting is out, you'll lose their respect. You just have to explain things and make them appeal."
Young female: teacher	"You've got to really <u>like</u> teaching them otherwise it won't come across properly. I really like my pupils as individuals, it's important."

Such teachers were also aware of potential sources of racial discrimination acknowledging the possibility of unintentional and indirect racism in school policies and practices. To the 'wags' of the 'old righties' camp this was 'over the top' and taking life far too seriously.

The 'wags' demonstrated their attitude towards gender and racial issues in what could be termed thoughtless humour and ribbing. For example, in a negative discussion of student teachers currently visiting the school one of these 'wags' said to his colleagues over coffee:

> "I hear old Harry had a nice Spanish bit in his class the the other day."

The speaker clearly thought he was being amusing and his colleagues smirked over the 'double-entendre' contained within the use of the word 'had'. It seemed to me that no-one present, apart from myself, had detected the subjugation of both women and other racial groups implicit in this piece of conversation. As Burgess (1987) states:

> ".... women teachers were not just judged on qualifications but on personal characteristics: age, appearance, marital status, success with their own families and so on - all qualities that would not be used to judge men." (p.18)

However, the 'wags' went further in having a standard joke about the school's token feminist. Miss Peters, who was a committed member of the Equal Opportunities Group had gained for herself the reputation of the 'angry young woman' and arch-feminist because of her tendency to tackle other members of staff about their stereotypes and gender biases. Needless to say, this did not go down well with many male teachers, particularly

those in the Head's 'righties' category who were not used to being
challenged to explain their views or being tackled over their sexist
remarks. As a result, she was frequently alluded to in derisory terms,
both inside and outside the staffroom and typical staffroom comments were:

"Don't let Miss Peters hear you say that, Tom!"

and "Sally wouldn't like that."

Both staff and pupils soon picked up on such issues in developing a
uniform typification of a teacher. At first it was unclear to me as an
observer, how pupils came to view a teacher in the same light as members
of staff because the two settings in which pupil/teacher and teacher/teacher
interaction took place were quite distinct. Pupils, for example, did not
enter the staffroom (they were always spoken to outside in the corridor if
necessary) and teachers did not team teach or observe each other's lessons.
However, observation revealed that teachers did pass on bits of gossip
and news about other members of staff to their pupils in the course of
lessons which led to a common picture of the person concerned. This, plus
the openness of most staff with their own form group about issues and
incidents they were involved in, provided sufficient 'evidence' for
opinions on individual members of staff to be formed with a high degree
of overall uniformity. In consequence, Miss Peters gained her label in
this way.

Feminism then, was not viewed terribly seriously by many members of
staff. The topic was polarised into its extremes and fun was poked at those
making a stand within the establishment. Similarly, racial equality issues
were not taken as matters of urgent concern. Indeed, the topic hardly
ever arose during my period of observation, it being something of a 'non-
issue'.

OVERVIEW

Ethnographic research in general and participant observation in particular, has a tendency to over-emphasise the exotic or aberrant. It is always easier to treat as important the events which were memorable rather than mundane.

My account so far, of corridor chaos and people-jams, hassled and polarised teachers, plus a mixture of disruptive, bored and resigned pupils is merely an overview of the main themes which struck me as a participant observer in the early days and weeks of research. Recording them is not intended to deny that the school day generally passed off in an effective and efficient way successfully time-tabling hundreds of pupils for dozens of subjects. Nor is it intended to denigrate the hard work and effort put in by teachers either in their subjects or in the matter of classroom control. Nor should it detract from the many pupils who, by and large, got on with their work and paid attention in a polite way.

The focus of my study, after the initial classroom observations, was in-depth discussion with individual pupils, plus analysis of pupil responses to school as elicited via a questionnaire with the entire 5th form. Many of the comments that arose in my initial encounters with the 5th year were to emerge as major themes during later in-depth discussions and through the replies to the questionnaire. In particular, aspects of teacher control, subject choice and vocational training were mentioned repeatedly in the questionnaire returns, whilst in the discussions and observations, aspects of gender, race and class and personal attitudes to the world of work were expressed. These issues are now addressed in turn in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5

BOYS AND GIRLS - DIFFERENT BUT EQUAL?

INTRODUCTION

The 1980s have witnessed an ever-increasing research interest in gender socialisation and gender differences in education. Early feminist writings included a focus on the unequal character of girls' education and life chances vis-a-vis boys (e.g. Sharpe (1976), Deem (1978)) and these were followed quickly by detailed studies into gender and the 'hidden curriculum', a term coined by Jackson (1968) and narrowed by subsequent authors (e.g. Burgess,H.(1983);Samuel(1981)) to refer to the process whereby existing divisions in society are inadvertently communicated to pupils via school organisation and through images and statements presented by teachers and text books.

During the early 1980s such researchers as Delamont (1980), Stanworth (1981) and Measor (1984) added much to our understanding of how gender processes operated to disfavour girls whilst others focussed on girls' own aspirations (e.g. Griffin (1985)) or girls' treatment by boys (e.g. Cowie and Lees (1981)).

In all such studies, the whole person was not researched to provide a detailed and integrated account of gender, social class, ethnic origins school experiences, personally held attitudes, future aspirations and actual destinations.

This study attempts to provide such a perspective for both girls and boys and this chapter begins the process by identifying some of the factors present at Leafield which created inequality between the sexes before considering the gender-specific interactions and attitudes of the pupils themselves.

In this respect, it should be borne in mind that Leafield was a 'caring' community school whose ethos was to serve all pupils equally. However, the school policy regarding gender issues was well-meaning but loose with no official written guidelines for staff to follow (see p. 89).

CURRICULUM CONTENT AND TEACHING AIDS

Subject choice and non-choice

There was some evidence of an overt gender divide in the curriculum at Leafield. Two examples of lessons where gender was taken as a determinant were P.E. and Parentcraft. In P.E. boys and girls were taken in separate groups, each with a same-sex teacher, and using separate toilets and changing rooms. Each gender group concentrated mainly on differentiated games (e.g. netball for girls and football for boys; gym work for girls and outdoor activities for the boys). Delamont (1980) refers to a similar segregation of the sexes in sports in her study of two English middle schools arguing that in conjunction with regulations concerning uniform and gender-divided registers, pupils were constantly reminded of their sex and sex differences.

At Leafield there was no school uniform (although pupils were expected to dress 'neatly', cleanly and appropriately for a day's work in school), and there were no gender divisions in registers of any kind to compound gender distinctions fostered through segregated sporting activities. However, there was an additional, and total exclusion of boys in the teaching of Parentcraft, an all-girls subject which covered aspects of pregnancy, birth, infant care and child development, alongside practical project work such as making baby clothes or items for the nursery. This subject was a differentiator not only in terms of gender but also in terms of achievement. Parentcraft was a CSE subject which was not taken by the girls from the 'O' level group who were taking, on average, five or more 'O' levels. Thus, it was only less-achieving girls who were overtly prepared for motherhood. Both Griffin (1983) and David (1985) have commented on such courses in schools and colleges plus on YOP and YTS schemes. As Griffin (1983) states:

> "It is not simply that young women are being pushed to the more exploited margins of the labour market. They are also being prepared with renewed vigour for their primary role as moral guardians of home and family life."   (p.73)

Indeed, preferred jobs as cited by questionnaire respondents indicated a strong interest in looking after children among 12 % of less-achieving girls. In addition, girls actively considered their eventual roles as mothers in thinking about their futures as evidenced by in-depth informants who, without exception, saw having children as distant events (i.e. coming along during their mid or late twenties), but nevertheless an accepted part of their future lives.

> Vanda: "Marriage? Much later on, in my 20s or 30s
> (less-   Then two children and stay with them all
> achieving   the time 'til they're grown up."
> black pupil)

> Delia   "I don't want to get married, not yet anyway ...
> (less-   I would like kids, yeah!"
> achieving
> black pupil)

Girls' perceptions on careers, marriage and children receive further attention in Chapters 8 and 9,   but for the present I would argue that the assumption that children and child-rearing would be an automatic part of their lives in years to come was fuelled, in part, by the biological facts and maternal skills taught only to the less able girls (Skeggs (1988)).

Achieving 'O' level group girls displayed less traditional expectations in relation to children and childraising.

> Sarah: "I'm definitely not interested in marriage 'til
> (achieving   my late 20s. I want to travel and get a job
> white pupil)   and "do" something. You're restricted by kids
>   and a husband, there's the need for two good
>   wages to support a mortgage. I want to be free
>   of that."

> Pauline: "I don't know about children. They probably
> (achieving   suffer if you dump them on a baby sitter at
> white pupil)   six months but probably also if you're bored
>   at home with them .... I would want to share
>   looking after them with my husband."

These two high-achieving girls clearly saw children as a constraint or problem vis-a-vis employment, and were reluctant to relinquish career

aspirations in favour of child-raising. Their solutions involved either delaying children or sharing care of them with their partner. I would suggest that whilst their academic achievement alone could lead these girls, and others like them, towards more job market orientated expectations, the school in not offering them a child-care subject was reinforcing the view that their role was something other than looking after children.

Similarly in excluding boys from learning about pregnancy, childbirth and childcare, it seemed that the school was assisting polarisation of interests of the sexes. The boys were not provided with the opportunity to reflect upon the world of childraising and so had no knowledge upon which they might judge their future role as prospective parents. Understandably then, from their position of ignorance, it was that a group of boys tittered and joked when the option of 'unmarried mothers' arose as a topic in the non-segregated subject of Social Studies. They were scowled at by some of the girls, but their reactions can be attributed not just to immaturity but also in part to the fact that such things were perceived as nothing to do with them; a world apart. However, both biologically and socially, males are implicated in the theme of 'unmarried mothers' and I would argue that in excluding boys from Parentcraft, the school was missing an opportunity to widen their understanding and develop notions of equality between the sexes.

However, as Delamont (1980) says:

> "...... organisational segregation would not, in itself,
> be significant if it were not just the first of many
> ways in which school life separates and then stereotypes
> boys and girls".   (p.27)

At Leafield, the Parentcraft issue was compounded by the fact that it was timetabled against German, History and Woodwork. Similarly, Needlework, although not solely intended for girls, was timetabled against Woodwork. The result was that pupils who chose a subject traditionally associated with their gender were rendering themselves unable to explore

skills usually associated with the opposite sex due to timetable constraints. In consequence just one boy, Will, was taking Needlework in the 5th year and he had a special 'reason' for doing so. He suffered from occasional epilepsy and was being steered away from dangerous machinery in technical lessons towards practical but safer skills he could cope with.

In a reverse situation, just one girl, Ann, chose Woodwork. She was good at the subject and had been part of the group for two years, but whereas Will had been accommodated readily by the girls in Needlework, Ann had experienced more difficulty in becoming accepted.

> Ann: "They [the boys] didn't speak to me at first but they do now. I don't get teased anymore and I may go on into 6th form .... other girls won't join me in Woodwork because they know I'm the only one and don't want to be the odd ones."

Ann, therefore, felt able to be 'the odd one out' but other girls felt the pressure to conform to gender stereotypes and expectations. Boys on the other hand had less inhibitions about entering one particular sphere, namely cookery, which could be taken superficially to be a 'girls' subject. Here, however, there were good local prospects of careers in catering and the school had strong links with the local College of Further Education where additional catering qualifications could be obtained. Boys then, were willing to enter the traditionally female domain when job prospects were involved and this was indicated by the fact that boys were just over half of the pupils attempting Catering at CSE level but were hardly represented at all in the more domestically based Home Economics CSE (see Figure 5(1)).

FIGURE 5(1):CATERING SUBJECTS, EXAMINATION ENTRIES BY GENDER, SUMMER 1985

Subject	No. of Boys	No. of Girls	TOTAL
Catering (CSE)	12	10	22
Home Economics (CSE)	2	15	17
Food & Nutrition (O level)	0	5	5
All	14	30	44

Source: Leafield School Examination Statistics (1985)

At the more academic level of 'O' levels, however, it would appear that able girls and <u>not</u> able boys were encouraged to enter for Food and Nutrition 'O' level, for five girls and no boys undertook this subject. This could be taken as an indicator that more able girls were channelled either by teachers or their own interests into a subject linked with the role of 'caring provider'. Griffin (1985), in her discussion of equal opportunities related to 'free' subject choice at school states:

> "There is nothing equivalent about boys taking cookery or typing, and that of girls taking metalwork or T.D. .... Male students who took 'girls' subjects' were assumed to be learning a skill for future use in the labour market. They were taken more seriously than their female peers in the same classes, to whom such skills were supposed to come naturally for use in their future roles as wives and mothers (see Dyhouse, 1977). Female students who took 'boys' subjects' were either presumed to be interested solely in flirting with the boys, or discounted as unique exceptions". (pp.78-79)

Griffin's statement would appear to hold true for Leafield pupils for the uptake of Catering CSE by boys was directly in line with the school's strong emphasis on 'good jobs' in catering. Similarly, with one girl undertaking Woodwork, no girls in Metalwork and no specific impetus to encourage girls in these domains, there was no scope for this lone girl to be taken seriously.

In contrast, three times more boys than girls were entered for 'O' level Physics, a typically 'masculine' area of the Sciences.

FIGURE 5(2): <u>SCIENCE SUBJECTS, 'O' LEVEL ENTRIES BY GENDER, SUMMER 1985.</u>

'O'level subject	Boys	Girls	Total
Physics	22	7	29
Chemistry	4	12	16
Biology	8	14 *	22
All	34	33	67

(* = includes 2 girls taking Human Biology)

Source: Leafield School Examination Statistics (1985).

Figure 5(2) above, indicates that whilst girls and boys took science subjects in equal numbers, there was a strong bias in favour of boys selecting Physics and girls selecting Biology in line with the findings of the 1985 national School Leavers Survey (DES (1986)), but the entries for Chemistry appear to indicate that girls were in the majority, contrary to larger scale statistics. However, an examination of Chemistry pass rates produced a different picture for eleven of the twelve girls attempting 'O' level Chemistry were ungraded whilst all four boys received a graded result.

Curriculum content

Girls' interest in, and success in science subjects has received attention from Measor (1984), who undertook qualitative research to discern the reasons behind girls' failure in comparison with boys. She found girls' traditional interests to be unsatisfied by the topics covered in the sciences and that girls tended to be marginalised by teachers in science lessons due to negative statements about their ability. In addition, girls' emerging notions of feminity were found to be at odds with the prevailing 'masculine' image of the sciences.

At Leafield, evidence from classroom observations and pupil accounts would appear to act in support of her findings. For example, one group of girls I observed complained bitterly among themselves, and out loud to the biology teacher, that they found plant reproduction boring.

"Why can't we do something on human birth?" one girl enquired. This sentiment was echoed by her friends and repeated again to the teacher later on in the lesson but the teacher made no attempt to explain the rationale of the syllabus and made no offer of human biology topics for future lessons. As a result the girls remained disgruntled and showed signs of 'cutting off' from the lesson by talking among themselves, failing to copy down work and generally not paying attention.

Two other girls whom I observed to be heavily outnumbered in a
Physics lesson (20 boys, 3 girls), were similarly unenthusiastic about an
experiment involving magnets and a solenoid, despite their success at the
work benches. Natalie and her friend were the only two in the class to put
six magnets together and obtain a good current. The teacher (male) asked
them to demonstrate their success to the rest of the class but both were
reluctant, preferring the teacher to do it. Eventually they were coaxed
to the front of the class and successfully performed the same experiment
again. The boys were <u>very</u> impressed at the amount of power achieved.
When the girls sat down they were not concentrating on the ensuing
discussion about the implications of their discovery, instead they played
with the magnets and appeared to have no interest in the topic whatsoever.
As the next stage of the lesson developed they started to talk about their
mates, about who was a 'slag' and who had been beaten up. They did not
complete their work.

Natalie and her friend were unwilling stars in the above episode.
They did not take pride in their achievement nor did it motivate them to
pursue their work. This was even more surprising because Natalie's deep
desire was to be a Vet and she knew she had to obtain Physics 'O' level
along with other science subjects to reach her goal. Measor (1984) has
cited pupils' own emerging sexuality and associated role expectations as
a major factor in negating girls' interest in science and I would argue
that Natalie was acting deferentially towards the male sphere in recoiling
from her success with the magnet experiment, but she was also totally
disinterested in the magnets and solenoid. Measor indicates that the
'feminisation' of science subjects (e.g. creating perfumes instead of
noxious substances in chemistry) might assist girls in seeing the relevance
of science in their lives and maintain their interest. In this respect
she notes that,in her own study,boys interests <u>were</u> accommodated in

Needlework classes where they were allowed to make football scarves.

At Leafield, boys seemed to be similarly accommodated in the Home Economics sphere where most of them took Catering CSE as opposed to Home Economics CSE (see p.100 and Figure 5(1)), but in the Science sphere, Physics and Chemistry seemed to follow the traditional pattern inasmuch as the lesson content had far more relevance to the outside interests of boys than girls. Thus, in the above incident, despite the teacher's encouragement towards Natalie over her success with the magnets and solenoid, he was unable to obtain her genuine involvement in the lesson. Obtaining a high power reading in the experiment simply did not impress her like it impressed the boys and she remained detached from her achievement.

Girls appeared to have similar problems in finding relevance in Computer Studies. The school had a recently-furbished Computer Centre (courtesy of a generous donation by a local company) and some Mathematics lessons involved recourse to this Centre and its facilities. Here again, Natalie's reaction to computers was interesting for her veterinary ambitions required Mathematics as well as science subjects. I observed one of her computer studies lessons in which the boys quickly got on with the design task in hand whilst Natalie and her friend could not get started. The teacher eventually worked his way around to their consoles and started off the programme for them, but when he moved on they still did not know how to create the required design pattern on the screen. Instead of asking for additional help they settled down to utilising their limited knowledge to outline a house on the screen and then proceeded to write up their names in different colour bands. They stayed undisturbed in this way for the remainder of the lesson whilst the teacher attended to other pupils (mostly boys) who were much more involved with the programme.

Culley (1988) notes that in the majority of schools computers are frequently linked to the perceived 'masculine' domain by being housed in

mathematics or science areas with male teachers in charge of them. In addition, she argues that the software used relies mostly on mathematical and technical concepts, rarely utilising word games or graphic applications that might create more appeal to the girls. At Leafield there was some evidence to bear out Culley's claim that computers are rendered less attractive to girls than to boys for similar reasons. Natalie's contact with computers was solely through her Mathematics lesson, a subject she detested, and her teacher was male. The Computer Centre was often frequented by older boys on a voluntary basis, giving the place an air of masculinity, and the programme I observed was evidently of more interest to the boys than the girls. There appeared to be no way in which Natalie and her friend could use their initial drawing of a house on screen and their interest in writing up words in different colour combinations to develop their skill and knowledge of computers. They, therefore, remained on the periphery of this computerised world and the fact that they were not alone in their disinterest and lack of competence was borne out by subsequent questionnaire data whereby it transpired that not one girl in the 5th form indicated any interest in working with computers.

Teaching aids and the hidden curriculum

A number of observations whilst sat in lessons led me to the conclusion that Leafield pupils were being presented with a wealth of stereotyped gender images in text books and via teaching aids and teachers' statements. Whilst such images were not intended to convey messages specific to one gender or the other, I would suggest that they did so by both subtle and not so subtle means. Indeed, in terms of such messages being part of a 'hidden curriculum' I would agree with Hargreaves (1978) who asks:

> "from whom, one wonders, is the hidden curriculum now hidden?"   (p.97)

Some Leafield pupils seemed quick to detect and challenge items or issues that they viewed as sexist.

Female pupils would criticise the use of the word 'he' and 'man'
in textbooks, complaining that it could be a 'she' or a woman involved
instead, and teachers did not always respond positively to such attention
to detail. For example, a male Biology teacher was heard to say the
following to a female 'O' level pupil to pre-empt her anticipated criticism:

> "You're OK here Pauline, this is Man with a capital M
> referring to the whole species, it's not talking about men."

I only observed deflective action of this kind in <u>male</u> teachers and the
way in which it was done could be termed patronising. Whilst at one level
the teacher was noticing and rectifying a possible sexist connotation, he
was also trivialising the incident by directing his critique at one known
feminist member of the class instead of the whole group, as if the topic
was only of interest to her.

This teacher was also observed to single out the girls in another
Biology lesson as if they formed some separate category of pupil. In giving
out instructions about a practical that would take place the following
week he noticed that four girls at one table looked surprised and ready to
query it with him.

> "Now there's nothing to worry about", he said.
> I know you girls tend to worry about tests the most."

From my position at the same table, the girls' reactions did not seem to
indicate concern, rather only that something unexpected had been announced,
yet the teacher took it that they were 'worried'.

Stanworth (1981) vividly portrays the ways in which teachers at a
College of Further Education had different opinions of their pupils'
characters and abilities based on their gender. Important in her study
was the fact that the pupils being differentiated were achieving pupils of
'A' level standard who might expect to be judged by their academic merit.
Similarly at Leafield, in the above incident, the teacher was talking to
a group of four achieving 'O' level takers including the two girls expected

by the school to gain some of the highest science grades in their year. Gender stereotypes were therefore being utilised and imputed irrespective of ability.

Another challenge over textbook content arose during a Religious Knowledge lesson; a subject taken at CSE level by virtually all pupils. In the key textbook a chapter on 'suffering' read:

> "a man might make a stand for what is right ....
> [and suffer consequences as a result] ... or a girl
> lose a boyfriend by refusing sex."

Here, as on many other occasions, it was the <u>pupils</u> who would point out bias to the teacher, the teacher having missed the point or let the issue slide. The ensuing discussion cited below indicated an increasing awareness among pupils of stereotyped images but this was masked by generalised counter statements.

West Indian: girl pupil	"This is a real sexist book. Why couldn't it be a boy who refuses sex?"
Reply from: her friend	"Because boys are randier than us and want it before we do."

The teacher broadly agreed with this last statement saying that he could not think of an occasion on which <u>he</u> would refuse an offer.

Boy pupil:	"What if Margaret Thatcher fancied you?" (laughter)

Although the issue lost momentum at this point another girl brought the subject up again later in the lesson:

Pauline: (white pupil)	"I think this chapter is too sexist and we shouldn't be reading it."

The male teacher agreed and said that now he, Pauline and Miss Peters (the 'feminist' teacher) were agreed on this point. Using this as a definitive statement the issue was dropped.

Teachers clearly used such strategies to pacify or cajole those who might be outspoken in class and in consequence made no attempt to deal <u>actively</u> with the underlying problem. Teachers in general did <u>not</u> take

individual action to seek out alternative books and materials nor did they indicate to the class that an important point had been made. Instead, each incident as it arose, was dealt with in an ad hoc manner.

Delamont (1980) found that it was in the area of teaching that teachers' sex stereotypes came through most strongly noting that:

> "the more the teachers tried to make the lesson
> material relevant and immediate to the pupils,
> the more likely they were to make sexist assumptions
> and remarks."   (p.54)

Certainly the teachers in the Religious Knowledge and Biology incidents cited here were trying to be affable and involved with their students yet their relaxed and unguarded comments betrayed some of their own gender-specific assumptions regarding feminism, predisposition to fretting and sexual desire.

Whilst pupil challenges of this type did occur, albeit with little real response, there were many other hidden messages to pupils that passed unnoticed. For example, one girl was reprimanded in a needlework lesson for swearing and belching with the remark:

> "That's not very ladylike, Susan!"

Such instruction was not queried. Similarly plenty of discriminating images did not attract attention, both in books and other teaching aids such as videos. Men were still predominant as activators in science and mathematics material, for example a maths video depicted young men only involved in an exercise to teach themselves percentages. Similarly, Geography and History textbooks provided images of mostly male contributions towards our own and other societies. Such images, presented as objective facts, offered less scope for girls to challenge the validity of what was conveyed.

Furthermore, 'information' videos prepared by outside industries offered distinct images of a gender divide in paid work. For example, one such 'fill-in' video used to keep a class occupied because their

teacher was off sick was about the North Sea industries (fishing and oil platforms). The film focussed entirely on men, as fishermen, oil riggers, divers, technicians and so on. As such it portrayed the working world as a man's domain, devoid of women. The implicit assumptions about women's unsuitability for or lack of interest in such work were unconsciously passed on to pupils. The film provided no hint of job or career relevance for girls. Observing the class as they watched this video, it was apparent that the boys sat quietly and watched with interest whilst the girls began to day dream, fidget, fiddle about and talk to each other. It was one of the few occasions I observed where girls were noisier and more disruptive than the boys and I would argue that this was due to their lack of identification with the film's content. Afterwards, two of the girls told me it had been:

> "Dead boring!"

but two boys described it as being:

> "Good"   and   "Alright".

Caring teachers?

I have cited above, examples where teachers acted carelessly concerning their own discourse with pupils or where they did not provide adequate support in championing equality. However, some teachers, all of whom could be included in the Head's 'young lefties' category, took great pains to redress the balance between the sexes. This they did without 'making waves', preferring instead to gently encourage more open attitudes on gender issues among pupils. For example, in Social Studies one female teacher had the following to say in response to a pupil referring to an Electrician as "he":

> "Yes, but is it always a man who's an Electrician,
> Tina?" (pause) "No, sometimes its' a woman isn't it?"

One male science teacher at Leafield expressed to me his active intention to encourage the girls in Physics and Chemistry as much as

possible in order to promote equal opportunities and he was observed to assist girls sympathetically during lessons, making sure that they had a voice in class and were involved in discussions and practical experiments.

One of his colleagues made similar efforts to encourage the girls and I was proudly told by Natalie (a white pupil):

> "Sometimes he lets us [girls] work in the corridor to
> get some peace and quiet".

Whilst this girl clearly saw her teacher's action as a _favour_ designed to help her accomplish her tasks, there was another side to it inasmuch as her removal from the mainstream classroom could be regarded as an _exclusion_ and _marginalisation_ of girls in science as Delamont (1980) and Measor (1984) have argued. Indeed, the need for her and her female peers to be offered an alternative quiet spot to work, indicated that boys were 'taking over' in the laboratory, steering the lessons towards _their_ interests, with _their_ preferred noise levels and work strategies. Certainly from observations in science lessons, it was the boys who appeared to be 'at home' at the benches, commandeering whole blocks of stools at the benches, grabbing the available equipment first and operating a noisy cameraderie with their 'mates'. In such circumstances, the solution of removing the girls to work elsewhere in peace may well have been the most practical, but the larger issue of whether boys should be permitted control of laboratory space in this way did not seem to attract attention.

Ironically, whilst the boys could be said to have the 'upper hand' in the laboratory situation described above, it was _they_ who complained about favouritism being displayed towards the _girls_ in allowing them to work unsupervised in the corridor. My suspicions (which could not be proved) were that the boys wanted to work in the corridor in order to muck about, out of earshot and out of sight of the teacher, but this grievance that girls received preferential treatment from teachers recurred in other lessons, especially over privileged access to the library.

In one Social Studies class I observed the female teacher was having difficulty controlling an unruly group of 15 boys and 8 girls. In order to thin out the class and make it more manageable the teacher asked for 6 volunteers to work in the library. Virtually every hand shot up and the teacher selected a disproportionate number of girls (2 boys and 5 girls) for the privilege of working in the library.

> "That's not fair, Miss", shouted a few boys almost in unison.
> "You always let the girls go!"

In this instance I checked with the teacher afterwards why so many of the boys had been refused a turn in the library and she was quite clear that the issue was one of control. She felt that boys were definitely more unruly and could not be trusted to work quietly without supervision whereas the girls (and a few studious boys) could. As a result the library could provide peace for those who would get on with their work away from the disruptions usually present in her lessons, a feature which was borne out by the statements of some of the girls sent to work in the library (see p.80).

In this example, boys were creating a classroom scenario of their own and studious girls objected to their behaviour, finding it impossible to concentrate in their presence. Here again, the girls were 'accommodated' by a teacher who cared about their progress, and a decision was taken to offer them removal (and possible marginalisation), from the mainstream because of the disruptive behaviour of boys. Girls, once again, in being offered the favour of an alternative place to work were nevertheless implicitly being treated as secondary to the boys, for the latter were not controlled in order to provide an atmosphere conducive for all to learn. These boys, however, did not see that they had 'won' classroom space for their own purposes and complained that favouritism was being shown towards the girls.

Boys often indicated to me that they thought teachers were softer on the girls, seeing themselves as hard-done-by in comparison. This antagonism between the sexes was also expressed in other ways both amongst the pupils and between pupils and teachers. The remaining sections of this chapter now turn away from curricular and teaching issues in order to examine the gender perspectives and dynamics that prevailed amongst the pupils themselves.

PUPILS' ACTION AND REACTIONS

Pupils' own perspectives on gender related issues cannot be judged solely by public incidents in the classroom. However, from school observations, comments overheard and viewpoints expressed in one-to-one interviews, gender was demonstrated to play a very important part in shaping their lives. Gender shaped school-related actions and reactions, but it also shaped other private and public aspects of their lives, both present and future.

Segregated Seating

The most startlingly obvious evidence of gender differentiation displayed by pupils lay in their preferred classroom seating arrangements. Almost without exception, girls would occupy one table whilst boys occupied another. Such mixing of the sexes as there was could usually be attributed to the last people entering the room being forced to sit at whatever table remained available, or to the deliberate actions of teachers in splitting up groups of boys or girls to stop them messing about in lessons.

In the main, both girls and boys preferred to 'sit with their mates' and these 'mates' were always of the same gender. Initially I found this surprising, especially among 15-16 year olds, some of whom were physically mature. I had not anticipated such 'perfect' gender clustering, especially among post-puberty pupils, some of whom were dating. Yet during lessons,

the preference was always to sit with friends of the same sex. Even
during a week's session spent in the library administering my questionnaire
during the Head's career interviews with the entire 5th year, pupils
(who arrived in form groups) would still group themselves informally at
tables with something close to a perfect gender split. Delamont (1980)
records her similar findings in two schools as follows:

> "The most noticeable pupil behaviour in the two schools
> .... was their physical sex segregation, which
> occurred in lesson after lesson .... "   (p.58)

Delamont goes on to demonstrate from fieldnotes that girls simply would
not settle until they had organised seating for themselves away from the
boys and she indicates an atmosphere of non-co-operation and banter between
the sexes. Observations at Leafield serve to corroborate her statements.
Not only did girls and boys actively try to avoid sitting together in class
but much classroom banter consisted of boys versus girls, usually with the
boys starting the process. In classroom tests, boys and girls would
compare their marks with their same-sex friends in an interested and sharing
way, but would establish the marks of other opposite sex members of the
class in order to boast or sneer at each other. In this context, it should
also be borne in mind that Natalie and her girlfriend worked alone together
on their solenoid experiment in a classroom full of boys and were not at
all keen to share their success with the rest of the class (see p.103).

Teachers and pupils gave me different explanations for segrated
seating. I cite both below as they are not necessarily mutually
exclusive, rather, both could hold true simultaneously. For their
part teachers put this differential seating down to the fact that boys
and girls did not have a lot in common in teenage years. Girls were seen
as maturing earlier than boys and having little physical attraction to
boys of their own chronological age. Similarly, their interests were seen
as polarised with both girls talk and boys talk being of little consequence
to the opposite sex.

Pupils themselves explained the phenomenon somewhat differently with girls being better able to articulate their reasons. For them, seating patterns reflected friendship patterns and it was always preferable to 'sit with your mates' in lessons. Girls in particular placed a high value on their friends and spoke of school as an opportunity to be with them.

> Angie:　　　　"We usually sit together, 'cos it's more
> (talking about　　interesting, like".
> her girlfriends)
>
> Danielle:　　　"We go around together and we like to sit
> 　　　　　　　with our mates so we can have a chat and
> 　　　　　　　that. Some of us go back to [Middle
> 　　　　　　　School] days.

The social aspect of school was very important to pupils, especially the girls, and later this proved to be something the school leavers sadly missed and envied the 6th formers for. As one girl said ruefully:

> "You don't find out 'til after you've left".

Seating patterns, therefore, reflected friendship patterns and the fact that these friends were same-gender friends seemed altogether too automatic and obvious for most informants to explain. Friendships centred on things shared in common; likes and dislikes, music tastes, interest in sports, clothes, etc. and in general these things were found with others of the same sex.

To corroborate the explanations of both teachers and pupils my fieldwork threw up only one noticeable boyfriend/girlfriend relationship among the 5th formers and here this couple's attraction to each other did lead them to sit together whenever possible. The only other evidence I found of a cross-gender friendship leading to the two pupils concerned deliberately sitting with each other was the case of a boy and girl who were both keen on motorcycles. The girl was very masculine in her self-presentation with very short hair, a man's cap, jeans, lace-up boots and a bomber jacket. The pair of them would sit together in class to talk about

bikes and how they were going to get a particular one on the road. This

girl had crossed the boundary into 'boys' interests' and taken on a 'boy's

image' and was accepted for these interests rather than her sexuality.

Gender-based tensions and sexuality

In the main though, girls and boys preferred to remain separate from

each other in class and there was evidence of a divide based on a belief in

polarised sexual differences. The Religious Knowledge incident cited on p.107

had important overtones of this, presenting a double edge to the issue of

sexism raised by a pupil, for it was the boys who guffawed and jeered as

Colette queried a sexist connotation implying she was out of step not the

statement in the book. In addition, it was a girl who offered the

'explanation' that boys

"are randier than we are .... "

Thus, stereotyped assumptions about the sexuality of the opposite sex were

already incorporated into the everyday understandings of these pupils.

Barnes and Todd (1977) noted a lack of co-operation between the sexes in

their study of young teenagers concluding that the two sex groups may even

polarise. Certainly an atmosphere of vying with the opposite sex was apparent

in Leafield classrooms and this became more noticeable during break times

when pupils were more free to act as they wanted. Indeed, break times

revealed aspects of polarisation that involved boys' sexual domination of

girls with girls being either unable or unwilling to 'give as good as they

received'. This aspect of gender relations is explored later in this chapter.

From discussions it was clear that boys and girls had little direct

sexual contact with each other. Whilst I did not ask anyone directly about

their sex lives many volunteered information. Girls in particular were more

forthcoming in this respect and here the gender of the researcher must be

taken into account in understanding their openness.

For most girls sex was something to get involved with when they were

serious with a boy and they felt this had not happened to them yet. Those with boyfriends said they were older than themselves and not connected with the school. School was therefore fairly free of romance and sexual activity.

But sexuality was raised at school by virtue of remarks, reputations and mucking about.

Sexual insults

Concerning remarks and reputations, broader gender stereotypes were employed by the pupils in classifying each other. Girls were referred to by both boys and other girls as "Slag" and "Cow". Such a label could be earned by actually being promiscuous or simply by seeming to be so. Such detail as wearing a lot of make-up, or very tight, short skirts and 'chatting-up' lots of boys was taken as 'evidence' of sexual promiscuity. That reputations far exceeded reality was indicated by the fact that my female informants knew only one girl who boasted openly about her sexual activities (e.g. would enthuse about how many times she had "had it" the night before) and even she could well have been exaggerating. In addition, as previously stated, there were virtually no overt signs of boy/girl relationships at 5th form level.

Cowie and Lees (1981) indicate that the label 'slag' is easy to earn and difficult to dislodge because it is hard for any girl to 'prove' she has not done something she is accused of doing. Certainly at Leafield, the label 'slag' was very easy to earn, not just through behaviour connected with boys but also through individuality in fashion, and rudeness or 'bitchiness' towards other girls. Cowie and Lees note that girls as well as boys apply the derogatory 'slag' label to other girls suggesting that this indicates that girls are prepared to accept and operate male values of female sexuality. However, the girls' usage of the term 'slag' at Leafield appeared to differ from boys' usage. Girls used it more as a general

insult for girls they found unpleasant, but boys used it more in the
narrower sense of sexual looseness based on their knowledge of how many
boys a particular girl had gone out with and the circumstances (real or
assumed) of those liaisons.

Boys then, were seemingly attempting to sanction and control girls'
sexuality by their definitions of them and the power that this had to
discriminate against girls was all the more powerful because there was
no equivalent pressure girls could exert upon boys in linguistic terms.
Spender (1980) argues that there are far more derogatory adjectives for
women than there are for men, whilst Cowie and Lees argue that most of
these rely on a sexual double standard whereby boys' libido is seen as
legitimate but girls' as illegitimate. Certainly Leafield girls seemed
powerless to counteract boys' insults with anything like similar potency.
Boys were cajoled as being "Randy" or "A Ram" but as Spender says, such
terms were more flattering than insulting to the boys for they smacked of
virility, something the boys prized.

Another separate aspect of language was the fact that boys' talk
was punctuated, almost as a matter of course, by various profanities.
Key words involved were 'fuck' and 'cunt', used mostly as adjectives to
add emphasis to the discourse and seemingly providing an air of maturity
for the speaker. These words were also used by boys to describe other
boys, and common usage included such items as:

"You stupid fucker"

and

"He's a silly cunt".

In this way, boys seemed to be using words with a sexual connotation in
a broader way as all-encompassing insults and in this, their usage of such
words had parallels to the ways in which girls would apply the terms 'Slag'
and 'Cow' to each other. In addition, for both sexes, these words could be

used softly towards ones 'mates' as if to indicate that the friendship

was strong enough to cope with such words used as gentle chiding.

Sexual Innuendo and Jokes

Apart from the overt use of sexual insults described above, sexual

innuendo and explicit sexual remarks or actions played an important part

in banter and humour between the sexes. The scope for this was enormous

ranging from graffiti to dirty jokes and taunts to classroom quips.

In general, Leafield was remarkably free of graffiti. One exception

to this was a somewhat splendid cariacature of the Head drawn by an

anonymous artist behind the bicycle sheds and even the Head thought that

this was

"a rather good likeness".

Apart from this there was little evidence of illicit spray painting or

carving, but the occasional erect penis or 'tits and bum'-type sketch of

a woman's body would appear chalked on a wall or drawn in a book. One

Religious Knowledge textbook I observed contained a picture of a woman

looking upwards (as if to heaven). A balloon from her mouth sketched in

by a pupil read:

"Give us a fuck!"

In class, opportunities to rib members of the opposite sex were not

often missed and in the protected environment of the teacher's presence,

girls were as good as boys at 'dishing out the treatment'. For example,

in one lesson I observed, Nigel was falling asleep over the desk.

"You're knackered I expect, from what I heard you were
doing last night" stated a nearby girl.

"You're only jealous!" came the reply.

Broader stereotypes of the opposite sex were also aired in the

classroom and for the most part, these were given credence by the lack of

any reaction from the teacher. In one lesson, a girl pupil became irritated

by her nearby male companions who were messing about. She muttered

about them and gave them some dirty looks which the boys noticed.

"What's up Tracy?" said one of them.

"Wrong time of the month is it?"

Neither she, nor the teacher challenged this comment although it had been

plain to hear. Thus, both classroom barracking and accepted 'differences'

served to polarise pupils into a 'them and us' situation along gender lines.

Sexual taunts were a favourite breaktime occupation at Leafield that

were indulged in primarily by boys at girls' expense. Taunts included:

- name-calling (designed to embarrass the girl concerned)

- walking close behind a girl using thrusting movements of the

  hips (designed to embarrass the girl and cause amusement to male

  friends watching)

- bumping into girls to rub up against them, and

- overt sexual offers.

Girls were less explicit in their pranks on boys. Comments and 'come-on'

looks were two methods employed but mostly there were just verbal protests

or reproachful looks done in retaliation for 'offences' already committed

by the boys. For example, crossing the courtyard late one breaktime,

Natalie, who was behind her friends squealed:

"Quick! Look! Do something Mandy, he's groping my titties."

A teenage boy had lunged at her and grasped her from behind with his

hands full over her breasts. She wrested herself free and gave him a

disapproving look combined with a broad beam. His actions were brushed

aside and treated with amusement.

In contrast, the most daring escapade involving girls against the

boys was the one related to me by Natalie. She told me how she and two

other girls had peered over the wall of the boys' toilet to watch a boy

they fancied 'having a pee'. Girls' pranks against boys were, therefore,

far more mild and conducted more at a distance than were boys' pranks

aimed at the girls. The latter did not seem to see anything wrong in

forcing themselves upon girls via direct physical contact. In this I

would argue that they displayed an implicit belief in their right to

women's bodies, a point argued by Hamblin (1983) in her discussion of a

questionnaire into male/female relationships conducted with readers of

Spare Rib. In addition, I would define this type of action as sexual

harassment in line with Mahony (1985) and Jones (1985) who found similar

examples of physical molestation and sexual graffiti in mixed schools.

The tip of the iceberg?

One disturbing feature of my research was the fact that for some of

my female informants, what happened to them at school at the hands of the

boys was mild in comparison to what happened beyond the school gates.

A popular activity among the girls was babysitting. It provided

pocket money and the chance to get out of the house without having to

spend money. However, two girls told me that they had had problems with

the fathers of 'their babies'.

> Natalie: "He'd go upstairs for a shower and come down
>   again in the nude, it was embarrassing".
>
> Tessa: "Yes, mine used to put his arms round me for
>   a kiss. I told him I'd tell his wife and he
>   stopped doing it".

These girls saw 'the fathers' as a perpetual problem in babysitting.

They despised them rather than feared them but never complained openly

to their families or the wife involved. Their reasons for keeping quiet

was that they loved 'their babies' and would miss them badly if they had

to stop babysitting. However, their silence could also be taken as an

indicator that young women in our society 'expect' to be troubled in this

way and know that if they raised a complaint they would either not be

taken seriously, or the incident would be taken more as a reflection

upon their character than the man's. As Mahony states:

> "[girls] regard sexual harassment as a normal part of
> daily life".   (p.49)

It was this type of experience, combined with the breast-grabbing

episode mentioned above that led Natalie to form a very negative view

of men altogether.

> "They only want one thing from you"

she averred. It is not surprising then, that girls like Natalie sought

out and valued the friendship of their own sex and claimed to have little

interest in boyfriends and marriage, at least for the time being.

ATTITUDES TO SCHOOL

Returning to issues associated with schooling, a gender divide was

apparent in pupils'attitudes to school and aspects of deviance. From the

questionnaire conducted with the entire 5th form it was evident that girls

and boys had different priorities in their reasons for <u>liking</u> school.

On Friendships

The single, most quoted reason from girls for liking school was the

opportunity to meet and socialise with friends (44%), closely followed by

enjoyment of certain lessons (39%). Most girls had a whole cluster of

girlfriends and, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, they made sure they

sat with 'their mates' in class whenever they could. This was particularly

true of less-achieving girls (CSE and non-exam takers) and formed a contrast

to the pupils studied by Llewellyn (1980) for whom

> "friendship and loyalty links were virtually non-existent". (p.47)

Leafield girls at all ability levels valued their friends, and less-

achieving girls looked back fondly upon their escapades after leaving.

> Shirley: "I already miss school ... not exactly to
> (8 months after   learn again but [to see] my friends and to
> leaving)   have a laugh; hiding in the toilets to have
>   a fag. Nothing like that at work, not at all".

The tendency among girls to mention missing their school friends many months after leaving indicated how important the issue of friendship was to them although they had not realised this whilst still at school.

> Tessa: "I miss school, didn't think I would but I do.
> (also 8 months   I miss my friends .... you don't find out
> after leaving)   until you leave".

Other researchers (e.g. Meyenn, 1980; Delamont, 1980) have acknowledged the importance of female friendship groups and Griffin (1985) has stressed how this is missed upon leaving, arguing that girls were able to create their own space within mixed schools such that:

> "the girls' toilets or cloakrooms provided an ideal
> refuge from teachers and the boys .... the toilets
> were a favourite place for sciving off lessons".
> (p.20)

I have already indicated in Chapter 4 that all pupils appropriated school facilities for their own purposes, but the girls' toilets were a particular focal point. As Shirley explained, they were a place to 'have a fag', or to indulge in fainting sessions or gossip. I would suggest that this location (as opposed to the bicycle sheds or playing fields) was no accident and that it was special because it was a 'girls only' space. I would argue in particular that Griffin is correct in suggesting that the toilets were a refuge from boys and that female friendship groups were an important demonstration of solidarity and withdrawal from male-dominated domains within the school grounds. Girls could have avoided teachers at one of many venues on site but they would have been in the company of boys doing precisely the same thing. I would suggest that girls found it preferable to be by themselves away from the barracking and taunting of boys and that the girls' toilets provided a 'haven in horny seas'. In addition I would suggest that the asexual and non-threatening friendship of other females was in itself an important mechanism for mutual support among the girls. Comradeship and solidarity were important

in a social setting where boys' actions at girls' expense could be regarded as intrusive.

That girls' friendships served this specific purpose at Leafield was perhaps indicated by the fact that, almost without exception, female in-depth informants lost contact with their friends after leaving school. Many of these girls lived literally around the corner from each other yet they did not take steps to keep in contact, even though many found their new lives and work boring. Girls' friendships were, therefore, important within the context of school and the events experienced there. For girls, school involved a double impact from both teachers and the boys; for boys it meant an impact from teachers only. This could account for the fact that only 26% of boys cited friendships as their main reason for liking school in the questionnaire. Instead their highest priority for liking school was the lessons, with 47% putting this first on the list. I would suggest that boys had less need for the support of same-sex friends at school, as they were not subjected to the type of harassment from the opposite sex that they themselves initiated. I would also suggest that their ability to list lessons/subjects as their main reason for liking school was precisely because they were free to enjoy them if motivated to do so, with no direct impediments coming from the girls.

On teachers

Whatever the discord between the sexes at Leafield and despite different main reasons for liking school, girls and boys were unanimous in their prime reason for disliking school. The most frequently cited reason, reported by 38% of both girls and boys, was 'the teachers'. By this was meant teachers' attitudes towards them and pupils were unequivocal in down-rating teachers who were unfair or who talked down to them and who treated them like children. Rosser and Harré (1976) state that pupils deem it very important that teachers should be fair and that being too

strict or unfair was one of the major 'crimes' teachers could commit.

Leafield pupils certainly operated the same ground rules and in consequence

teachers who violated their 'human rights' gained the dubious distinction

of being the major cause of making being at school unpleasant. To illustrate

this point, in-depth informants complained about the attitudes of teachers

especially where they felt that teachers 'put them down'.

> Vanda:
> (West Indian
> pupil)
>
> "Their attitude I suppose ... some could be
> very snobby. Some people think we're like
> little kids and need a proper telling off
> .... I rebelled most probably, so talked and
> messed about. I would have been different
> if treated differently, I'm positive."

> Shirley:
> (white pupil)
>
> "Some teachers' attitude was helpful, for
> example Mrs Henderson gave you more equal
> treatment, really nice. But others, like
> Mr Kelly, if you were just a couple of
> minutes late he wouldn't wait for you to
> explain, stand there and shame you up in
> front of the class."

Pupils hated being told off or being made to look small. They wanted to

be treated as equals and rejected child status (see also Griffin (1985)).

Having a laugh with teachers was also valued as an indicator of a good

working relationship and this was taken as proof that they were accepted

on equal terms by teachers. As one boy explained:

> Eddie:
> (West Indian
> pupil)
>
> "Some teachers were alright, you could have
> a good laugh and they'd talk to you normally
> .... didn't talk down to you or nothing."

Both Woods (1979) and Willis (1977) have stressed the importance of

teachers' ability to 'have a laugh' in forming good pupil relationships.

As Woods (1983) states:

> "Humour eases interaction when it has got into embarrassing
> or otherwise difficult situations. It is a great leveller,
> for though the teacher is in authority over them, it shows
> that basically he or she is one of them".   (p.56)

Whilst pupils valued 'having a laugh' and wanted teachers to be able to

respond in this way, the more common occurrence was that teachers were

viewed negatively for not being able to match up to this standard. The net

result of this was that pupils distanced themselves from the learning

process if they perceived their teachers as being unjust.

Other complaints levelled at teachers are discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to class interests, but the criticisms raised so far have been mentioned at length here for two main reasons. Firstly, because despite any polarisation of the sexes, both girls and boys were united by the fact that these teacher 'failings' formed the key to dissatisfaction with school, and secondly, because these complaints about teachers' actions interlinked with another aspect of schooling, namely discipline, upon which pupils had differing and gender-specific opinions.

On discipline

My questionnaire with the 5th form included an opportunity for pupils to list their suggestions for improving school. 'Better teachers' was the inevitable response of many pupils given their feelings illustrated above. Some also cited more interesting subjects, rearrangement of school hours and better equipment/funding. On these issues boys and girls could not be distinguished, giving these replies in similar proportions. However, 13% of girls requested stricter discipline in school, whilst only 7% of boys mentioned this. This faithfully reflected the complaints about discipline raised by my in-depth informants. Virtually all the girls felt they could have done better at school and most blamed noise and disorder as major reasons for failing to do so as with Griffin's girls (1985) who also bemoaned teachers' lack of control. However, they acknowledged that if others were mucking about they found it hard not to get involved themselves. Consequently there was a recognised lack of self-discipline which they had found difficult to control. Nevertheless, girls felt that teachers should have stopped classroom disruptions in order to create an atmosphere conducive to work. Tessa's complaint below was typical of many less-achieving girls.

Tessa:
(white less-
achiever)

"I went downhill in the last year. Originally
I was in for 'O' levels but I messed about with
Natalie and got put in for CSEs instead .....
I think teachers should have been harder.

Marsh, Rosser and Harre (1978) in researching classroom disorder, noted

a similar desire for control among their informants who expected teachers

to be firm.

Pupils like Tessa expected teachers to successfully tread a very

fine line between being too hard and too soft. They despised authorit-

arian control, hated being 'shamed up' or 'put down', and rejected being

treated 'like little kids'. On the other hand 'soft' teachers were almost

equally despised and were played up in lessons. As March, Rosser and Harre

(1978) state, pupils were:

> "insulted by weakness on the part of those in authority
> who they expected to be strong, and this weakness, once
> established, provokes more playing up".   (p.38)

Somewhere between the two, teachers were expected to strike an effective

balance, keeping classroom order without making any enemies.

The most striking feature about pupil complaints concerning lack of

discipline was not, however, that girls mentioned it more times than boys,

but that women teachers were criticised more often than men for their

weakness and lack of control. Thus, although in the questionnaires, twice

as many girls wanted extra discipline from teachers, in the in-depth

interviews equal numbers of both boys and girls could see that it was

often lacking and blamed women teachers far more than men for this state

of affairs.

Duncan: "Men hold the class together better, women are
(white pupil)   OK but they can be a bit bitchy".

Intertwined with criticisms of female teachers lay acknowledgements that

pupils played up the women more than the men. Pupils could articulate a

cycle of events involving their negative perceptions of female teacher

control and their responses to that, leading to chaos.

Peter: "Mr Lukes was the best, harsh but fair. Social
(white pupil)   studies, Mrs Cornforth was one of the greatest
                  tits in the world. She'd promise things and
                  not do them so then we played her up ....
                  Definitely boys played women teachers up more
                  than men. They fear men more .... The more

> women tell you off the more you resist them.
> Men stamp their authority on you more than
> women".

Beynon and Atkinson (1984) discuss the way in which pupils can actively combine in the classroom to 'suss-out' teachers, indicating a particular tendency to challenge women teachers who are suspected of being 'weak'. Leafield pupils were very good at this, utilising techniques that ranged from using four-letter words to creating disturbances and announcing provocatively things like:

> "Miss can't teach".

Through probing into the clear cut divide that pupils presented on male and female teachers' ability to control the class, most could think of individual teachers who did not fit the stereotype. Some men were said to be too 'soft' and some women were said to be 'OK' or 'alright' but only one informant gave women teachers the credit for controlling the class through different means than men and even he saw women opting out at the higher levels of disciplinary action.

> Eric: "Women handle trouble more psychologically
> (West Indian   but I was struck that it was always men at
> pupil)   the top. Miss Baverstock used to use men
>   to handle trouble".

Overall then, many pupils operated under the assumption that women teachers had less control over the class than men. They were seen as less forceful, easier to 'play up' and as operating 'differently' to men. Both boys and girls shared this perception of women teachers, although girls were more likely to make reference to specific women teachers whom they had found very helpful. Pupils were, therefore, stereotyping their teachers by utilising broader societal assumptions concerning female characteristics and then re-inforcing that stereotype by virtue of their own response in the classroom.

On classroom behaviour

In the foregoing discussion, pupils admitted to playing up teachers if they were too 'soft' and to rebelling against them if they were too 'hard'. However, the way in which pupils did so was largely gender-specific. One boy summed it up nicely:

> Peter: "Boys are more boisterous than girls at school, you can see that straight off".

Peter's statement appeared to be quite accurate from my own observations in class. Both boys and girls would talk, fidget, waste time and so on, but boys were decidedly more noisy in doing so, therefore gaining increased teacher attention. It was the boys who would enter the classroom banging bags down on the desks and scraping chair legs on the floor. It was boys who would lob bags across the room when the teacher was out, and it was boys who made a nuisance of themselves shouting out answers or demanding to be dealt with. Boys' behaviour in this respect did not pass unnoticed by the girls.

> Vanda: "Boys - they could do what they wanted, and
> (West Indian   girls - they were under there"[pressing her
> pupil)   thumb on the table]¨.

Spender (1982) has highlighted this more 'pushy' element in boys, claiming that it provided boys with the opportunity to claim more of the teachers' time. Time which was in consequence shared out unequally between the girls and the boys. At Leafield it was invariably the boys whose noise levels and antics caused actual classroom disruption, for girls misbehaved in a different way.

For girls, misbehaving usually took on a much quieter form. Girls would whisper to each other incessantly and carry on low-decibel conversations that did not attract teacher attention. They would also doodle in their note books, manicure their nails, sort and re-sort their pencil cases, and simply resort to day-dreaming.

All this meant that girls were less 'trouble' than the boys, but it also made them what Stanworth (1981) describes as the 'faceless bunch'. Girls could, therefore, slip through their lessons doing very little work yet escape the sanction of the teacher.

Anyon (1983) argues that this type of turning away or withdrawal from lessons constitues an action in its own right and that in consequence such girls can be considered as deviant and resisting school processes. Stanley (1986) argues that the quiet passivity of girls can also be attributed to behaviour expected of them by teachers and society, arguing it to be:

> "a successful adaptation to the situation of girls
> in school".   (p.275)

I would agree with both Anyon and Stanley in that both these aspects of girls' classroom behaviour were present at Leafield and I would argue that girls did not recognise that their actions rendered them 'invisible' in comparison to the boys.

BATTLE OF THE SEXES?

To summarise I would argue that there was evidence of polarisation between the sexes at Leafield and that this divide was applied by pupils not only to themselves, but also to their teachers.

A powerful part of this polarisation was the stereotypical attitudes pupils held about their opposite sex peers, especially on matters of sexuality. Perceived 'feminine' or 'masculine' attributes were also transferred onto members of staff such that women teachers were perceived as 'weak' or 'bitchy', whilst men were seen as 'hard' or having authority.

However, apart from any preconceived ideas about masculine and feminine behaviour the pupils may have held, they also _observed_ actual differences in boys' and girls' behaviour in class and acknowledged that those differences existed. Boys and girls reacted differently to staff. They also barracked each other in lessons and vied with each other for the

upper-hand in classroom banter. Boys harassed girls both directly and indirectly and girls gave them the 'cold shoulder'. Here then, was a subtle yet truly comprehensive battle between the sexes.

Thus a combination of broader beliefs and attitudes plus first hand experience formed the stock knowledge they had about each other. Feeding this knowledge was the response of teachers in interacting with pupils together with the content of teaching aids and issues related to organisation of the curriculum. These three features of schooling combined to fuel pupils' existing gender-divided attitudes. Only a few brave and persistent girls challenged these classroom messages and their viewpoint was marginalised via teacher strategies of placation instead of action.

Girls wanted extra discipline at school in order to control the noise and disorder that was more often than not created by boys, and female friendship groups were an important and pleasurable feature of daily life for them. I have argued that boys' behaviour towards girls made for the efficacy of such groups as a sanctuary, away from the world of the boys.

Such then, were the aspects of gender that I observed being played out at Leafield and that were recounted to me by the pupils in both discussions and questionnaire replies. In my opinion, the school's lack of any guide-lines to staff on how to guard against sexism in the class-room contributed towards this. A lack of policy on combating sexism among pupils, also led to the unchecked formation of a highly polarised set of gender-related attitudes that boys and girls held about each other and about themselves. On this evidence I would argue that gender inequality existed at Leafield to disfavour girls at a variety of levels within the school. As Griffin (1983) states:

> "those working in the area of young people's education, ...
> need to think long and hard about the relevance of their
> work to the female half of the population." (p.75)

CHAPTER 6

BLACK AND WHITE - UNITE OR FIGHT?

INTRODUCTION

Leafield School was located within a Local Education Authority that had no written policy on either equal opportunities or multi-cultural education. The Chief Education Officer in addressing a conference[1] said that schools should anticipate "the inexorable march of events" in our society and "better equip their pupils for such a future", but this philosophy did not encourage him to see the benefits of a written policy.

The Local Authority, which claimed on all its vacancy advertisements to be "an equal opportunity employer", provided support for a Multi-Cultural Education Centre set up in 1978. This support included the provision of premises, materials and a small staff to whom schools could turn in search of multicultural literature and teaching packs, and from whom advice on teaching methods, classroom materials and mother-tongue support teaching could be obtained. This Centre developed slowly, able only to engage actively with schools who were willing to utilise its resources and having little or no power to engage other less willing schools in multi-cultural initiatives. Troyna and Ball (1985) studied schools' usage of the LEA's Multicultural Education Unit at Milltown with similar conclusions. In Bridgehurst, it was not until 1986/87 (after my research period at Leafield) that the LEA produced a prejudice and equality document which became something of a catalyst for discussion among teachers.

It is widely assumed (e.g. Little & Willey (1981); Swann (1985)), that the development of a written LEA policy is of crucial importance in involving schools actively in combatting racial inequalities that occur within school walls, be they directly racist (e.g. pupil attacks and insults) or unintentionally prejudiced (e.g. in stereotyped textbook images or discriminatory practices). Also, as Troyna and Ball (1985) state:

> "the absence of an Authority-wide policy is said to have the potential to inhibit developments at the 'chalk face'."
> (p.26)

It is against such a background of no written LEA policy, that research into race and its effect on interactions at Leafield took place. The racial dimension was considered in both teacher and pupil interactions and in this chapter I shall argue that the lack of an LEA policy did assist the perpetuation of unchallenged racism that occurred in both blatant and subtle ways.

Multiculturalism and Antiracism at Leafield

Leafield's school policy was stressed as being one of equality of opportunity although it did not have a written anti-racist or anti-sexist policy and there were no written guidelines or procedures for teachers in dealing with racist or sexist events. It followed then that in the absence of clearly defined guidelines for combatting racism any such incidents that arose were dealt with individualistically 'on the spot', if at all, with no system of recourse to a disciplinary procedure or for feedback and discussion with colleagues. In practice what happened in classrooms and staffrooms was distinctly influenced by the perspective of the individual teacher or teachers involved and, as indicated in Chapter 4, some members of staff were not averse to resorting to racist humour in the staffroom and this was observed being followed through into the classroom (see p. 135). In addition Chapter 4 also described the mini-furore that was created over the suggested policy statement by the school's Equal Opportunity Group, the reaction among some staff being that overt stands against racism (and sexism) were uncalled for and in fact only served to exacerbate 'problems'.

In the absence of a strong anti-racist policy, Leafield might still have had a substantial multicultural curriculum, but here again research has indicated that few predominantly white schools take multiculturalism seriously (e.g. Troyna and Ball (1985)). In this respect it should be stated that the school's intake included only 5% EM pupils, the vast

majority of whom were children of West Indian origin. During my time at Leafield there were only 10 pupils of Asian or Eastern origin in the entire school, the remaining non-white pupils being solely of Afro-Caribbean origin.

Leafield had, indeed, made changes in the curriculum since the appointment of a more progressive Head in 1982, for example the humanities had been broadened to include topical issues of racial and sexual equality both at home and abroad, religious education, and the school boasted a newly acquired Section 11 teacher whose duties lay in the Humanities and TVEI training.

The school had also forged a link with a black school in a Third World country and this incorporated project work, pen friends and an ambitious school visit to the other school during the summer vacation.

However, for one reason and another, these genuine efforts to raise awareness and broaden the horizons of the pupils often failed to reach their target. For example, the Section 11 teacher was used primarily as a means of spreading the general teaching load rather than concentrating on ethnic minority needs and during my time at the school her classes included Mathematics, Parentcraft, Community Studies and History. Her timetable was quite full and her support for ethnic minority pupils was, from my observations, primarily conducted through lunch break caring contacts with any minority pupil who had a personal problem at the time. She did do some work on racism and prejudice within the curriculum, utilising materials from the local Centre for Multicultural Education but this was a small part of her teaching load. I was informed by the local Multicultural Education Adviser that:

> "Section 11 funding is commonly used to supplement
> teaching in this way".

This falls in line with the findings of other researchers (e.g. Dorn and Hibbert, 1987), who have commented that Section 11 teachers are often used

to improve general pupil/teacher ratios.

Regarding the school trip to the Third World school, the cost of this trip to parents was over £600, immediately excluding a number of pupils whose family could not afford such a sum.

Similarly, it proved difficult to raise interest in the pupils when important international issues were introduced into classroom discussions. An example from my fieldnotes is as follows:

> History lesson with Mr Lukes (11th December 1984)
> The class contains 15 pupils, twelve boys and three girls. Three are of West Indian origin, two boys and a girl. The class has been working on Apartheid in South Africa finishing off today with Ron Pickering's film on sport in South Africa.
> The teacher re-capped on earlier lessons and asked why South Africa was prepared to spend £33,000 on assisting international sports events. After a lot of delays and non-commital activity, Sonia, my West Indian informant suggests it is to make it look as if the races can mix.
> The film is then shown with much fidgeting and noise from the pupils, used deliberately to indicate their boredom. Afterwards in question time, two pupils state that the film advocates an end to the sports boycott when in fact it suggests the opposite. All three West Indian pupils are among those not really paying attention to the film.
> Winston, a West Indian boy in the class, is then sent out for fiddling with a pair of clippers from his metalwork class and saying "Yeah - my tongue" in answer to a question about whether he had anything in his mouth. The lesson struggles on.

Other initiatives were also being taken by staff at Leafield to include a multicultural perspective with emphasis on West Indian culture in particular in order to reflect the intake of the school. They incorporated reggae in Music, Drama and dancing classes and sported a steel band that met to practice after school. The steel band consisted of 5 West Indian-origin boys of various ages. One teacher in particular, did a lot to keep this band together by constantly encouraging its participants, staying late to help them practice and finding them local

community bookings. She told me later that it was a problem trying to

get all band members to stay behind after school for practices and a

constant worry that they would not show up at booked events.

Beyond this, some members of the school's Equal Opportunities Group

told me that they actively tried to use non-racist and non-sexist resources

and topics in their teaching, but these were highly personalised initiatives.

The group, per se, did not make any great impact on either policy or

practice at the school during the period of this research, save to

aggravate some of the 'rear guard' teachers of the Head's "old righties"

category.

From the foregoing examples of multicultural inputs at Leafield it

can be seen that these were largely 'ad hoc' and initiated by individual

teachers with a desire to promote multicultural perspectives. This is an

experience shared by many schools, with or without a written policy

(Troyna and Ball, 1985). The additional absence of an anti-racist policy,

however, meant that there was no concerted attack on <u>racism</u>, no common

stand displayed by staff to pupils. This was to have repercussions on

interactions in the classroom.

TEACHERS' ACTIONS

I have already indicated that some teachers from the Head's "old

righties" category were not averse to racial overtones in staffroom

humour (see p. 93), but did their attitudes spill over into the classroom?

My research at Leafield suggested that they did.

Two male teachers who formed part of the smoking fraternity in the

'old righties' section of the staffroom were observed to be engaging

in racist humour in the classroom. One of these, a metalwork

teacher, made considerable play when talking to an Asian pupil by exhorting

"Mohammed - son of the prophet", to perform some activity or other. The

same turn of phrase was used when addressing the boy concerned on a more

one-to-one basis, again loud enough for all, in a fairly noisy machine room, to hear. This boy was the only Asian-origin boy in the class and the teacher clearly thought he was being witty and "pally" by addressing the boy in this way. The boy concerned received such salutations passively but there was no doubt that he was singled out by the teacher because of a perceived ethnic difference.

Wright (1986) reports very similar behaviour from a male metalwork teacher who could not understand why his comments about being

"sent back to the chocolate factory" (p.131)

were received so negatively, stating that it

"was only said in good fun". (p.131)

Her observations, contained in the research of Eggleston et al. (1986), are completely consistent with my observations of this teacher who, in common with his male colleagues saw no harm in humour of this type and felt that:

"too much was read into things".

The common belief among the 'smoking fraternity' to which he was a party was that researchers, such as myself, simply caused trouble and made things worse than they really were by placing the spotlight on race. Cohn (1987) found similar attitudes among teachers in Manchester schools quoting one teacher's comment as follows:

"As soon as you institutionalize something it becomes
more obvious". (p.10)

The above classroom example was observed directly but pupils also related other similar examples to me.

Tessa: "In Mr Harper's class a boy made a joke about
(white pupil) Mohammed and everybody laughed and the teacher
laughed too."

and:

Shirley: "Mr Dixon used to say something about chappatis
(white pupil) and everyone would laugh. He told Pakistani
jokes and Irish jokes and we were all generally
treated the same."

In the latter example it is interesting to note that a white pupil took the teacher's usage of both Pakistani and Irish jokes as proof that he was not racist and treated all pupils the same. Yet as Curtis (1984) states, jokes against the Irish are as racist as jokes against Pakistanis for both serve to denigrate a population considered inferior to the British. Leafield pupils did not perceive that the Irish were being ridiculed in jokes as an ethnic minority, rather they saw them as white and the jokes were commonly seen as a signal that their teachers were 'OK'. It would appear that both status and a reputation for fairness in white pupils' eyes was built upon a teacher's willingness to have a laugh (see Woods, 1979) enhanced by their willingness to include racial humour of various origins in their repertoire. It can be debated whether cross-cultural and trans-racial jokes in mixed company are or are not signs of true racial harmony. Certainly the ability to laugh at oneself and one's own group is considered beneficial in our society. When white British people can identify so clearly with black people or Irish people as to laugh with them rather than at them I would suggest that whites have reached an important stage in the process of anti-racialism, but it is not clear to me that the incidents cited here correspond to this ideal. The jokes referred to were clearly at the expense of black and Irish people.

As a result, it is not surprising that some of my black informants picked up on this and presented it as a criticism of their teachers. They were affronted by such humour and in consequence dubbed offending teachers as "racists". Whilst this did not lead to classroom antagonisms or to 'them and us' situations of the kind described by Wright (1986) in her ethnographic study of a mixed comprehensive, there was clearly a gulf of understanding between both white teachers and pupils and black pupils on this point.

From my observations teachers were not directly challenged over such

jokes, and indeed as Tessa explained, white pupils thought more of their teachers for their light-hearted approach as a result of such jokes.

There is a lack of evidence on whether schools with no specific anti-racist policy fare worse in terms of race relations and racism than those which do have one. However, I would suggest that staff are more likely to 'fall into the trap'of racist banter in their classrooms if they have not been involved in discussions or training designed to combat prejudice and increase racism awareness.

I have also indicated above that teachers were not challenged over racist jokes. This was in direct contrast to sexist remarks and text books which evoked a response from both white and black girls (see p. 107). I would suggest that it was more problematic for pupils to challenge racism in the form of jokes precisely because teachers were trying to be affable and because the view of the white majority was that such ribbing was 'fair play'. In addition, it would seem that the subtleties of negative stereotypes and non-existent black faces in text books were not readily identified by pupils. Contrary to this, on gender issues, both black and white girls could unite to defend things female presenting much less of a minority front on an issue which potentially affected half of the school population. Black issues potentially affected only 5% of Leafield's student population, a minority which did not wish to make a stand alone.

Black Pupils Reactions to Teachers' Attitudes

I have indicated above that racist jokes were not challenged in the classroom and in general, my black informants (who constituted the entire complement of West Indian-origin pupils in the 5th form) had little to say on this front. However, sensitivity towards race was conveyed via two separate episodes concerning individual teachers.

In one observed incident, the history teacher, Mr Lukes, fell foul of Sonia, a West Indian pupil. Admiring her newly corn-rowed hairstyle he

engaged her in casual conversation about it:

> Mr Lukes: "How long can you keep it in before
> having to wash it?"

> Sonia: "I can wash it while they're still in!
> (indignantly) I'm not _that_ dirty!"

Sonia clearly thought he was being rude and personal and she
separately described him to me as being "racist". She based her analysis
both on his comment about her hair and on his behaviour in the history
lesson on Apartheid (see p.134). In that lesson, Mr Lukes had
become exasperated with the disinterest of the class and castigated them
saying:

> "If you can't get interested in that then I'm afraid
> most of you are going to be bored for the rest of
> your lives."

Whilst this had been aimed at the class as a whole, Sonia took a special
dislike to it, treating it as a personal criticism. I would argue that
in this case, the topics in hand, namely her corn-rowed hair and South
Africa included sufficient ethnic/racial content for her to be on the
defensive, indicating the presence of sensitive 'triggers' that could be
inadvertently 'set off' by the teacher.

In this instance, I would consider Sonia's response to her teacher as
particularly problematic because in both events in which he gained her
disdain, he was trying to be open and _non-racist_. From my subsequent
knowledge of this teacher it became clear that his teaching philosophy
and political ideology was such that racism was an anathema to him. Neverthe-
less, he inadvertently earned for himself a reputation in Sonia's eyes
of being a "racist".

A second example of a black pupil's complaint against a teacher came
from Delia. She explained things to me this way:

> Delia: "Sometimes, when you'd go to the class there'd
> (West Indian be five of us, three black and two half-caste,
> pupil) and one teacher; he only took it out on us,
> everytime .... It would be nice to see a few
> black teachers."

Clearly for Delia, her colour represented a 'separateness' which the white teacher homed in on in a way a black teacher would not have done, but there was an alternative explanation which another white pupil articulated well:

> White Pupil: "Black people think they're getting into trouble because they're black but it's not. Take Bedford for example, he messes about in class and then gets into trouble for it, not his colour".

Indeed, my own classroom observations would seem to bear out this point. Teachers who did not tolerate a lot of messing about in class would sanction offenders whoever they were, but both Delia and Sonia were quick to place a racist connotation on any sanctions they received.

These teachers were, I believe, in the main misunderstood in their motives. They misjudged the reception that their open, jovial or disciplinary remarks would receive and were perhaps naïve in thinking that old wounds in the ethnic minority community have healed sufficiently to accept both banter and sanctions as being neutral. Underlying expectations of prejudice still led black pupils to assume the worst.

Teachers' Typifications

To be fair to teachers, no-one that I observed overtly discriminated between their pupils but some teachers' typifications led to their views of individual West Indian pupils fitting the stereotype of the disruptive, boisterous pupil (Brittan, 1976).

One teacher who was involved in equal opportunities work told me that I would find Sonia "interesting" because she was talkative and exuberant in class. I was also warned about her alarming temper. Wright (1986) also refers to the fact that West Indian girls in her study were seen as "unpredictable". Sonia was indeed as described in a number of lessons but so were many other white pupils in whom this tendency passed unnoticed. It was evident that black pupils still stood out in the minds

of some teachers so that their behaviour was easier to remember.

Teachers' opinions of black pupils also contained implicit meanings

gleaned from information about the home background.   One teacher

described three of her West Indian-origin pupils as follows:

    (about Diane): "Came middle of the 4th year. A loud,
                noisy uncontrolled extrovert. Lives with
                her mum, a smashing lady. Her mother is
                supportive [of the school] but can't really
                do anything."

    (about Vanda): "Excellent attendance, fair group of friends,
                cheerful and outgoing. She's doing CSEs,
                average ability. Lives with her mum, only
                came to the school once but no problems.
                Not sure about her hobbies but I think she
                does lots of babysitting."

    (about Sheilah):"Lives with her mum, part of West Indian
                culture. A well-rounded, mature, intelligent
                girl, gifted in 'O' level subjects and sport.
                She's got a pleasant personality, possibly not
                aiming high enough, she wants to be a travel
                agent ... Her friends are mostly academic but
                there are some younger black ones who hang
                around."

This teacher's perception of these three black girls focussed not

only on their academic ability, but also on the nature of their home life,

part of which (living with a single parent mother) was seen as "part of

West Indian culture". In addition, references were made to the control of

the parent and involvement with the school, as well as to the type of

company the girls kept and their outside interests. Distinction

was made   between Vanda and Diane, both of whom were classified as

of average ability, but viewed either positively or negatively according

to other aspects of their home life and personality (see Wright (1986)).

Whilst this well-meaning teacher may have considered these descriptions

of her pupils to be objective, there is a wealth of research evidence to

suggest that negative and positive stereotypes can be transmitted to pupils

via the teacher's attitude thus promoting or inhibiting their academic

performance, causing the pupil to become like their label (e.g. Rosenthal

and Jacobsen, 1968). This particular teacher could be classified as one of the Head's "young lefties" but this did not stop her from forming either positive or negative images of black pupils based on factors other than purely educational ones. Her 'progressive' attitudes did not help her to avoid bias in judging black pupils.

Similarly, I observed one lesson which passed with the usual range of banter, minor complaints and periods of peaceful work until a West Indian boy was asked to collect up the books and put them in the cupboard. He began to gather them in, in a hit-and-miss fashion. "All of the books, please" the teacher reminded him. "Fuck off!" he was then heard to say, but it was not clear to me who this was aimed at, or why it was said. The teacher, however, took it to be aimed at her and placed him on a disciplinary referral to another tutor. The final outcome was a later apology from the boy but I noted that other white boys had sworn during the lesson and their verbal abuses had attracted no sanctions.

Again, I consider that the absence of guidelines in the area of multiculturalism, anti-racism amd equal opportunities served to weaken any control the school might have exercised to counter such prejudices forming a regular part of school life.

Teachers' Inertia

So far, the attention has been focussed on what teachers did at Leafield that could be construed as racist or prejudiced, but of equal importance is what teachers did not do in terms of their omissions that contributed towards the perpetuation of racist values and attitudes in the classroom.

Leaving aside the fact that many teachers did not deliberately try to tackle racism via lesson content and materials, classroom observations led to the detection of one particular issue that seemed of paramount importance, namely that of ignoring racist incidents in the classroom.

In one history lesson I observed, one particular white boy sat alone at the back of the class saying intermittently in a loud voice:

"I'm bored ..... It's so boring!"

As I participated in the lesson going round to view pupils' work I sat with him and asked what he would rather do. In earshot of a Bangladeshi classmate the reply was:

"Gun down thousands of innocent Pakis".

Asked why, the provocative reply was :

"Well, it would get rid of them wouldn't it?"

The teacher could not have avoided hearing this. Later I probed into the background of the boy concerned with this teacher and I discovered he had been fined in the juvenile court that same week and was classified by her as having a 'bad home background'. This knowledge allowed her to consider him unreachable and beyond redemption and so to discount and not sanction his actions. Whilst his internally held attitudes may well have been impossible to shift by school influences alone, my observations led me to the conclusion that they would remain hidden and not expressed in the presence of a teacher who would not tolerate such behaviour. However, this particular teacher lacked classroom control. She was despised and considered "hopeless" by her work-orientated pupils whilst being totally 'sent-up', taunted or ignored by the rest of the class. All lessons observed with her ended in chaos and one side effect of her lack of control was that pupils such as the one described could get away with unacceptable behaviour.

In a Biology lesson a similar incident occurred. The male teacher was discussing the difficulty of genetic experimentation on humans because of their

"dislike for having hundreds of children".

A boy from the back of the class distinctly interjected:

"But the Russians do".

Another boy supplemented this with:

"And Pakis".

Plenty of pupils heard the remark and some sniggered but the teacher

showed no sign of having heard it. The point having been registered and

received, the lesson continued in the normal way.

In the second incident cited, I do not know whether the teacher

concerned heard the comment or not, but in other lessons he had been seen

to counteract complaints of sexism via anticipatory placation (see p.106).

However, from informal discussions with various teachers it appeared that

the absence of challenges to such classroom barracking was due mainly

to one of three factors. Either teachers valued the peaceful cohesion of

the lesson as a whole too much to interrupt the flow by following up

provocative pupil remarks, or they wished to avoid confrontation on

racist (or sexist) incidents because they did not feel equipped to handle

them, or they simply did not see the issue as being sufficiently important

to warrant attention.

Irrespective of individual teachers' rationales for non-action, all

of which were identified by Figueroa and Swart (1986) in their study of

racist comment among pupils and teachers, it was clear from observations

that this type of incident only occurred in lessons where the teacher was

perceived as 'soft'. Most teachers in this category were women, but

not exclusively so. I did not see any indication of this type of racist

banter in the lessons of 'no-nonsense' teachers. Teachers could, therefore,

be instrumental in eradicating overt signs of racism in their classrooms

if they were prepared, or felt able, to 'grasp the nettle'. I would argue

that once again, the absence of school directives on how to handle racist

indicents was a party to teachers' failure to address racist incidents.

BLACK PUPILS' PERSPECTIVES

The issue of white middle class researchers studying blacks

is a sensitive one. It could be argued that as such, I would never be

accepted sufficiently for black pupils to share their experiences of racism

with me. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, through a process of giving

of myself and alligning myself with them, black pupils accepted me easily

and were, I believe, genuinely open in their discussions with me. Only

one quiet boy, Bedford, indicated that there were things he could tell me

about which he preferred not to discuss. In this instance his silence

spoke volumes about the emotional pain that experiencing racism inflicts.

It should also be borne in mind that my research was conducted in a part

of Britain not noted for high levels of unemployment, high proportions of

ethnic minorities or racial tensions. Indeed, OPCS Census Data for 1981

indicated some 1.2% West Indian-born residents in the area leading to an

estimated 3% West Indian-origin residents including those born in the U.K.

With such low percentages and only 4% of school leavers registered as unem-

ployed at the local Careers Office the future for young, black people did not

look bleak. Such factors should also be taken into account in understanding

why I was not perceived as an outsider or intruder, and that black pupils

felt able to share their thoughts with me.

Having an on-going rapport with all West Indian-origin pupils in the

5th year did not, however, mean that I received most of my evidence for

racism at Leafield from them. Indeed, things were quite to the contrary.

At the outset I had anticipated that black pupils would be my major source

of evidence for racist behaviour received from their white peers, but in

the event, few could relate specific school incidents they found racist,

disturbing or insulting.

Black pupils did classify some of their teachers as "racist" (see p.139)

and they firmly believed that there was discrimination in the world of work

(this issue is addressed later in Chapter 9,   but they were less

sure that they experienced discrimination at the hands of their <u>peers</u>.

Instead, pupil racism was broadly denied, but with some provisos that are

worthy of discussion.   A sample of statements from black pupils is as

follows:

> Vanda: "I never saw any racial signs or insults."
> (said about
> school after
> leaving)

> Delia: "Not at all, not at school, but I don't
> (on the subject   listen to things like that. To me
> of name-calling)   everyone's the same."

> Sheilah: "Infant and Middle School were worse for
>   racial jokes, but it's <u>much</u> less in Senior
>   School. Just comments about Pakis in shops
>   and "Go back to your own country.""

There is an implicit acknowledgement in Delia   and Sheilah's

remarks that some degree of both name-calling and racist humour <u>was</u>

occurring at Leafield, but that they preferred to ignore it. Delia's

attitude was to pay no attention to things she heard whilst Sheilah's was

to 'play it down' in comparison with worse things she had heard in earlier

schools. From my observations this 'low-key' response was typical of

black pupils' reactions to any incident that had racial overtones to it.

They did not openly challenge teachers they saw as racist, and did not

respond in a volatile way to jibes and taunts. A typical example of how

black pupils dealt with little incidents was the way in which three West

Indian girls reacted to an immense golliwog on the front of a hand-knitted

jumper worn by a young white 3rd year pupil. Finding themselves opposite

this girl and this jumper at a lunch table they did not openly refer to it

in any way but simply pointed and leant over the table for a closer look

and giggled about it in a mocking way. The girl concerned seemed to have

no conception of what they found so entertaining but seemed instead simply

embarrassed by their 'inexplicable' behaviour - another example of a gulf

in understanding.

Name-calling and Taunts

The issue of name-calling has received recent attention from such
researchers as Figueroa and Swart (1986), Cohn (1987 and 1988) and Kelly
(1988). Cohn (1987), using data from Outer London schools, found that over
50% of name-calling reported by senior school pupils involved the use of
racist names. She also found that the recipients of this name-calling
found it very hurtful, although many found this difficult to admit. At
Leafield, black pupils frequently experienced jibes in the playgrounds
and open spaces during breaktimes. These jibes were frequently one word
slights such as "choc drop!", "Paki!", or impromptu attempts at foreign
accents and animal grunts as the targetted person walked past. The usual
response was to ignore such incidents although occasionally the perpetrator
would receive 'an earful'. Pupils certainly did not bother to report such
incidents to teachers. Indeed, black pupils did not see all teachers as
entirely blameless, and they saw little sense in bothering to tell someone
in authority after the event. As one black pupil told me:

> Delia: "What could they do about it anyway? Some of
> them are just as bad".

Kelly (1988) found similar mistrust of teachers in her study, and a
similar reticence in reporting incidents of name-calling.

However, another avenue for taunting black pupils was through having
a laugh at their expense during a lesson, and here it proved problematic
to differentiate between the general amusement caused by sending someone
up (and the disruption of the lesson that usually ensued) and the added
satisfaction that might be gained by aiming the humour at a black pupil.
For example, in one of Sonia's History lessons a white boy in front of
her was making a good job of forcing her to laugh. He was amazingly
inventive in how he could attach a piece of sticking plaster to his face,
turning round to demonstrate a variety of permutations to her. I find it
difficult to assess such interaction as racist for the actor's motives were

not clear. Did he want to get Sonia into trouble for laughing or were his antics a spontaneous extension of his chosen role of 'mucker'? (Beynon and Atkinson, 1984). In this instance I would suggest the latter for he was being equally silly and irritating towards other white pupils by virtue of such devices as making noises and flicking balls of paper.

However, in another of Sonia's History lessons I observed the same boy in action in a rather different way. As part of many other tricks and ploys to waste time he took a whole piece of plain paper from his notebook, folded it in half and held it in his mouth, opening and closing the flaps like a massive pair of lips.

> "Hey, Sonia!" he called to her, making the big paper
> lips move together and apart again.

She gave him a withering look and he collapsed in laughter. The incident was genuinely not noticed by the teacher who was writing on the board at the time.

The dividing lines between humour, <u>cruel</u> humour and <u>racist</u> humour are hard to define but attempts have been made to differentiate between them in the area of name-calling by such authors as Goffman (1963), Cameron (1985) and Cohn (1988). In addition, Kelly (1988) writes:

> " .... who would have thought that 'specky-four-eyes' as a
> name .... could have any connections with racial fights?
> The answer is that it should not and need not .... but, as
> we have seen, it is part of the same vocabulary .... as
> 'Paki' and 'Nigger' which are not only personally insulting,
> but which can also be used to excite racial tensions". (p.27)

In the two examples of 'mucking' cited above I would argue that there is a similar sliding scale in operation and that at some point along the line, racist intent plays an important part in how a 'playful' activity should be viewed. As Kelly goes on to say:

> "Until and unless pupils and teachers draw some lines of
> demarcation between the two kinds of name-calling, the
> vocabulary of racial names will continue to be prominent
> in schools and will feed into dynamics of relations between
> the racial groups." (p.27)

Similarly, I would argue that both pupils and teachers need to decide just what will and will not be tolerated in pranks played upon black pupils, but as demonstrated in this chapter, both black pupils and teachers appeared loathe to make a stand. I would suggest that the difficulty in pinning down the exact intention behind an incident is a major factor in this respect, but that once again, the absence of a strong written policy advocating vigilance against such episodes was in part responsible for teachers non-action and white pupils' persistence in indulging in such games.

WHITE ATTITUDES

If black pupils saw little in the way of racial incidents at school, and played down taunts and jokes, then it might seem fair to assume that little or no serious racial discord existed at Leafield. Indeed, blatant examples of racism as cited earlier were indeed the exception, and there were no incidents of fighting breaking out between ethnic groups, and no directly provoked attacks of any description during my period of research. In addition, staff assured me there had been no serious racial incidents requiring recording for disciplinary action for at least the last year. However, listening to the views of white pupils indicated that such an impression of Leafield would be a false one.

By far the most powerful evidence of racism came directly from white pupils themselves, deeply ingrained in their attitudes. The assumptions and beliefs about both immigrants and black British-born individuals shared by many of my white informants informed their name-calling and teasing in the classroom. The racism stated to me in discussions came from pupils totally unashamed of their attitudes and therefore in no way inhibited in expressing their opinions to me. Both achievers and less-achievers were capable of holding racist beliefs and their racism similarly crossed the class divide. I quote at length from a discussion with Paul, a farmer's

son and member of the Young Farmer's Association who sat and obtained

8 'O' level passes and then entered the 6th form.

Paul: "I'm very racist, it runs in the family. I
(white pupil) realise they've got a right to be here but
              I'm not inclined to have them as my friends.
              I would rather not mix with black people.
              Au pairs from Switzerland are OK but they're
              girls and white anyway."

(Later in the same interview)

"A bloke from Pakistan gets given a house
for nothing and a bloke here has to work for
it. Get too many benefits for a start ...
If they are no different why do they get the
benefits and we don't .... I can't call them
British if they're born here, still got the
accent and the colour .... You don't swear at
one because you know what's going to happen,
there'll be five of them on you, gang warfare!"

Paul's comments indicated a dislike of racial mixing, a belief in

black 'gangs' and a particular resentment towards Pakistani immigrants.

He was by no means alone in holding such views which were repeated time

and again by white pupils.

Peter: "Blacks always stick together in a fight because
(white pupil) they think everyone picks on them because they're
              black. That Eddie, he's like that, the older they
              get the worse they get."

The most powerful message of all, however, was their overiding hatred of

the Asian, so-called 'Paki', community.

Duncan: "I don't like Pakis meself. Too many spreading
(white pupil) up the Woodlands Road to Hillrise .... I've got
              some sympathy with the National Front over
              numbers, colour does set people off."

An interesting feature of Duncan's racism was the fact that he did have

black (West Indian) friends. For him and many others, Pakistani immigrants

represented a threat, an invasion, but West Indians were more taken for

granted as a feature of British life. Duncan, in common with other

informants, therefore, operated a double standard in his racism with

personal black acquaintances lying outside the scope of his definition of

'the colour problem'. For him, it was the 'Pakis' who were the problem,

not non-whites in general, and not his own friends.

Although more boys than girls expressed overtly racist sentiments
it was not their sole domain and girls were similarly more hostile towards
people of Asian origin.

> Sarah:
> (a pupil who
> gained 9 'O'
> levels and
> entered the
> 6th form)
>
> "There's no Pakistanis in school so there's no
> real problem. Coloureds [West Indians] mix in
> but Pakistanis don't, they're more separate in
> their dress and ways. I think there would be
> more going on at [two other schools mentioned]
> where they do go. I think people should act
> the same as us if they come over here and
> coloureds do dress the same and so on."

Sarah's concern was that Asians did not assimilate and absorb British
language and culture as readily as West Indian people did. For her,
perceived cultural distance equated with the level of her hostility and
negative attitudes.

The extent of anti-Pakistani feeling in the school was such that the
few white pupils who condemned racism felt particularly sorry for the
school's small Asian population.

> Tessa:
> (white pupil)
>
> "Pupils used to say 'Choc-drop' and I hated that
> because they're just the same really, just a
> different colour. Especially Pakistanis, every-
> body at the school hates them. I always felt
> sorry for them."

Occasionally, a desire was shown to demonstrate greater solidarity with
those suffering the effects of racism.

> Derek:
> (white pupil)
>
> "I saw a kid once, a bully, in a gang of kids,
> come up to this coloured [Asian] guy and call
> him names galore. If I 'ad the strength of
> all those guys I'd 'av ... well, you know."

In discussing 'Pakistanis' at Leafield it was clear that all pupils
(including those of West Indian-origin) lumped all Asian-origin people
together as 'Pakis'. Pakistani was used as the blanket term irrespective
of actual origins. The word 'Paki' was used as a derogatory term in its
own right and West Indian-origin pupils also referred to Asians in this
way, seeing them as a distinctly different group and usually with similar

negative connotations. Thus, just as some white pupils felt that West

Indian-origin people had more of a right to be here than Asians, so did

some West Indians hold similar views. In terms of a hierarchy, both

groups saw Asians as being at the 'bottom of the pile'. As a result the

ten Asian pupils at the school had to survive an enormous amount of

prejudice and they too, mostly 'kept their heads down' in a similar way to

that in which West Indian pupils dealt with events. This Asian experience

was in stark contrast to that of a Vietnamese boy in the 5th year. This

boy seemed fully integrated within mainstream school culture. He was

popular and frequently seen happily in the company of predominantly white

friends. I neither saw nor heard anything negative towards him and he was

similarly liked by his teachers and praised for his above-average academic

achievement.

Apart from exploring directly racist attitudes among my informants, I

also took the opportunity to investigate how they felt about racially

mixed friendships and to what extent these actually developed at Leafield.

On the theme of racial mixing, all pupils with racist tendencies vouched

for the fact that mixed friendships were uncommon.

> Peter: "Black and white boys don't mix after school.
>   I'm not a racialist, but I don't know why, I
>   don't like to see a black boy with a white girl."

That aspects of sexual as well as racial dominance were involved here was

apparent from our ensuing discussion when I asked him to consider how he

would feel if the genders were round the other way.

> Peter: "Oh no, I wouldn't worry if I saw a white boy with
>   a black girl, but I always say 'Look at her mother
>   though .... in forty years time .... "
>   (shaking his head at the prospect)

If friendships could not be promoted between black boys and white

boys of Peter's persuasion, it was possible to gain their distant

admiration, based on a respect for 'hardness'.

> Peter: "The only black boy I liked who was hard but
>   kept it quiet was Bedford."

In this connection the 'hardness' Peter respected was not the
'hardness' defined by Furlong (1984) which related to West Indian boys'
'style', but to an anglocentric notion of 'hardness' which stood for
masculinity and strength.

Bedford was indeed quiet as Peter suggested, he was also gentle in
his manner, but he was tall, broad and strong. As such I suspect that
his build with its attendant promise of being able to flatten anyone who
stood in his way or abused him, was instrumental in Peter treating him
with respect.

The view expressed above that mixed race friendships were not common
was not in fact borne out by reality. White boys with racist inclinations
preferred to believe this but West Indian-origin boys were mostly to be
seen in the company of white friends and West Indian-origin girls, whilst
often being seen together at break-times, did not always spend their free
time this way and had many white girlfriends. White girls, far more than
white boys reported having black friends, and for these pupils racism was
something that other people felt or practised, not themselves.

> Lynn: "I haven't seen any racism at school, I've got
> (white pupil) friends according to their personality. My
>   Mum and Dad are, very, [meaning racist] but
>   I'm not at all. Some blacks have a chip on
>   their shoulder though."

Ironically, pupils with black friends could express something of a
'double standard' in their thinking, akin to Duncan's racism (see p.150),
which succeeded in conveying prejudice whilst excluding their own friends
from the judgements they were making. There were other incidents where
white pupils provided evidence of their thinking along racial lines despite
accepting black friends as individuals. Lynn's statement above is one
example but taking another, entering Wendy's home one day with Sonia (a
West Indian) and two other white friends, Wendy's pet dog allowed us all
to enter the room peacefully but snapped at Sonia.

"See, I told you!" Wendy confirmed to me gleefully.
"I told you our dog doesn't like black people."

Despite this categorisation along designated lines of colour Wendy was

friendly with other West Indian girls and emphasised to me their humourous

banter which, she felt, demonstrated their complete acceptance of each

other and lack of racial prejudice.

> Wendy: "There's a lot of black prejudice and a lot of
> white prejudice. I'm not prejudiced. In fun
> Diane will say, 'Shut up you white bitch' and
> I will say, 'Shut up you black cow!' and we'll
> have a laugh about it. But it can get serious
> with some people."

This open usage of 'colour' (as most Leafield pupils would call it)

in two-way humour was seen by her as proof of liberation from racial

prejudice. Many white pupils expressed sentiments to the effect that

they 'treated all their mates the same', and teachers were widely

acknowledged by white pupils to do the same. What white pupils perceived

as equal treatment to all, however, was not always seen in the same light

by black pupils as already indicated (see p.137).

Overall, it was noticeable that more boys than girls displayed racism

towards black people and more girls than boys spoke supportively about

them and reported having black friends. Verma and Bagley (1975) also

found English girls to be less prejudiced than English boys. I see this

as an important indicator of socialisation processes whereby boys concerned

themselves more with fears regarding competition from blacks (e.g. for jobs)

whilst girls related their observations of black people more to the

nurturing and caring role expected of them by society. Allport (1954)

and Abrahams (1972) offer a more psychological explanation for boys'

racism in that it helps them to deal with their anxieties and stress in

striving for 'success' as part of the masculine role. By extension,

I would argue that girls' tendency to feel sorry for black people and

their greater readiness to take the part of the other and sympathise with

their lot as part of the caring role so deeply socialised into them and
so acutely displayed in their ideal job choices. Such choices are the
subject of a later chapter, but the point can perhaps best be illustrated
by one final comment from Wendy in talking about her mother:

>   Wendy: "I'm not prejudiced and neither is my mum.
>   She's thought of adopting one, a black baby.
>   I think that would be nice don't you?"

NO PROBLEM HERE?

Leafield saw itself as a community school, but did this mean that
all members of that community were receiving equal treatment and respect
at the school? The main points in this chapter would seem to indicate
that they were not and that whereas girls received a qualitatively
different experience of school to boys, so black pupils received a
qualitatively different experience to white pupils.

To begin with neither the LEA nor the school had a written anti-racist
or multicultural policy. As such, there was nothing upon which to build
guidelines for good classroom practice. This left teachers free to interpret
their role with black pupils according to their own personal beliefs and
philosophies. As has been indicated in this chapter this provided scope
for some teachers to indulge in racist humour and for others to be
misinterpreted in their naïve (and sometimes genuine) attempts to involve
black pupils. White pupils were also free to poke fun at black pupils.

Black pupils were largely tolerant of this situation, they were neither
volatile nor vociferous, but there were indications that their passive
acceptance was due partly to a desire to underplay issues which they found
hurtful and partly to a lack of faith in teachers' willingness or ability
to do anything about their experiences. Some teachers of the "young
lefties" type also doubted their ability to combat racism whilst others
more aligned with the "old righties", saw no need to address the issue at
all, again symptoms of a laissez-faire situation and failure to make a
policy stand.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, white pupils were relatively free to make racist comments at Leafield - free from both teachers' sanctions and a black backlash. The racist attitudes of many white informants were quite keenly felt and there was evidence of many more negative attitudes and racist tensions lying under the surface than were actually expressed publicly. The failure of this racism to surface in direct action can perhaps be explained by the fact that most resentment was expressed towards Asians, and the majority of non-whites in the 5th form were West Indian in origin.

Overall, the main thrust of education provided at Leafield did nothing to combat the deeply ingrained racist attitudes of some white pupils who remained unchallenged, and carried their stereotypical views of black people out into the workplace. The inevitability of this process might have been checked by a positive set of anti-racist policies at the level of the school, although it is accepted that policies are not necessarily enacted due to their existence and that the commitment of staff to make concerted efforts in effecting policy is also required. At Leafield, neither was the order of the day.

Footnote:

(1) Full reference to this address cannot be made in the interests of retaining anonymity for both the school and its LEA.

CHAPTER 7

CLASSES WITHIN CLASSES

INTRODUCTION

Gender, race and class are commonly taken to be three major variables in the process of social differentiation in schools (Burgess, (1986); Blackledge and Hunt, (1985)). So far, I have looked at both gender and race and how these two factors affected the school experiences of Leafield pupils. My findings illustrate how gender had a subtle effect on the formal and hidden curriculum and that it also had a profound effect on the relationships between male and female pupils themselves. Gender also played a powerful part in career choices which are still to be discussed (see Chapter 8). Similarly, race also affected pupils' interactions with both staff and peers. Race provided opportunities for misrepresentations and misinterpretations between staff and pupils and there was a distinctly racist element in the attitudes some white pupils held about black people which affected the extent of their interactions with black pupils. I have argued that both gender and racial biases were able to take hold more readily because of the school's lack of a written and conserted policy designed to tackle discrimination.

Turning now to class, the data from Leafield suggest that the impact of this factor was also two-fold. That is to say that both pupils' perceptions and actions plus school responses were involved in creating a situation where class 'mattered' and made a material difference to how schooling was perceived and received.

A Definition of Class

The term 'class' is itself problematic, however. Firstly, precisely what is meant by class and secondly, how is it to be measured (if at all), especially in terms of delineating between groups? Both Marx and Engels (1965) and Weber (1968) utilised economic criteria in evaluating class

position, and likewise, Giddens (1973) identified three major classes

present in modern Britain. These are:

- the upper class (based on ownership of property as the means

  of production)

- the middle class (based on the possession of educational or

  technical qualifications

and - the working class (based on the possession of manual labour power)

In measuring occupational status for the purpose of sociological

enquiry, such researchers as Glass (1954) have utilised a hierarchical

scale by which to grade occupations according to their degree of control,

academic qualifications, technical skills or lack of them. In particular,

a divide has been created between 'white collar' clerical work and 'blue

collar' manual work as in Goldthorpe's scale whereby the former is regarded

as middle class and the latter as working class (Goldthorpe and Hope (1974);

Goldthorpe (1983)). Such scales rely solely on male occupations in households

and have been criticised by Garnsey (1978) who argues for women's (and

especially wives') occupations to be taken into account. In addition,

Crompton (1976, 1979) has added another dimension to the debate on the

validity of such measures via her arguments concerning the de-skilling of

many 'white collar' clerical jobs to the point where they become routine,

manually operated exercises.

Precise definitions and boundaries in discussing class, are therefore

problematic. As Bordieu (1987) states:

> "In the reality of the social world, there are no clear-
> cut boundaries, no more absolute breaks, than there are
> in the physical world. The boundaries between theoretical
> classes which scientific investigation allows us to
> construct on the basis of a plurality of criteria are
> similar, to use Rapoport's metaphor, to the boundaries
> of a cloud or a forest".   (p.1)

However, class is experienced, irrespective of precise definitions, just

as race and gender are experienced irrespective of uncertainty about where

the boundaries lie in terms of ethnicity or gender orientations. For
this reason it is important to consider class as a possible determining
factor in the lives of pupils at school.

Class Factors in Education

The way in which class operates in differentiating between pupils
has been researched from a variety of standpoints. The large-scale,
quantitative survey by Glass (1954) and the subsequent Oxford Mobility
Study by Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) serve to provide statistically
significant evidence that social class (and the type of schooling that
money can buy) does make a difference in terms of educational and
occupational outcomes, whilst also demonstrating a large amount of inter-
generational class reproduction. By means of classifying fathers' and
sons' occupations hierarchically along professional, white collar, skilled
manual and unskilled manual lines, the latter study was able to demonstrate
great fixity at both the top and bottom of the occupational structure and
that there was little movement (after controlling for economic expansion)
across the so-called white collar/blue collar barrier which is commonly
taken to be the divide between the middle and working class (see for
example, Goldthorpe,(1980)). Such studies have provided a useful 'macro'
view of the importance of family origins and schooling on eventual
occupational attainment but do not provide explanations as to how class
operates in affecting school entry, school performance and informing the
attitudes of both pupils and their parents.

Some theoretical writings and qualitative research have attempted to
explain how exactly class makes a difference in education. For example,
it has been suggested that schools transmit the dominant values of society
(Parsons,(1959);Karabel and Halsey,(1977)) and that these values are those
of the dominant, ruling group whose needs, in terms of education for a
viable work force, will be those that are catered for in the education

system (Westergaard and Resler (1975)). Bordieu (1973) has put forward
the concept of 'cultural capital', whereby the children of the dominant,
middle class arrive at school already attuned to the ideals ascribed by
an essentially middle class education system. They, therefore, 'fit-in'
easily with the norms and values operated in schools and are at an
advantage vis-a-vis their working class peers who have not had the benefit
of this background. Bernstein (1970) has viewed the effect of class from
the standpoint of language, arguing that both the middle classes and
schools utilise an 'elaborated' code, whereas the working classes use a
more 'restricted' code in communication. As a result, the working class
child is at a disadvantage in the classroom in not fully understanding
and being able to interact within the format of the 'elaborated' code.

Attention has also been focussed on the attitudes of teachers
towards pupils of different class origins (Sharp and Green (1975);Reid
(1980)),on the curriculum (Keddie (1971)) and upon pupils themselves. The
latter category includes the work of Hargreaves (1967), Lacey (1970) and
Ball (1981), who examined the effects of streaming and banding and how
working class pupils could become discouraged by the process of being
placed in low streams and so develop anti-school sub-cultures. Finally,
the research of Willis (1977) and Corrigan (1979) has been important in
portraying the perceptions of working class pupils and the reality of
their lives, to illustrate how these factors fundamentally shape their
attitudes towards school.

CLASS FACTORS AT LEAFIELD

In my study, I was similarly interested in what it actually meant to
the pupils to be working class, and how they saw themselves (now and in
the future) and how they 'handled' school as a result. My questionnaire
with the whole 5th year included questions about what they had liked and
disliked about school as well as what they wanted for themselves after

leaving (see Appendix 1). This was designed to discover any unfulfilled needs among the pupils and also to see what, if anything, they had particularly enjoyed or found material to their needs at school. Apart from this, however, I also explored aspects of class and class consciousness with my twenty in-depth informants, and it is to their statements I wish to turn first by way of setting the scene.

PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CLASS POSITION

Eighteen of my twenty in-depth informants (10 white and 10 West Indian-origin) came from working class family backgrounds. Just two pupils had both parents in professional/white collar employment whilst the remainder had mothers who were mainly in nursing, catering, cleaning, factory work, clerical work or housewives, and fathers who were bricklayers, decorators, electricians, porters, drivers and factory workers.

Figure 7(1) lists parental occupations for all twenty informants and a cross-check against school records revealed that these twenty formed a representative cross-section of parental occupations for the entire 5th year. The school record cards, although not completely up to date, indicated some 90% of fathers in either skilled or unskilled manual employment (or unemployment) with a slightly lower figure of 80% for mothers (which included many listed simply as 'housewife'). Mothers' occupations revealed a higher incidence of clerical and secretarial office work typical of women's work (Deem (1978);Oakley (1981)).

Whilst is can be debated whether a pupil with a qualified Electrician for a father and a receptionist for a mother is or is not of working class origin (see Acker (1980)and Heath and Britten (1984)),it should be borne in mind that these 'ordinary kids' from 'ordinary families' had their own definitions of where they stood in the economic and social hierarchy. These definitions did not take the form of evaluating the occupational status of their parents in the manner of say, Goldthorpe's scale(Goldthorpe (1983)).

FIGURE 7(1)

FATHERS' AND MOTHERS' OCCUPATIONS FOR IN-DEPTH INFORMANTS

FATHERS	No.	MOTHERS	No.
Teacher	1	Stores Manageress	1
Agricultural Engineer	1	Receptionist	2
Bricklayer	2	Laboratory Assistant	1
Electrician	1	Cashier	1
Painter and decorator	2	Clerk	1
Printer (redundant)	1	Nursing[+]	3
Welder	1	Nursing Assistant	2
Factory worker (now s/e*)	1	Catering Assistant	1
Mechanic	1	Factory worker	1
Driver	2	Housewife	3
Hospital porter	1	Not known (lives separately)	1
Manual workers	6	Deceased	1
(details N/K, father living separately)		Unemployed (1 ex-catering assistant) (1 ex-cleaner)	2
TOTAL	20	TOTAL	20

* s/e = self-employed, making garage doors

+ = level of qualification not known

Source: In-depth informants and school record cards, Leafield School (1984)

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neither did they utilise any Marxian notion of selling their labour to the owners of production. Instead, they relied on a firm conception of themselves as 'working class' based upon common sense truths about the reality of their lives.

Vanda: "I reckon I'm working class and have a poor
(W.I. girl) chance of moving upwards".

Similarly, other pupils who also saw themselves as working class had this

to say:

>   Philip: "Well, there's the working class and those on
>   (white boy)   top of them get it easy .... It's probably
>   fair if you've worked for it, but some get it
>   handed on, or win it, Good luck to them!
>   But the dole should be more."

>   Duncan: "I don't like snobs, stuck up people, especially
>   (white boy)   them in the posh houses of Foxlease - too near
>   Hillrise [his council estate] which is a dump
>   and completely working class."

Despite leaving school at Easter with no formal qualifications,

Duncan was well-able to articulate his notion of class differences and

his sense of injustice that such differences existed. He went on to say:

>   Duncan: "I don't think it's fair to be so unequal but
>   it will keep happening. I think it's stupid to
>   do the Pools and for one person to get rich.
>   I don't think a bricklayer should get less than a
>   clerk. A bricklayer uses his brain too, and with
>   no office computer to help!"

Duncan's father was a bricklayer and he was experiencing the irregularities

of contract work, whereby there were often weeks of unemployment between

jobs. Duncan was speaking in support of him having seen the limitations

this placed on the financial rewards his father obtained for his labour.

Pupils frequently blamed 'the Government' for the inequalities which

they saw around them, especially unemployment.

>   Duncan: "It's bad at the moment, I haven't got anything
>   behind me or to look forward to. She's not doing
>   a good job really."

>   Eric: "The country's diabolical, terrible at present.
>   (W.I. boy)   She hasn't done a lot for the working class ....
>   unemployment always strikes me as possible ...."

>   Delia: "I'm not really interested in politics but I
>   (W.I. Girl)   will vote Labour because they don't take one
>   person's side. They take everyone's side, they
>   help people. Not like the Conservatives, they
>   want what's right for them."

Delia's views indicated a definite concept of 'them' and 'us'.

'Them' were the affluent sector of society who were well off and tried to

organise society to their own advantage. 'Us' were large groups of people

in society who needed help to get jobs and avoid poverty. This divide

was articulated in a different way by another pupil.

Bedford: "This country's run for the rich, not really for
(W.I. boy)   the poor. I can remember when Labour was in,
              my Mum was better off. One thing sticks in her
              mind. It was £25 for food then but it won't
              last a week now. Never heard of unemployment
              then but do now. A Labour government could do
              little, gone beyond it now."

Views such as these were complemented by those of other pupils who could

see how the Conservative government benefitted some people in society but

not all.

Peter: "Margaret Thatcher is the pits but Tories are
(white boy)   OK for you on the money side."

Peter indicated that those who had accumulated some wealth could gain

from Conservative policies but he did not place his own family in this

fortunate category. Indeed, he saw his mother, who was separated, as

struggling financially and was keen to obtain a skilled apprenticeship in

order to secure a permanent, well-paid job so he could help her.

Peter: "Mum's recently got a full-time cashier's job and
              she's part-time in The Yew Tree some nights of the
              week. Her car's pretty old now and the rent's
              £22 per week. It's criminal!"

The most noticeable feature of pupils' definitions of where they

stood in social or class terms was their overall acceptance that nothing

could be done to change their lives for the better. Bedford has already

been quoted as saying that he feared a Labour government would not be able

to curtail rising unemployment and other pupils agreed with him.

Eddie: "I used to like Labour but not now. Ain't worth
(W.I. boy)   voting if you ask me. Neither of them can do
              anything about unemployment."

This fatalist acceptance was present in the thinking of most working class

informants. Where a preference was stated, pupils saw the Labour Party as

trying to do most to help people like themselves and their parents, but

half did not intend to use their vote upon coming of age. Some felt it was pointless to vote, others were simply not interested in politics and knew little of what the various political parties stood for.

Of the eighteen informants from working class homes, seven intended to vote when they became eligible and five did not. Six others were unsure. No one intended to vote Conservative. Their concerns were mostly about jobs although the most despondent ones, like Eddie, thought the employment situation was 'hopeless' and did not intend to vote.

> Sheilah: "I won't vote when I'm 18. Possibly later.
> (W.I. girl) Britain's not very good at present. I remember
> the Young Socialists coming to the school, I
> sympathised. YTS is cheap labour. You should
> do a full-time job and should be paid."

Sheilah was one of the two high achieving black girls from working class homes. Sheilah lived with her mother who was currently an unemployed catering assistant, and her comment above indicated that she had thought out her political convictions to some extent. Two others had also reflected on political solutions with widely differing results.

> Peter: "I tried the Young Socialists, they were a drag.
> Like Russia, too many rules. You couldn't get
> in or out. I wouldn't sell their newspaper but
> I did organise Discos. I got roped in too much.
> What they say sounds alright, but you can't put
> it into practice. They talk of revolution, but
> I said it was my time to get out."

Peter then, also considered left-wing solutions to the class position he found himself in but decided they were untenable. In complete contrast, Duncan considered the opposite solution:

> Duncan: "I've got this friend, he's a kind of Nazi, a
> racist. I don't think that's quite right ...
> but I've got sympathy with the National Front
> over numbers."

Duncan had previously said that he had not got anything behind him (meaning qualifications) and that he had nothing to look forward to (see p. 163). He was worried about unemployment and felt that his father did not earn a fair wage as a bricklayer. He felt threatened by immigration.

He had also

"been nicked for aiding and abetting"

an experience concerning the taking of a motor bike which had left him

with a low opinion of the Police. He claimed to have been beaten up by

officers in a police car, and as such did not have a lot of confidence

in them.

With no qualifications, a dislike of Asians and a Police record,

Duncan felt his chances of finding a job were poor. His only suggestion

to ease this problem was a startling one:

> Duncan: "I don't like the treatment of old people.
>   The retired get too much from firms and
>   the government. They should make way for
>   young people .... Possibly put them in a
>   field and bomb them."

He was completely serious in this suggestion.

Duncan was not alone in perceiving unemployment as a threat. All but

one of the fourteen less-achievers (i.e. those not taking any O-levels)

from working class backgrounds acknowledged its existence and that it

could happen to them. The majority, however, just accepted its existence

and were not at all sure that anything could be done to alleviate the

problem. They simply hoped that it would not happen to them and were

prepared to be flexible in order to obtain work (see Chapter 8).

These comments from working class boys and girls, white and black,

serve to illustrate their perceptions of their own position in society.

They did not feel particularly important, nor that they were 'going places'.

Indeed they saw themselves as largely needing 'help' to find a job and

create a life of their own. They saw other people as being in the 'posh'

or 'comfortable' sector in society whilst acknowledging themselves to be

working class. They were not particularly angry or assertive in their

demands for change and harboured few, if any, hopes about the unemployment

situation.

CLASS ORIGINS AND ATTITUDES TO SCHOOL

(a) Working class pupils

I have indicated that my eighteen working class Leafield in-depth

informants had a clear idea of where they stood (i.e. firmly in the

working class) and that they had a working definition of how that

differentiated them from other, more favoured individuals in society.

Fourteen of these were also less-achievers inasmuch as they were not

sitting any 'O' levels, just CSEs, and I would suggest that this, in

conjunction with their general acceptance of a reduced lot in life, led

to a lack of any real hope for a fulfilling and rewarding future which

fuelled disinterest, inertia and lowered expectations.

I would suggest that literally _being_ from a working class home led

to a particular view of the world which informed the perceptions pupils

held about education. Brown (1987) in his study of 'ordinary kids' argues

in favour of a common working class understanding being present in pupils'

attitudes to school:

> "Despite important differences in the attitudes of
> ordinary boys and girls to school subjects and jobs,
> these differences are mediated and cross-cut in
> important ways by common class cultural understandings
> which lead both male and female ordinary kids to share
> the same orientation to school and the same under-
> standings of what it is to be an ordinary working
> class pupil in school".   (p.67)

At Leafield this common understanding operated to the effect that working

class less-achievers displayed little, if any, enthusiasm for school.

This was not borne out of a failure to succeed but rather it was something

they felt about school in an overall sense. Corrigan (1979) similarly

found that his working class boys had never seriously taken on board

school values of academic achievement at any point in their school career.

At Leafield, life and futures were seen very much in terms of what

pupils saw around them in their own families and among their friends.

Pupils drew on the experiences of these people in assessing what might

also happen to them. As Day (1987) states in relation to her 12 repre-

sentative school leavers from Piertown:

> "They were confident from their peers and family they
> knew what the adult world of work was like". (p.150)

The only way to succeed in life that my Leafield pupils could see was

'to get a good job'. In their terms, 'good' meant well paid and secure,

with interest value being a secondary feature, or bonus. A detailed

discussion of job aspirations follows in the next chapter, but for the

present the important thing is that as pupils consistently saw this as

their main goal, they wanted their education to be relevant to that goal.

I believe it is this desire for relevance that led to the major criticism

of school voiced earlier by working class pupils, namely that school was

"boring".

(i) The irrelevance of schooling

Much research has indicated how 'ordinary' working class pupils see

school as irrelevant to their future lives. Brown (1987) found that pupils

saw school as being a useful preparation for office work (and hence middle

class destinations) but not matching up to working class needs. Both

subjects and qualifications were seen as useless. Similarly, both Davies

(1979) and Day (1987) researching girls and Raby (1979) and Corrigan (1979)

researching boys, found disenchantment with the whole school process.

Queries about the relevance to lesson content cropped up frequently

during my period of observation at Leafield.

> "What's this got to do with us?"

muttered one boy involved in a history project on the local community

as it was last century. He told me later that it was

> "totally boring" and "a waste of time".

The extent to which pupils could convey their absolute boredom during

lessons has already been discussed in Chapter 4. Probing into this boredom

led to expressions of the perceived irrelevance of subjects and their content

to the lives of pupils and their deep desire for changes in the curriculum
to relate their schooling more directly to the outside world, especially
the world of work.

Phillips (1984), in a longitudinal study conducted in a Welsh
comprehensive school found that pupils preferred subjects which they
considered useful for future employment. Griffin (1985) found that girls
only valued information of practical use in getting jobs. Leafield pupils
expressed similar sentiments.

> Shirley: "The [subject] choices weren't flexible enough.
> (white pupil)   We needed more practical things, to do with
> real life."

Other pupils (predominantly girls) could be more specific about what those
"practical things" should be

> Vanda: "More lessons on world wide knowledge and things
> (West Indian   like how the Council works and political parties."
> pupil)
> Delia: "I would have liked World Affairs ... Famine, War
> (West Indian   in Iran, things like that."
> pupil)
> Peter: "I'm into Politics and Law, so I'd 'av liked that."
> •
Whilst boys could agree that broader knowledge of the world today
would be interesting, a lot of their concerns were linked directly to the
need to prepare themselves for jobs.

> Duncan: "In my spare time [two afternoons per week due to
> (white pupil)   being barred from some lessons], I just had to
> report to Mrs Young [head of 5th year] and do
> boring copying and paper work for her. They
> could have given me extra work in the lessons I
> liked, I would have done that, or arranged work
> experience."

Pupils simply could not see the point in some of the things they had
to learn at school. For example, Philip could not see the usefulness of
languages.

> Philip: "Don't see the point of French. Most places they
> (white pupil)   learn English don't they?"

Looking at life from Philip's standpoint he was absolutely correct. He was
very unlikely to need French in his future jobs and not at all likely (due

to disinterest) to take the type of continental holidays that would bring

him into contact with the local people. He would far rather have spent

his time trying out different types of work or concentrating on subjects

that offered practical, saleable skills in the job market. I observed

Philip in some of his French lessons and he seemed desperately uncomfortable

in them, occupying himself with constant knee-trembling as he struggled

to maintain his dignity in the face of practically no knowledge of French

whatsoever. He could not pronounce French words correctly, or complete

the simple sentence:

"Je m'appele Philip".

His inability was matched by total disinterest.

> Philip: "I hated French. Only in it because I got kicked
> out of catering. I liked that but she said I
> didn't bring my stuff enough, but I only forgot
> twice."

Philip appreciated catering because of its utility in later life, it

therefore had meaning for him. Similarly, he appreciated the letter

writing practice he did in English. Again, this was perceived as a useful

skill in securing work.

> Philip: "Catering was OK, it was useful and I liked writing
> letters [for jobs] in English. Most other things
> were a waste of time."

Philip had primarily opted out of school and its values. School had lost

its relevance and in turn, teachers lost the battle to maintain his interest.

His sights were clearly fixed on the outside world of work and the only

practical thing the school could then offer to maintain his attendance was

to create as much work experience as possible or organise early entry into

a YTS placement.

Philip's dissatisfaction with the content of schooling was shared by

others. Questionnaire responses indicated that school was appreciated for

having taught pupils to read, write and add up money, but for very little

else. As Natalie put it in relation to one of her Maths lessons which

she found crushingly boring:

> Natalie: "It's so boring. What we got to keep doing
> these _angles_ for?"

As Raby and Walford (1981) state, school was

> "generally regarded as an inevitable phase of life
> which had to be endured."   (p.22)

Neither were attempts by staff to make lessons more relevant very well received. I observed three boys during a community studies lesson covering local Leafield history. They had the following to say about it:

> 1st boy: "That photo of Mr Lea. He invented Leafield
> didn't he?"
>
> 2nd boy: "What did he want to go and do that for?"
>
> 3rd boy: "Some kind of nutter I reckon."   (laughter)

Davies (1979) reports a similar cynicism among girls in her study, stating:

> "To them they are doing the same thing they did last week,
> last month, last year .... attempts to 'make relevant' the
> curriculum ..... are treated with equal weariness, are
> viewed as equally insulting."
>
> (p.63)

The knowledge offered in lessons was not the knowledge that pupils wanted. The curriculum contained items that teachers perceived as relevant knowledge and there was a cultural and experiential gap between the givers and receivers of that knowledge. Keddie (1971) has argued that teachers define what is valid knowledge and there were similar indications at Leafield. The example above is a case in point, so too is the following example when spontaneous pupil knowledge was not accessed in the classroom even when it related directly to the topic in hand. I observed a clear example of an opportunity missed during a Religious Knowledge lesson on 'Suffering'. The text book stated that animal suffering was "natural" but some pupils disagreed and a lively discussion developed.

> Various pupils: "Yeah, what about fox hunting."
>
> "And experiments."
>
> "Whale's blubber in margarine, that's not
> natural."

"Experiments on animals don't always tell
you about humans, take Thalidomide."

The class soon fragmented into subdiscussions of related issues, one

group talking about factory farming and another listening to a girl who

said the Animal Liberation Front were awful for putting poison in Mars

Bars. Another girl got onto the topic of Aids as a type of suffering,

suggesting that this was "God's punishment" for the wrong doing of homo-

sexuals.

In short, within the space of a few minutes the class had come to

life and demonstrated a great deal of personal knowledge on contemporary

issues but the teacher did not use this knowledge to develop the theme of

the lesson or encourage debate. Instead, he steered the lesson back to

the set text and the class continued to undertake a cursory reading of

the main points in the chapter. The lesson resumed a 'sterile' approach

detached from modern day issues.

Bergqvist and Säljö (1987) also report teachers' failure to access

pupil knowledge and incorporate it in lessons. This renders pupil

knowledge as irrelevant or illegitimate and thus fails to make the link

between pupils' current level of understanding and what is being taught.

A rift then develops between pupils' common knowledge and the formal

knowledge on offer in the classroom.

The rift between the curriculum and these pupils' interests can be

attributed to a cultural gap between educators and working class

consumers. I see this rift not so much as a <u>deficit</u> on the part of working

class pupils as a <u>difference</u> between their social world and that of their

mostly middle-class, educational superiors. Bourdieu (1973) explains

this in terms of a model whereby working class pupils lack the cultural

capital that is gained in middle class homes which share the same dominant

culture as the school. Bernstein (1975) also acknowledges that principles

of power and social control are reflected in the knowledge transmitted in

schools. If this is the case, then it is little wonder that Leafield's working class pupils rejected the knowledge that was on offer, and set their sights beyond the school gates instead.

The fact that school did not produce the goods as far as learning about the 'real world' was concerned, exacerbated the desire of the vast majority of working class pupils to get out of school as soon as possible. Many non-exam takers left as soon as they were old enough to do so without waiting for the end of term, and even those with exams to take were longing to be released.

> Natalie: "I want to leave school. Do some growing up
> before going to college."

Natalie felt that "growing up" was something that happened <u>outside</u> school when you had time to discover the real world. School was a narrow entity that existed separately and 'kept you away' from everyday life.

Working class pupils felt the divide between school and 'real life' very deeply and they eagerly shared their grievances with me in this respect. However, this did not mean that on a daily basis they were passively accepting the status quo. Challenges in the classroom were frequent and some ranged beyond expressions of boredom and the creation of diversions. Pupils could be, and were, the instigators of <u>constructive criticism</u> and requests for alternative knowledge. From my observations such challenges, often expressed as simple pleas for change, were not taken up by teachers on the pupils' behalf. Teachers would sympathise with pupils, and sometimes agree with them, but indicated that there was nothing they could do to change the situation.

> Boy pupil: (in a non-exam Science lesson)
> "I wish we could take an exam in this Sir,
> have something to show for it."

> Teacher: "Yes, you've had a bit of a raw deal this year.
> perhaps I can set you an end of term test."

In another instance, two girls in a Biology lesson raised

the issue of contraception and sex education with the teacher.

"I'll talk to you later about it"

was the teacher's reply. However, no further mention of this issue was

made by her either during, or at the end of, the lesson.

The above example demonstrates a willingness among pupils to criticise

content and suggest alternatives that they would find more interesting,

but complaints were also levelled at process.

During another Biology lesson the class was asked to view a video and

take notes ready to answer questions afterwards.

> Girl pupil: "But we've never been taught how to take notes.
> What are we supposed to do?" (she clearly seemed
> lost at the suggestion .)
>
> Teacher: "Yes I know, it would have been better if this
> had been done in the 4th year, but this is at
> least a late start and better than not at all."

No further assistance was offered and the pupils near me copied the set

questions off the overhead projector but made no attempt to take notes or

list relevant points as the film proceeded. The pupils had expressed a

need for assistance but none was forthcoming. This issue of note-taking

arose again during another film for a different subject involving a

different set of pupils, but again no practical guidance about how to

proceed was offered.

In a similar context, Natalie also complained about her CSE Biology:

> Natalie: "We never do experiments in Biology. Just
> one last year."

Natalie became very bored when copying work from the chalk board or working

from set question sheets. She wanted active as opposed to passive learning,

and in its absence she lost interest in the subject.

(ii) The futility of exams

Brown (1987) states:

> "If what is taught in schools is viewed as irrelevant ....
> then the same can be said for qualifications."   (p.74)

This statement was also borne out at Leafield. Of my eighteen working class

informants, twelve were due to sit between 3 and 8 CSEs whilst two (the white boys, Philip and Duncan) were not put in for any exams at all owing to their poor performance. (These two boys went onto a programme of extended work experience.)

These fourteen boys and girls were not at all sure that CSEs would be useful afterwards in obtaining work. Their criticisms of CSEs fell into two broad categories:

(a) that one or two CSE passes were quite useless on their own and would not help in getting a job,

and (b) that securing a job depended more on personal contacts or personality than CSE results.

The subsequent experiences of the CSE school leavers did bear out that personal contacts were important in finding work and this issue receives attention in Chapter 9. However, for the present it is important to consider that pupils already viewed CSEs negatively <u>before</u> they had entered the job-seeking phase and that this influenced their motivation towards achieving in the exams that lay ahead of them. As Raby (1979) states:

> "most of the youngsters did not perceive that academic success or failure would affect their career aspirations, because most of them aspired to jobs which did not, or were perceived not, to require formal qualifications ...."
>
> (pp. 255-256)

Day (1987) also reports that her Piertown informants rejected the usefulness of exams (O-levels) in <u>doing</u> a job, although pupils conceded they could be a passport in <u>getting</u> a job. At Leafield, working class less-achievers were sceptical about the utility of CSEs on both accounts.

> Eddie: "School is rubbish, I don't know why, it just
> (who passed 1 CSE is. Loads of people get jobs without exams,
> out of 2 taken and it helps a bit - but not that much."
> failed to sit a third)

> Sonia: "First year after leaving school they [CSEs]
> (who passed 5 out don't help you, nobody asks you .... it's your
> of 7 CSEs) attitude to things and how you look."

Similarly, pupils who admitted to being disappointed at their results could cite their actual job-seeking experiences to demonstrate that their lack of CSEs had not really mattered. This was treated with relief by some who had been apprehensive about securing work and as proof that exams (and by extension school) were a waste of time.

> Shirley: "I knew of a job before my exams so I didn't
> (who passed 1   really try."
> out of 2 CSEs
> and failed to
> sit a 3rd)

> Tessa: "My exam results were terrible .... I was
> (who obtained   petrified for my Dad to see them. He was
> low grades in   disappointed and thought a job would be
> the 6 CSEs she   difficult [to find]. Maths was low but I
> took)   only got one wrong on the Marks and Spencer
>   test and I got the highest score even at
>   Boots."

This widespread lack of faith in CSEs was supplemented by the fact that many pupils had been shocked to discover how few CSEs they were being entered for. The decisions were taken at Christmas and were not popular. Both the validity and timing of these decisions were questioned by pupils. Among informants, many less-achievers felt they should have been given the 'benefit of the doubt' and allowed to sit subjects,but in general, they accepted the decisions without a fight. Pupils reported disappointment or anger from their parents about their low number of exam entries but there was also a tacit acceptance of the school's decision.

> Bedford: "I'm taking 3 CSEs, got told off for that.
> (West Indian   Mum expected more."
> pupil)

The news about how few CSEs they were being entered for led to widespread disenchantment with school. Pupils taking no CSEs began to drift away from school and into jobs or YTS at the earliest opportunity; others lost the motivation to even sit the exams and a spate of pupils left at Easter, especially if they had jobs lined up.

> Duncan: "I hoped I'd be put in for 5 CSEs but in the
> (white pupil)   end, just before Christmas, I was told I could
>   only do 1 CSE in Religious Knowledge and what
>   good will 1 CSE do you?"

This low estimation by teachers of what he could take and pass came as a shock to Duncan and his parents, but no-one queried the school's decision. Duncan admitted that things had gone down hill in the last year through getting into trouble with the Police and confrontations at school. In the end he left at Easter to join a YTS workshop.

Views of school polarised rapidly after the exam decisions were announced. Those with substantial numbers of CSEs to sit began to prepare in earnest whilst the others consolidated their opinions that exams were a 'waste of time'. Teachers were well aware of the drop off in school attendance that followed the announcement of the exam entries and I was told that the decisions were delayed until Christmas to avoid widespread absenteeism throughout the 5th form. Pupils though, criticised the decisions as coming too late. Many were truly shocked to learn how few exams they were sitting and felt it left them no time to catch up or improve their work to reverse the situation. It was as if they had never really taken in the fact they were being continually assessed and could be precluded from a chance to sit an exam. Taking work seriously had been deferred for too long and in consequence, the Christmas decisions were a moment of truth.

To some extent these lesser or non-achieving pupils had been strung along for some time by their teachers. Encouragement led to confidence among pupils that they were doing alright, and lack of strictness (i.e. lack of 'pushing' and 'stretching') led to complacency. From my observations I would argue that the teachers were treading a fine line between not wanting to demoralise the weaker students with criticism (e.g. over poor work or non-existent homework) and wishing to give encouragement up to the last moment so giving all pupils the chance to prove their worth. Their working class pupils seem not to have responded well to this approach. This leads on to another issue, that of working class pupils' criticisms of their teachers.

(iii) <u>Perceived teacher failings</u>

One criticism that came across loud and clear among working class

informants was that they felt their teachers were not sufficiently

interested in them. This interest was gauged by the fact that pupils did

not feel sufficiently <u>encouraged</u> by their teachers. In short, they <u>wanted</u>

to be 'pushed' and 'stretched' and felt that in not doing so, their teachers

had let them down. In both Stanworth's study (1981) and Delamont's (1980)

girls spoke of being insufficiently 'pushed' but at Leafield both male

and female less-achievers felt this way.

> Eric: "I could have got more out of school, didn't
> (who failed to try hard enough .... would have done more if
> sit his 3   pushed by teachers. It makes you feel they're
> CSEs)   interested in you and wanted you to do well."
>
> Bedford: "I know I was marked off as a dosser. I felt
> (who took and   prevented because they thought I mucked about."
> passed 3 CSEs
> with low grades)

Implicit in the complaints of some pupils was a resentment aimed at

the 'posh' pupils, whom they saw as being favoured by teachers and having

an easier time at school.

> Sonia: "Some don't bother about us and go back onto the
> (who passed 5   brainy people. Lower grade groups, they don't
> CSEs)   even help you. They think you're dumb and that's
>   it."

Many studies have similarly shown that working class pupils are quick to

spot the fact that they are located in low streams and that such pupils

gain the impression that teachers are not interested in them (e.g.Hargreaves

(1967); Lacey (1970)and Ball (1981)). These studies go on to demonstrate

the link between perceived position in the academic meritocracy and actual

achievement, arguing that such pupils then 'opt out' of school and fail

by virtue of the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (see Becker (1963)and Rosenthal

and Jacobsen (1968)).

There were also indications of resentment amongst Leafield pupils

concerning the low streams they were placed in and this was blamed for

dragging down their performance.

> Tessa: "I'm certain that if I'd been in a quiet
> (who obtained 6   class with cleverer ones I would have tried
> low grade CSEs)   harder, not to look ignorant. Miss Wilson
>   tried to push me, but not really a _good_ talk."

> Peter: "[I was] in General Science with nobheads and
> (who sat and   thickies. Two brainy people in that class,
> passed 2 CSEs   me and Tracy. I was upset it wasn't a CSE
> and failed to   course as getting good marks."
> sit a 3rd)

At Leafield, working class non-'O'-level takers certainly did not

feel very important and could see a difference between themselves and the

'posh' pupils. The term 'posh' was used to describe those who were taking

'O' levels such that being 'brainy' was synonymous with being 'posh' in

the eyes of working class less-achievers. Thus, a distinction in terms

of academic ability was taken to be a distinction in terms of _class_ by

such pupils. This was not necessarily the case as will be discussed later

in this chapter, but suffice it to say that that is how the hierarchy was

viewed by the majority of my informants.

Both Hargreaves (1967) and Griffin (1985) report similar views where

streaming has created a divide between achievers and less-achievers

whereby achieving pupils were viewed as 'posh'. In the case of Hargreaves'

(1967) study this divide came between CSE-takers and non-exam students but

at Leafield it fell between 'O'-level takers and CSE-takers.

The distinction between the 'brainy'/'posh' pupils and less-achievers

at Leafield was made even more pronounced by the different classroom

interactions experienced by pupils according to ability. Both higher and

lower achievers acknowledged that low ability group lessons and unstreamed

lessons were peppered with noise and disruption.

> Sheilah: "Noisy pupils were a problem. Spoiled your
> (taking both   concentration."
> 'O' levels
> and CSEs)

> Natalie: "Them in the other group, the posh ones,
> (taking CSEs   _they_ do alright."
> only)

By "other group", Natalie was referring to the main 'O'-level takers, who split off into a separate form called the "Exam Group" after the Christmas exam decisions were taken. From my observations of this group, their lessons were certainly a more straightforward academic exercise. There was little mucking about and no serious threats to order in the classroom caused by deliberately disruptive activity. Non-exam classes, and some CSE classes were always 'at risk' from pupils who were not involved in the work and wanted to create diversions. Typical activities, such as bag lobbing, stupid remarks, flicking small items across the room and scraping chairs have already been described in Chapter 4. These were employed to full effect by the disinterested.

Some indications of a split between working class CSE-takers and non-exam takers was discernible over the issue of discipline in the classroom. Some 10% of questionnaire informants wanted stricter teachers or more discipline to keep classroom order and these were primarily the pupils who could be categorised as 'ordinary kids' (see Brown, 1987), who were taking some exams.

> Tessa: "I think they should have harder teachers. Higher
> (who passed levels, posh, never used to have any trouble but
> 6 CSEs) our group in the middle had tearaways and that,
> and we just used to mess about and never used to
> do nothing."

These pupils, therefore, blamed teachers for their lack of discipline, and by extension, for their own lack of achievement. Non-exam takers saw things somewhat differently. They felt that teachers picked on them unjustifiably, and that they were not liked by those teachers.

> Delia: "Mr Morris talks to you as if you was skiving
> (due to sit ...Mr Lukes said I was a skiver and it's really
> 3 CSEs but shameful in front of a class to be called a
> missed all 3 skiver. I wasn't doing nothing."
> due to "being
> off sick")

Shirley: "Some teachers made sure you knew it if
(failed to sit   they didn't like you."
1 of her 3 CSEs)

Philip: "They just treat you like little kids."

All informants hated the idea of being treated like a child, but it was the working class, less-achieving pupils who noticed and resented this treatment from teachers the most, primarily because theirs were the very lessons where disruption would take place and teachers would have to exercise some degree of enforced control. But did teachers really dislike their working class pupils or hold negative views of them? Both Hargreaves (1967) and Sharp and Green (1975) have indicated teachers do treat pupils differently according to how they are perceived and that their perceptions of pupils owe something to class factors.

Teachers at Leafield professed to care equally for all their charges and to judge each pupil on their own merits. These 'merits', however, proved to include non-academic factors, as evidenced by the following descriptions of pupils I was given by their form teachers.

Shirley's   "Rather stroppy and difficult, from a big
form teacher: family. Her mum gets in a violent temper
              and so can Shirley. There is a nice side
              to her ... but she skives a bit. She's an
              underachiever, hasn't worked hard. Her
              mum works in Sainsbury's. She goes around
              with Lisa's crowd, getting into fights."

Elements of Shirley's home life were, therefore, invoked to explain her temperament and involvement with school work. She was also judged by the friends she chose. Implicit linkage was also made between the mother's occupation (erroneously for she was currently a doctor's receptionist) and Shirley's underachievement. Similarly, Philip's form teacher had this to say about him:

Philip's form teacher: "Oh, a naughty boy, a baddie. His
                         brothers were a nuisance at the school
                         and he lives up to this. A bit
                         aggressive, a bit noisy. Difficult in
                         the classroom. He's not academic,
                         banned from the workshops because he's
                         such a twit there."

In this case, clearly Philip's teacher had a very negative attitude towards him. His behaviour was described as "naughty", "aggressive" and "difficult" and he was labelled "a baddie" and "a twit". All judgemental statements, supported by the fact that his brothers had also been a "nuisance".

Hargreaves, Hestor and Mellor (1975) describe precisely this process of forming negative pupil typifications based on evidence garnered about older siblings and forming a reputation that is utilised for subsequent members of the family. Clearly, Philip fell foul of this process. Notes on Philip's personal file revealed that he was "talented and keen" at P.E. (especially football), but the remaining comments were:

Maths: "Not achieving his potential",

Woodwork: "Wasting ability",

English: "Lacks concentration", plus a general comment of "not
            interested".

Philip was also seen as "noisy" and "difficult" and as "not academic". Here too, he was fitting the teacher's typification of the boisterous and unruly pupil lacking in intelligence, a view commonly expressed by teachers in discussing working class, low achieving pupils (Hargreaves (1977). He was, however, "talented and keen" in football, an attribute that is considered in keeping with working class origins by middle class teachers who presume to judge.

I have already discussed in Chapter 6, how black pupils were the subject of stereotypical typifications by their teachers, and these two working class pupils were similarly categorised according to perceived characteristics which by themselves need not have had any bearing on their performance. As a result, implicit understandings about class differences were developed and maintained by teachers and these should be borne in mind when considering that most working class informants felt that teachers did not really try to push them and were, in fact, not really

interested in them.

Working class pupils saw school as selling them short. They were not at all sure that teachers acted in their best interests and school did not seem to tally with their needs and the reality of their future lives. When schooling seemed to address non-relevant topics these pupils wanted to extricate themselves from the education process as soon as possible and try their hand in the job market instead.

However, for a small section of my informants this mis-match did not exist. These were the pupils with middle class backgrounds or middle class aspirations, and the fact that school held far more meaning for them serves to support the view that a class divide informed attitudes to school.

(b) <u>Middle class and working class achieving pupils</u>

A distinct difference in attitudes to school was discernible between the majority of working class informants already discussed and a minority of other pupils which consisted of two specific 'types'. These were (a) a small group of pupils of middle class origins and (b) a further small group of achieving pupils of working class origins. In all, six out of 20 informants fell into this category and the main difference between them and the bulk of working class informants was a polarisation in attitudes towards school and its worth for the future. This polarisation was also evident in questionnaire returns from the whole year group.

Before examining the views of these pupils it is necessary to define what is meant by both 'middle class pupil' and 'working class achieving pupil' in this context. On the first point, I took pupils to be of middle class origins if the main bread-winner of the family was in white collar professional or technical employment. Thus, in principle, a pupil with a bricklaying father and secretarial mother would not be classified as middle class, whereas a pupil with a teaching father and factory working mother would. There have been criticisms of occupational classi-

fications which fail to give adequate weighting to wives' employment
(see Heath and Britten (1984); Garnsey (1978)), and in considering the values
expressed by achieving working class informants I considered whether there
was the possibility of any influence from mothers with middle class jobs.
In the event, however, some pro-school (achieving) and some anti-school
(less-achieving) pupils had mothers in office work such that no connection
could be made between mothers' occupation and pupils' attitudes.

On the second point, the term 'working class achiever' refers to
pupils from working class homes who were taking 'O' levels as opposed to
CSEs. The divide was placed here because the pupils themselves categorised
each other according to the ability groups they were in (see p. 179).
This was also the line that differentiated pupils regarding a polarisation
of attitudes towards school such that 'achieving' pupils had positive
reactions to school and 'less achieving' pupils had negative reactions
similar to those found by Hargreaves (1967).

(i) <u>The relevance of schooling</u>

That school was seen as worthwhile by middle class and achieving
pupils was clear from their positive attitudes towards their preferred
subjects and favourite teachers. In their questionnaire returns, school
subjects were described as 'interesting' and teachers as 'helpful'. Most
importantly, the role of schooling was not questioned.

It is difficult to convey the positive attitudes these pupils
adopted towards their school work. Evidence for it was found not so much
in what they <u>said</u> as in what they did. Classroom observations revealed
passive conformity in lessons, quiet attention to the teacher, and
concentration on work set in class with work completed to the deadlines set.
Conformity and acceptance of the norms and values of schooling meant that
the education process ran smoothly and became something of a 'non-issue'.
These pupils had few grievances and found it difficult to articulate
opinions about school other than saying it was "good" or "interesting".

Their acceptance of school, its norms and values is perhaps best
illustrated by the fact that the majority of 'O' level takers I approached
during the 5th form made it plain to me that they were "too busy" to
spend time discussing school with me. "After the exams" was a frequent
response and clearly these pupils were well-tuned to the deadlines of
revision and exams that lay ahead and were wanting as few disruptions as
possible. Their goal was very clearly getting through the exams and they
approached them seriously.

In contrast, less-achieving pupils were <u>not</u> too busy to tell me how
they felt about school. To the contrary, a whole host of pupils were
keen to express their views and my impression was that they were only too
pleased to be able to air their grievances in the hope that something
might 'get done' to change things.

When some of these achievers did sit and discuss school with me at
the start of the 6th form, this seriousness of purpose and absolute
acceptance of the validity of the examination process was borne out in
their statements.

Lynn: (working class achiever)	"I always liked school, including 5th form. Fun there, teachers were nice and lessons interesting. Being interested was definitely linked to how you got on."
Pauline: (middle class achiever)	"I enjoy school. Always have done."

These comments, and others like them, demonstrated an overall willingness
to work and an acceptance of school subjects as worthwhile. Criticisms
concerned blocks that prevented that work taking place or made the process
of learning inefficient or less pleasurable. Education per se, was not
questioned.

Pauline: (said when in 6th form)	"There were times when we were all a bit wound up and felt it was a bit disorganised, teachers not informed, lack of efficiency and that. We had no proper chemistry teacher and this didn't help."

This is in stark contrast to the less-achieving pupils who did not accept

the usefulness or interest value of many lessons and found the process of schooling completely irrelevant to their future lives and very boring.

For achievers, however, school subjects had relevance. Paul, for example, was of middle class origins. His father was an Agricultural Engineer and his mother (separated) was a Stores Manager in industry. Paul did not experience the mis-match of interests at school that his working class less-achieving peers did. He was involved in various after school activities and had parents who could afford the additional expenses that clubs and trips entailed. His exam subjects were directly in line with his career interests (see next section). In short, school was offering an _academic_ route towards a career and this was wholly in line with his needs. The school, therefore, seemed better able to meet the demands of a middle class pupil like Paul than one from the working class even though it professed to be a 'community' school and served a predomin- antly working class area (OPCS, 1982b).

(ii)   The utility of exams

A second major difference between the middle class and achieving pupils and their less-achieving working class peers lay in their approach to exams. Again, those involved in taking 'O' levels had little to say on the topic being too busy preparing for them, evidence in itself of the importance examination passes held in their eyes. One boy, studying for 7 'O' levels and 4 CSEs summed up what the exams meant to him:

> Paul: "'O' levels I find are a way of getting you ready,
> (middle class giving you loads of information and facts. When
> achiever)   you get to 'A' levels you start _using_ the facts."

For Paul, 'O' levels conveyed necessary information and learning that would be needed to progress to more applied studies. His acceptance of them as necessary did not question their content, and their usefulness was seen, not in terms of practical utility for daily life, but in terms of the access they promised to further education. They were a passport

to further education and, in his case, desired university entrance, in order to be an Agricultural Engineer like his father.

All of my informants who were taking 'O' levels had their sights set on further education. They did not necessarily intend to follow a highly academic route involving 'A' levels but they wished to progress to the 6th form to take vocational or subject-specific courses to help them find an interesting job.

> Sarah: "I want to do a year in the 6th form. An RSA
> (working class   Secretarial course then off to work."
> achiever)

Taking and passing 'O' levels clearly had utility for these pupils. Their exams were part of a process towards employment goals and as such they had relevance. This is in contrast to the working class pupils mentioned earlier for whom CSEs held little relevance in finding work (see p. 175). As Raby (1979) states, school seemed relevant to top stream pupils but not to the remainder.

(iii) <u>Perceived teacher merits</u>

Another polarisation of attitudes concerned the way teachers were viewed differently by achievers and less-achievers. Working class less-achievers, as discussed earlier felt they should have been pushed more, and that teachers lacked interest in them preferring the 'posh', 'brainy' pupils (see p. 178).

Questionnaire responses indicated that achievers, in the main, felt they had gained greatly from their teachers. They had their favourites and the reasons cited for liking particular members of staff revolved around the perceived interest that that person took in the pupil and how well they got their subject across. Likes were therefore based upon factors that <u>assisted</u> the pupils in succeeding in their work, be it through personal encouragement or a flair for making the subject stimulating.

Sarah: "I had a lot of help leading up to the exams ...
(working class English, poor at it, but Mr Rogers got me
achiever) through it."

Sheilah: "It was OK last year [in 5th form] and some
(working class teachers I really liked .... a good relation-
achiever) ship with teachers really helps your work
 and they take more interest."

Naturally enough, achievers could find some teachers (or their subjects)

boring, others helpful, and there was considerable overlap amongst

achieving and less-achieving pupils on this topic. However, the general

feeling amongst achievers was that teachers (good or bad) did their best

for you. As a result the contract to work hard and learn was not

threatened. Working class less-achievers were not at all sure that teachers

had their best interests at heart, and some also indicated that teachers

lacked discipline which allowed disruption and noise in the classroom to

interfere with their performance. Achieving pupils agreed over teacher

discipline and the noise factor, but in the main they were largely buffered

from the worst effects of this via streaming.

Pauline: "Maths was very streamed right from the start,
(middle class and English. A lot of others were mixed so a
achiever) fair bit of noise. A lot has to do with the
 teacher. The vague ones were annoying and
 those who can't get discipline."

Sarah: "I didn't find trouble-makers a problem, always
(working class in other classes due to their lower ability.
achiever) I could cope with them for fifteen minutes at
 Registration."

As a result they were able to proceed with their work in line with their

own interests and did not perceive noise and lack of discipline as being

associated with teachers' disinterest in them as working class less-

achievers did.

Teachers, for their part, spoke quite positively about their achieving

pupils whether of middle or working class origins. Examples of form

teachers' comments about achieving pupils are as follows:

Paul's form teacher, about Paul:	"His attendance is fine, excellent. Lives with his father. Good lad, helpful, fairly responsible. Very intelligent doing between 8 and 10 'O' levels with 6th form ahead. Possibly a university entrant if has the right attitude and <u>works</u> .... Dislikes violence and violent people. Fairly relaxed but can be tense occasionally, possibly due to home and school pressures to complete his work. The father is very supportive, wants his son to do well so the boy's trying to live up to that. There's an older brother in the 6th form now ... they'll both succeed if motivated."
Sarah's form teacher about Sarah:	"Definitely one of our brighter pupils .... A good worker, conscientious. Lives with her mother. Has had some trouble recently with some girls in the non-exam group. Got hit over taking someone else's boyfriend, but she's getting over that now."

As with working class less-achievers, teachers brought home background,

siblings and other non-academic criteria into their verbal assessments

of pupils (see p. 181). However, the general tone was far more positive

in talking about Paul and Sarah and teachers spoke of their achieving

pupils enthusiastically and with a degree of pride. The relationship

between school and achieving pupils therefore seemed to be a 'symbiotic'

one. The pupils felt that schooling offered subjects and examinations

which provided an entree into their chosen career areas and gained

satisfaction from being able to demonstrate ability in their chosen subject

areas. Such pupils fitted teachers' notions of the 'ideal pupil'

(Becker (1952)). A combination of their ability plus their "helpful",

"responsible" and "conscientious" ways meant that they were rewarding and

a delight to teach. Such pupils, therefore, satisfied teachers' interests

at hand whilst teachers satisfied those of pupils. Both had similar

expectations of school and what it could provide for the future. As a

result, there was little real discord between them.

THE SPECIAL CASE OF WORKING CLASS ACHIEVERS

Four pupils out of the twenty informants appear to spoil the perfect
'fit' of working class pupils being turned off school and middle class
being committed and successful. These were the four 'achieving' pupils
from working class families. These pupils were all girls, two white and
two black. Their home backgrounds are charted in Figure 7(2).

FIGURE 7(2): PARENTAL OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF LEAFIELD 5TH
FORM WORKING CLASS ACHIEVERS

ACHIEVING PUPIL	FATHER'S OCCUPATION	MOTHER'S OCCUPATION	CAREER ASPIRATIONS
SARAH (white)	Council Manual Worker (living apart)	Hairdresser's Receptionist	Work in Travel Agency
LYNN (white)	Bricklayer	Nursing Asst. (nights)	Teacher (primary)
COLETTE (West Indian)	Welder	Nursing	Business Studies BSc
SHEILAH (West Indian)	Ex-printer, now in USA (living apart)	H/Wife, Ex-catering Asst.	Skilled Office Work

Source: In-depth informants and school record cards, Leafield School (1984)

All four girls had two things in common, which in tandem, had placed them
outside the experiences of the other working class pupils. Firstly, they
had all found school work interesting and secondly they all had some degree
of parental support.

I would suggest that the fact that they found school interesting
enabled them to develop a good working relationship with their teachers
in a way that was not possible for their peers who found school subjects
boring. Form teachers spoke positively of all these girls, taking pride
in their achievements irrespective of ethnic origins. For example:

Sheilah's form teacher about Sheilah (West Indian pupil): "She's a well rounded, mature, intelligent girl. Gifted in 'O' level subjects and sport. Pleasant personality."

>Sarah's form teacher   "Definitely one of our brightest
>about Sarah (white   pupils. A joy to teach."
>   pupil):

I would further suggest that these harmonious pupil/teacher relationships

encouraged performance and assisted these pupils in becoming achievers.

The Effect of Parental Support

There is, however, the additional dimension of parental support and

encouragement. The Central Advisory Council for Education (1967) in its

major report on Primary Schools states;

>".... the most vital factor in a child's home is the attitude
>to school, and all that goes on there, of his [sic] mother
>and father. The interested parent has the interested child."
>   (p.461)

Reid (1986) suggests caution in viewing the evidence for parental influence

but indicates that:

>"if achievement were related to certain parental values,
>then a potentially powerful explanation could have been
>identified."   (p.216)

At Leafield, I found that parental support, taken in isolation was not

sufficient to motivate working class informants to do well at school, but

I would argue that parental support plus an interest in school subjects

served jointly to enhance achievement but that the absence of one or other

of these served to depress achievement.

I have already described how disinterested pupils found school

boring and irrelevant to the 'real' world outside school and in

consequence could not relate well to teachers or become motivated in their

school work. I have also argued that this was a class-based phenomenon

because the school curriculum did not match up to the needs of working

class pupils and what they perceived as necessary to help them find

'decent jobs'.

This disinterest in school could not be countered by parental support

operating in isolation. Hence the working class parent who wanted their

child to 'get on' and stay on in the 6th form could not instil in that

child a positive image of school. Indeed, every one of twenty informants reported their parents to be in favour of them staying on to obtain additional qualifications. No pupil was being expected to go out to work to earn money. The less-achieving pupils, however, had already 'voted with their feet' and decided that further schooling was a waste of time. Pupils had, therefore, taken on a working class perspective and were more inclined to follow in their parents'footsteps than heed their advice to 'break the mould'.

I do not consider that parents can be blamed for the underachievement of their children when they have tried to express their support for gaining qualifications and 6th form studies. To cite specific examples, Bedford remembered his mother always wanting him to be "a heart doctor" and knew she was disappointed that he did not continue at school after the age of sixteen. Eddie's father wanted him to go to college, Shirley's parents wanted her to carry on in the 6th form but said "It's up to you". Similarly, Tessa was horrified at her poor CSE results because she knew her father would be angry and disappointed. Parental support for education came from both mothers and fathers, including fathers separated from their families who nevertheless kept in touch and tried to encourage their children. It also came from both white and black parents. This support though seemed powerless to alter the opinions of school that working class disinterested less-achievers held.

Parental support <u>did</u> act as encouragement for my pupils who already liked school. The extent to which this encouragement affected their performance and willingness to stay on in the 6th form can be judged by Colette's experience.

Colette was of West Indian origin and her father was a welder, her mother a nursing assistant. She recounted how during her moments of depression over poor 'O' level grades her mother had humoured her into persevering.

> Colette: "She would say to me things like, "Let me see, we haven't got any doctors or lawyers in the family so you've got to be something like that."

Sarah and Lynn, the two white working class achievers had also received support for gaining qualifications and as this combined nicely with their own interests, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were present.

Similarly, Sheilah, the other West Indian origin working class achiever, spoke of the encouragement and advice she had received at home regarding staying on to undertake a B-Tec National.

> Sheilah: "I talked with my Mum and older sister and Mum's pleased I'm staying on to do it because my sister did the B.Tec earlier and she was alright."

These working class pupils then, received the kind of parental support and advice normally associated with pupils of middle class origins. Their parents aspired to white collar or professional employment for their daughters and this plus their interest in school work and their ability enabled them to progress academically through the school and examination system. Parental support for middle class occupations was therefore indicated as an important element in working class informants' achievement although it did not seem to have effect in isolation. Other working class parents would have loved their sons and daughters to remain at school and do well (see p. 192), but their children lacked motivation for they could not see the usefulness of school or exams. These pupils were my less-achieving informants who 'voted with their feet' to extricate themselves from the school process as soon as possible.

DOES CLASS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

In this chapter I have indicated that working class informants had a very clear understanding of what is meant to be working class and that the majority of them then viewed school as being largely irrelevant to their future lives. They did not see the utility of exams (or more specifically

CSEs) and the subjects on offer held no meaning for them. Neither did they see teachers as being particularly interested in them. Middle class informants did not see any separation between their best interests for the future and what school offered and could see the relevance of both subject content and exams for their future training and careers. These pupils viewed teachers as encouraging them and showing interest in their performance.

I have explained this in terms of a clash of cultures along class lines whereby the school operated on essentially academic and meritocratic principles in line with the dominant middle class values that abound in education (Karabel and Halsey (1977)). Values that were not shared by the majority of working class pupils. I have also indicated that teachers labelled pupils according to factors linked to their home and therefore class backgrounds, and not just on academic criteria alone, serving to exacerbate a class divide.

Finally, I have offered an explanation for the achievement (in middle class terms) of a minority of working class informants on the basis that both they and their parents were acting uncharacteristically for their actual class position in that these pupils were interested in their school subjects, and were positively encouraged by their parents. That these pupils were a minority, and that 16 out of 20 informants maintained strong allegiance to either their working or middle class origins, with attendant anti- or pro-school attitudes, does I believe indicate that class has an important bearing on how schooling is received.

The 'success' of the working class achievers and the main difference between them and their less-achieving peers seems to lie not just in their interest in academic subjects per se, but in the fact that their utility was recognised in providing access to middle class occupations. This indicates a link not only between class and attitudes to school, but also between class and aspirations, an issue which is taken up in Chapter 8.

Class did not operate in isolation, however, gender and race also took their toll. As a result, the effects of all three factors are now summarised in relation to school experiences before moving on to consider their impact in the transitionary and early post-school phase.

EXPERIENCING GENDER, RACE AND CLASS IN SCHOOL - AN OVERVIEW

Put briefly, gender, race and class informed teachers' interactions with and reactions to pupils but in subtly different ways. Gender considerations led teachers to 'protect', or 'patronise' girls, racial factors led to racist humour, misjudged rapport and teacher typifications along stereotyped 'cultural' lines and the class dimension created similar typifications of the 'ideal' versus the 'non-ideal' pupil and to inter-actions with pupils which left them feeling that teachers were only really interested in the achieving middle class-orientated pupils.

Gender, race and class also affected pupils' interactions with their peers and their teachers. Gender considerations (based on issues of sexuality) massively divided girls from boys to the point of a polarisation of the sexes, whereas the race dimension involved a core of racist beliefs (primarily but not exclusively among boys), plus name-calling and jokes at the expense of black and Asian pupils. These were met with a desire to 'ignore' such incidents on the part of black pupils but with indications of a strain this placed on black/white relationships at the school. The class dimension had its most powerful effect in determining attitudes to school itself with working class pupils seeing little relevance in the education on offer and doubting teachers' interest in them as pupils. Middle-class and other aspiring achievers held the opposite view whereby school was interesting and useful and teachers helpful.

Thus, it can be seen that gender, race and class imposed both different and differential influences upon the experience of schooling. Pupils felt the 'push' or 'pull' of each of these on their lives and it was girls, black pupils and working class pupils who received negative treatment as a result.

CHAPTER 8

CHOOSING FOR THE FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

As pupils approached the end of their compulsory education they had to make some important choices about staying on at school, seeking further education, trying to find work or accepting YTS placements. An important feature of this study was to research this decision-making process in order to establish the extent to which gender, race and class affected both choices and outcomes. In consequence, the focus now shifts onto the 5th formers' career choices, the influences involved in making those choices and a critique of the careers advice available at the school.

In this respect, the 5th formers in my study did not drift towards leaving school. Indeed, they talked about it at home, with their friends and thought about it a lot. From the replies on the 5th form questionnaire it was evident that the majority of pupils had availed themselves of the careers talks on offer as some 75% reported attending these. In addition, nearly 80% indicated that they had talked to relatives (parents, siblings and others) about selecting and seeking employment. The effect of this was quite pronounced in that pupils frequently opted for a path already taken by another member of their family or one suggested by them. This held true for both boys and girls, achievers and less-achievers, blacks and whites, details of which are explored below.

Perhaps the most important thing to establish at the outset is that most Leafield pupils of both genders and all racial origins, did not make career choices, but job choices. The school's intake was predominantly working class (OPCS 1982b) and some 90% of 5th formers at the time of this study had parents with working class occupations (School Record Cards (1984)). As such, the majority of pupils did not think in terms of a

'career' and 'job satisfaction' and as Corrigan (1979) states, they

> "don't see their world in terms of choice and career, when
> the job comes it comes in a harsh and real form .... you
> have to go and it's boring."   (p.92)

It is in this light that Leafield's 5th form choices must be viewed.

All pupils were asked by questionnaire the following two questions:

Q. What would you most like to do when you leave?

and Q. What else are you prepared to do if necessary?

(see Appendix 1)

By posing these two questions I hoped to get at pupils' deeply-held

desires and their realism. It was then my intention to compare these

replies with the actual experiences of my 20 in-depth informants. The

resultant data indicated a strong influence on choices of both class and

gender, but not of race. These are now considered separately.

THE CLASS DIMENSION IN JOB CHOICES

There is a wealth of research to support the notion that class

position is a major determinant in pupils' job choices. Corrigan (1979)

discovered that boys in his study stuck closely to their manufacturing

origins in thinking about future work, stating:

> "At no stage in either the interviews or the questionnaire
> do they reach out from their class backgrounds and use a
> comparison that comes from outside."   (p.91)

Finn (1984) also concluded that the dominant influence on decisions and

expectations for the future came from class and cultural backgrounds.

Other researchers focussing on girls have indicated the importance of

parental occupations in formulating choices (Delamont (1980),Furlong (1986)),

which by extension implicate class origins in forming pupils' aspirations.

At Leafield, class origins and parental occupations played a major

part in determining pupils' job choices. Only seven pupils (3 girls and

4 boys) aspired to professional employment or university in questionnaire

returns and of these, two were known to be of middle class origins for the pupils concerned were among my in-depth informants.

At face value this seems surprising for some 21 girls and 18 boys were sitting sufficient 'O' levels to warrant 6th form entry (subject to satisfactory grades) and had already split off from their usual form groups at Christmas to become an 'Exam Group'. However, this lack of aspiration becomes understandable in terms of class position when the parental occupations and home backgrounds of informants are taken into account to shed light on this phenomenon.

(a) Achievers

Six of my 20 informants were from the Exam Group mentioned above and defined as 'achievers' in Chapter 7. Their occupational aspirations and parental occupations are detailed in Figure 8 (1).

FIGURE 8 (1). EXAM GROUP INFORMANTS BY ETHNICITY, TO SHOW PARENTAL OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

PUPIL	ETHNICITY	FATHER'S OCCUPATION	MOTHER'S OCCUPATION	CAREER ASPIRATIONS
Paul	White	Agricultural Engineer	Stores Manager	Agricultural Engineer
Pauline	White	Science Teacher	Hosp. Lab. Tech.	Occupational Therapist
Sarah	White	Council Manual Worker	Hairdresser's Receptionist	Work in Travel Agency
Lynn	White	Bricklayer	Nursing Asst. (nights)	Primary teacher
Colette	West Indian	Welder	Nursing Asst.	Business Studies B.Sc.
Sheilah	West Indian	Ex-printer	Housewife Ex-catering Asst.	Skilled Office Work

Source: Leafield informants and school records (1985)

It was noticeable that many of these achievers had job aspirations in line with the actual occupations (or past occupations) of a parent or sibling, and not in line with their own level of achievement and ability to continue with Higher Education. Thus, despite ability, there were indications of a 'pull' towards class origins such that middle class pupils chose careers closely alligned to the career of a parent and working class pupils chose occupations below the level associated with their academic achievements. This created a tendency to under-aspire in working class pupils, whilst middle class pupils chose careers in line with their ability.

Four of these informants aspired to a profession and two of them had professional parents. All six were well placed academically to progress towards middle class occupations. Their experiences are interesting in shedding light on how class position and family influences can affect aspirations and career choices.

Paul's father was an Agricultural Engineer and his mother was an Office/Stores Manager. Paul had his sights set on taking 3 'A' levels and he listed his eventual aim as a career in Agricultural or Electronic Engineering. Paul's career choice was strongly influenced by his parents, especially his father whom he lived with, apart from his mother.

> Paul: "My parents helped in my decision - pushed me a bit.
> I've got a brother and sister older who did 'A'
> levels."

Paul's form teacher confirmed that the boy's father was supportive of the school and 'pushed' the boy to the extent that he was perhaps:

> "Under a bit of pressure from the father."

Paul recounted to me his earlier childhood experiences of growing up in a farming environment and how he saw this as satisfying work. He recalled travelling around with his father and took pride in the links his family had with the farming community. He had kept up some of his father's

old contacts in the country and was a member of the Young Farmers' Club.
He also lived in a country village outside Bridgehurst, and was the only
informant to do so.

Not only did Paul select an occupation that was already 'in the
family' but he showed a strong leaning towards entering that career in
the same way as his father.   In the 6th form he began to think about
an HND instead of a university degree because he could see it was more
practically based.

>   Paul: "You see, I enjoyed Control Technology [in 5th form]
>   (white   .... projects and working with people. More action-
>   achiever)   type, more machinery work."

This was directly in line with his father's experience who started off
as a foreman in Agricultural Engineering. Paul was displaying a similar
inclination towards the practical rather than the academic side of the
industry.

Pauline was the only other informant to have professional parents.
Her father was a Science teacher at a local college, having previously
been in Laboratory work. Her mother was a Laboratory Technician in a
local hospital. Pauline herself wanted to be an Occupational Therapist.

Here again, the scientific and professional interests of her parents
were conducive to Pauline's own interest in Science. Pauline took and
passed 8 'O' levels with an average pass grade of 'B' and went on into the
6th form to take 2 Science 'A' levels and English Literature. She was a
quiet, modest and serious pupil.

>   Pauline: (about her new 'A' level studies). "They're inter-
>   (white   esting but Biology is harder than I thought it
>   achiever)   would be. Chemistry is hard but I like it -
>   although I doubt if I'll pass."

Her results at 'O' level were the best grades in the school that year
and her fears for her ability would appear unfounded.

Pauline had given some thought to her future career and had taken
some active steps before settling for Occupational Therapy.

Pauline: "I first thought of Nursing then I heard of this
through a cousin doing a week's work experience
in Occupational Therapy. Also, I went to the
careers talk on Occupational Therapy. So I did
some work experience in that too and decided it
was OK."

Pauline intended to go on to a Polytechnic or special training

college for Occupational Therapy. She said that her parents had never

pushed her as regards career choices but clearly, with both parents in

scientific work and a medical orientation, it is not surprising that she

should feel comfortable and confident about a career that combined

science with medical aid. Pauline also chose a 'practical' occupation

rather than an 'academic' one despite her excellent 'O' level achievements.

In this too, she was following in the footsteps of both her parents and

a cousin and was influenced by them in choosing a middle class occupation.

The noticeable feature of the remaining achievers was that their

parents were in typically working class jobs and that pupils themselves

held modest career aspirations below the limits of what could be open to

them based on their examination successes. Thus, whilst it was still

true that that there was a parental influence on career choices, this

influence was now exerted in such a way as to curtail not enhance career

aspirations. This created the beginnings of class perpetuation between

generations for both middle and working class pupils, even in the face of

proven academic ability.

Sarah, for example, sat 8 'O' levels and passed 6, plus 4 grade I

CSEs and was considered by the Head of 5th form to be "one of our brightest

pupils". Sarah, however, tended to underestimate her achievement and had

heeded the advice of her mother and experience of her older sister in

selecting a career.

Sarah: "I never felt very academically inclined. It was
(taking RSA   very hard work to get Cs [at 'O' level], so my
secretarial   mother thought don't flog it to do 'A' levels, go
course in   for a secretarial course, so I did. My older
6th form)   sister had already done the same course at Leafield
               and did OK afterwards."

Sarah's mother was a receptionist in a hairdressers and her father, who did not live with them, used to be a manual worker with the local council although Sarah was not certain about his current job. Although she was within range of 'A' level achievement, she found studying hard going and was happy to take an easier route towards employment as encouraged by her mother. Here again, family influences were involved and, like Pauline, she chose a 'tried and tested' route that a member of her family had already negotiated successfully, in this case depressing the level of her aspirations, albeit that her preference for working in a Travel Agents was a form of white collar employment.

Another example can be found in Sheilah who was again pronounced to be "very academic" by her form teacher. She sat 7 'O' levels and 5 CSEs passing 5 at 'O' level. Like Sarah, Sheilah also had her sights set more on getting a _practical_ qualification that would lead to employment and she made choices below the level of the options open to her based on her examination results. In her case she chose to do a one-year B.Tec. National in order to go straight into office work afterwards. She hoped that this job would include some computer or accountancy training to make her more specialised and was happy to continue some part-time (perhaps day release) studies once she had started work. Here too, both maternal advice and sibling experience prevailed to influence her.

> Sheilah: "B.Tec. takes 1 year and I can convert it to a
> (West Indian Higher Diploma with one extra year. Then
> pupil who straight into a job, preferably computing
> began a B.Tec. office work ... My mum's pleased I'm staying
> course in on, my sister did the B.Tec. earlier."
> office skills)

Both Griffin (1985) and Furlong (1986) researched girls' aspirations in comprehensive schools and found evidence of low expectations. Furlong also found girls' female relatives had a powerful impact on their choices:

> "The single most important influence on the occupational
> aspirations of young women is that of their mother and
> female friends and relations." (p.375)

I would supplement Furlong's contention by arguing that for my Leafield
working class achievers the influence of those female relations served to
limit occupational choices and confine them to what Glass (1954) and Heath
(1981) refer to as short-range mobility. Thus, class origins impeded
such pupils in striking out towards occupational goals compatible with
their proven academic ability.

So far, I have suggested that familial influences both enhanced and
depressed the aspirations of achieving working class pupils. Enhanced
them because working class parents openly supported and encouraged
their children to stay at school and aim for qualifications but also
depressed them by suggesting employment choices below the level of their
children's ability. However, the two working class pupils who did make
professional career choices revealed an ambivalence towards those careers
which indicated that even they were wishing to enter those occupations for
reasons other than upward social mobility.

Lynn for example, was one of these two informants to 'break the mould'
in the absence of familial occupational links. Lynn's father was a brick-
layer and her mother was a Nursing Assistant for disabled people. In a
breaktime discussion about future career choices she had this to say about
her family and her decision to be a primary school teacher.

> Lynn: "Both my parents are thick .... My Mum's nice
> (said fondly   but ever so thick. I just want to do a job
> and without   with children and think the holidays would be
> rancour)   good as well as it being an interesting job ...
>   Teaching was my own idea, it came from my own
>   interests. I must have a job I enjoy as it
>   won't seem like working."

Lynn could not say why she had proved to be academically able but she had
always liked school. Her parents were supportive and she had a good
relationship with them; she knew she wanted a "more interesting" job than
her mother's.

In this instance, it is worth noting that Lynn's preference for

teaching was because she wanted "a job with children" and that teaching
seemed to offer the 'easiest' and most interesting option. Her articulated
sympathies lay not with teaching per se, or the imparting of knowledge
in an academic sense but with children. In this, she was very similar to
many lower ability working class pupils but her 'O' level successes enabled
her to consider more professional employment with children that would lead
to a career. She had doubts about her ability to succeed but was, never-
theless, undertaking 3 'A' levels and 1 O/A level.

> Lynn: "Not sure I can do it, but it's nice to try."

Colette, the other West Indian achieving pupil, similarly did not
set her sights too low. She and her parents had been told many times that
she was "university material". As a result, she anticipated passing her
'O' levels, entering the 6th form to take 3 'A' levels and then going on to
college or university to take a degree in Business Studies.

The problem for Colette was that on her own admission, she had become
"too complacent". She thought she could be active in sports, music and
drama and still pass her exams without spending a lot of time on her work.

> Colette: "The trouble was I was really fed up with school.
>   I always worked hard and then I asked "What's it
>   all for?" I got to the stage I said "I can't
>   take any more"."

Colette felt that all the time her less-achieving friends had been
enjoying themselves she had been seriously working, then near exam time
they had been able to settle to work and she had reached her 'cut off point'.
The end result was that she failed 4 out of 7 'O' levels and obtained D
and E grades in the other three.

> Colette: "My mother said "How could you do this to me?"
>   but later she said not to worry ... I can tell
>   you I was so depressed at that time."

In consequence, Colette's plans had to be revised and she spent her first
6th form year re-taking her 'O' levels, this time successfully. After
that she embarked upon her A level programme, one year behind her peers.

The interesting thing about Colette was that she had become "really
fed up with school" and began to resent all the effort she was putting
into school work compared with some of her non-'O'-level taking friends.
She was in danger of 'slipping' and becoming one of the less-achievers and
only strong parental encouragement (see p. 193) kept her going. Colette
then, can be viewed as 'sticking it out' rather than enthusiastically
being involved in academic attainment. As she herself said:

> Colette: "I don't know whether it's motivation, or
>   laziness about going out to work." (Original emphasis)

Lynn and Colette were the only two working class informants who had opted
for academic or professional careers, and as demonstrated above, neither
were particularly committed to what they had chosen in a 'career' sense,
although for different reasons. Lynn's motivation was that she primarily
wanted to work with children and Colette showed signs of continuing with
her original plan because it was preferable to going straight out to work.
The jobs that lay ahead of them, after qualifying, were not valued for
their intrinsic worth as by Paul and Pauline, rather they offered a
pragmatic solution for the future.

In this, Lynn and Colette were acting similarly to Sarah and Sheilah
who had made different but nevertheless pragmatic decisions in choosing
short term skill-orientated training in readiness for the world of work.

Pragmatism has been noted as a particular feature of working class
girls' occupational choices by Griffin (1985) and by Raby and Walford
(1981) and as a feature among all working class pupils, both boys and
girls. Indications at Leafield were that working class achievers were
also thinking along such lines.

Less-achievers

As has already been stated, only 7 out of 193 pupils who returned
questionnaires aspired to professional middle class employment or to
university. The remainder selected jobs from a narrow range of skilled

and unskilled manual employment with boys opting primarily for skilled

trades or garage/mechanic work (26%) and girls primarily selecting 'caring'

jobs (15%) or office/secretarial work (13%) (see Figure 8(3)). As these

choices were also gender specific they are discussed in more detail in

the section which examines gender and aspirations (see pp.210-222)

but for now it is important to consider the class relevance of pupils'

preferences. Raby and Walford (1981) found that job choices among their

urban comprehensive school pupils bore a direct relation to the practi-

calities of the local labour market and many other researchers (e.g. Corrigan

(1979);Baqi (1984);Griffin (1985)) reveal a realism in pupils' choices that

reflects what is feasible and attainable in the job market. Delamont (1980)

indicates that parents' own jobs are considered in making these choices

and as King (1987) states:

> "children do not encounter the occupational structure
> directly, but construct subjective definitions of work
> through their family and school experiences."   (p.297)

Certainly, at Leafield, there was nothing to indicate that pupils

in any way stepped out of their class origins in selecting jobs. Further-

more, 16% of all pupils said they were prepared to consider "anything"

if their first choice was not possible indicating a passivity and acceptance

of whatever was available in the job market.

This can best be seen by examining the job preferences of my fourteen

working class less-achieving informants. Figure 8(2) shows both preferred

and second job choices in relation to parental occupations. From this

table it can be seen that pupils chose largely from the range of

occupations they saw their parents and siblings participating in, such that

any mobility that might be aspired to was only from unskilled/unqualified

manual work to skilled or qualified manual work (e.g. Peter, whose father

was an ex-welder making garage doors, wanted to obtain an apprenticeship).

These less-achieving pupils acted in accordance with Willis' (1977) lads

FIGURE 8 (2). <u>PARENTAL OCCUPATIONS AND JOB ASPIRATIONS OF LESS-ACHIEVING</u>

<u>WORKING CLASS INFORMANTS, BY ETHNICITY</u>

PUPIL	ETHN.*	FATHER'S OCCUPATION	MOTHER'S OCCUPATION	JOB PREFERRED	ALTERNATIVE JOB CHOICE
Peter	W	Ex-factory worker, now making metal doors (living apart)	Cashier	Fire service	Anything
Philip	W	Painter and Decorator	Clerk	Coachbuilding	Painter and Decorator
Duncan	W	Bricklayer	Nursing Assistant	Building work	Army
Bedford	W.I.	Manual labourer (living apart)	Nurse	Electrician	-
Eric	W.I.	Hospital porter	Ex-secretary now housewife	Elect. Engineering Apprenticeship	Garage
Eddie	W.I.	Electrician	Not known (living apart)	Anything	YTS
Winston	W.I.	Not known (living apart)	Nursing Assistant	College	-
Shirley	W	Delivery Driver	Doctor's Receptionist	Catering	Factory
Natalie	W	Driver	Housewife	Work with animals/F.E.	YTS
Tessa	W	Factory mechanic	Factory machinist	Work with children	Office work
Delia	W.I.	Not known (living apart)	Unemployed cleaner	Hairdressing	-
Sonia	W.I.	Not known (living apart)	Deceased	Anything	F.E.
Vanda	W.I.	Manual worker	Housewife	Shop work	-
Diane	W.I.	Not known (living apart)	Catering	Nurse	Catering

Source: Leafield Informants questionnaire returns and school records (1984)

*   =   Ethnic Origin

W   =   White

W.I. =   West Indian

in taking their aspirations from what they saw around them, thus being
instrumental in their own working class entrapment.

Neither their first nor second choices lay outside the domain of
working class jobs, pointing again to the beginnings of class perpetuation
between generations, indeed some had deliberately selected the job of their
same-sex parent.

> Philip: "I'd really like to work down Parkers on their
> (white working   coaches [he had done some work experience there]
> class less-   but otherwise I'd like to be a painter and
> achiever)   decorator like my Dad."

Philip, who found school totally irrelevant and boring (see p. 170) could
indeed 'come alive' when talking about the world of work. One breaktime
by the bicycle sheds he proudly told me about his father who was a painter
and decorator.

> Philip: "He can do wonderful ceilings and that, plaster
>   them real smooth. He does a lot for that....
>   [named local period property]"

Philip was animated and enthusiastic in what he said, quite unlike the
silent and stumbling boy I observed painfully enduring a French lesson.
He saw his father's world as the 'real' world and was keen to leave school
behind him. Whereas his form teacher described Philip as a "baddie", a
"nuisance" and a "twit", he was more than efficient and helpful in
organising a quotation from his father for some work I wanted done in my
own house. Indeed, he was back to me and setting it all up within 24 hours.

Duncan similarly wanted to work on a building site and his father was
a bricklayer, this despite the fact that he had referred with some
bitterness earlier to his father suffering spells of unemployment between
jobs and receiving low wages (see p.163).

Furthermore, three pupils were prepared to consider any job at all
and flexibility is perhaps best demonstrated by Shirley who completed her
questionnaire by post, having already left school (unofficially) before
Easter. She wrote on her form:

> "I would have liked to have catered somewhere but
> fortunately I ran straight into a job in a factory
> .... I will stick to the job I have."

Shirley, then quickly accepted the first job offer she was made and was

prepared to 'stick to it' without searching for something better. Indeed,

she even left school early in order to take it. Her instrumental approach

to work epitomised the work ethic of most less-achieving informants whereby

anything was swept aside in order to secure a job. This issue receives

further attention in Chapter 9 which focusses on employment destinations.

Finally, the parental advice that was forthcoming for achievers in

helping them decide future careers and appropriate 6th form courses, was

also forthcoming for less-achievers in deciding their futures. In

relation to this, <u>no</u> parents of informants had insisted they leave school

to get work (see p. 192) and some openly preferred their children to stay

on in the 6th form.

> Vanda: "My Mum, she supported me in my decision to go
> (West Indian   into a shop but both Mum and Dad wanted me to
> less-achiever) go into 6th form."

> Shirley: "[They were] all for me going to college but said
> (white less-   'It's your choice, so do what you want to do'."
> achiever)

These parents then, might have <u>liked</u> their sons and daughters to continue

at school but they did not <u>press</u> them to do so. Neither did they articulate

specific job targets or goals that would be best served by staying on at

school by which pupils might have seen a rationale to do so. None of the

parents of these pupils had <u>themselves</u> stayed on at school beyond the

minimum school leaving age and their children, in following in their

footsteps were 'doing as they did' rather than 'doing as they said'.

I see this as realism on the part of pupils in sticking to tried and

tested routes rather than delve into the unknown. This too served as a

mechanism for intergenerational class perpetuation and was further

compounded by the job contacts parents could often make for their children

via friends or their own workplaces. This factor is discussed in more

detail in Chapter 9 when examining employment destinations.

GENDER AND JOB CHOICES

Another notable feature among Leafield 5th formers was the gender
differentiation in employment aspirations, as reported in the questionnaire
returns.

(a) The girls

With stunning clarity, both girls and boys chose stereotypical
occupations that would polarise them into two separate spheres of the
workforce. Figure 8(3) indicates the occupations selected by both girls
and boys as their first and second choice.

The largest category of employment cited by girls as their main
choice was "looking after children". 10% of girls mentioned this. The
next most popular choices were shop work (9%), office work (7%) and
secretarial (6%), such that these four categories combined to account for
32% of all girls' choices. A further 14% wanted what I have collectively
described as 'glamour' jobs in reception, hairdressing, beauty work,
fashion design or art. Engineering was completely unrepresented in the
girls' choices and just one girl wanted to work with computers. Nobody
wanted outdoor manual work and the two girls who wanted professional
careers chose Occupational Therapy and Accountancy, both of which can be
associated with either the 'caring' role or office work, thus lying within
the realm of what is considered 'suitable' women's work (Sharpe, 1976).
As such, gender-specificity in job choice transcended occupational class
divides.

One interesting feature of girls choices was that 5% nominated YTS
as their main choice whereas no boys opted for YTS in the first instance.
In addition girls were far more willing to opt for 6th form or further
education (8% against 2% for boys), although these differences disappear
when alternative choices are taken into account. Girls, therefore,

FIGURE 8 (3). FIRST AND SECOND CHOICE OCCUPATIONS OF 5TH FORMERS, BY GENDER, AS CITED ON 5TH FORM QUESTIONNAIRE

Destination	GIRLS (%)		BOYS (%)	
	1st choice	2nd choice	1st choice	2nd choice
Anything	14	16	10	17
6th form or F.E.	8	10	2	10
H.E./University	1	0	0	0
YTS	5	10	0	14
Uniformed Forces	1	0	6.5	5.5
Unskilled (outdoors)	0	0	6.5	1
Unskilled (Rail/P. Office)	0	1	5.5	0
Unskilled (Garage)	0	0	9	2
Unskilled (Factory)	1	0	1	1
Unskilled (Domestic/Catering)	1	1	1	0
Skilled (trades)	1	0	17	10
Skilled (factory)	0	0	3	1
Skilled (catering)	3	1	3	2
Shop Work/Sales	9	14	5.5	3
Reception	2	1	0	0
Fashion and Art	8	4	3	2
Hairdressing/Beauty	4	1	1	0
Child care	10	2	1	1
Animal care	2	0	1	2
Nursing Assistant	0	1	1	1
Nurse	3	0	0	0
Office/bank work	7	9	1	3
Secretarial	6	4	0	0
Computer work	1	0	4.5	1
Engineering	0	0	3	2
Technician/Technical	1	1	2	0
Professional	2	3	5.5	2
Not stated	10	21	6.5	18
TOTAL NUMBER = 193	TOTAL NUMBER = 100		TOTAL NUMBER = 93	

Source: Questionnaire, Leafield 5th formers (1985).

displayed a tendency towards greater readiness to stay in education, or embark on some type of vocational training than boys, whose sights were more set on paid work. Furlong (1986) suggests that this willingness to continue studying is a way of girls avoiding unemployment but this did not seem to be the case at Leafield. Girls were faced with only 4% unemployment as school leavers locally and female informants actively chose further studies for either 'A' level or vocational course purposes (e.g. Sarah, Pauline, Sheilah and Natalie). In this they differed from the boys who were more likely to start in 6th form but drop out as soon as any paid job arose (see p. 247).

Much attention has been focussed on the tendency of girls to opt for traditionally female roles, and occupations seen as 'feminine', and school processes have been implicated in the formation of girls' attitudes in Delamont (1980). Researchers have identified a wealth of factors bearing upon girls' decisions including home influences (e.g. King (1987)), the desire for marriage (e.g. Dex (1982)), pressure from boys to exclude girls from non-traditional spheres (e.g. Culley (1988)), teachers' attitudes (e.g. Stanworth (1981)) and the quality of careers advice (e.g. Griffin (1985)). I would like to address each of these issues in turn in relation to Leafield girls using data from my informants and school observations.

Furlong (1986) suggests that mothers and other female relatives are instrumental in girls' aspirations because:

> "persons of the same sex within the family are most
> likely to be experienced as significant others." (p.375)

At Leafield, girls certainly referred most to female relatives in talking about family discussions on jobs as evidenced by Sheilah and Sarah (pp.201-202) who listened carefully to their mothers and sisters in deciding what training to undertake and what jobs to aim for. The fact that the mothers of all these girls operated in entirely 'female' spheres (see Figure 8(1) and 8(2) must, by Furlong's reasoning, have an effect

upon expectations.

A powerful message from Leafield girls was their keen interest in "working with children". In this, I would argue they were unrealistic in terms of jobs on offer in the labour market. Some 80 girls packed the careers talk on "Working With Children" (the average attendance at careers talks was about 40), and 10% (the largest single category) wanted such work according to the questionnaires, yet local opportunities in this field were severely limited. The local College of Further Education course for Nursery Nursing was over-subscribed each year and in any event, the ability levels of the girls most interested in such work fell short of the entry requirements for the course. The local Careers Officer told me:

"They wouldn't be able to pass the entrance test anyhow".

Tessa's experience seemed to confirm this.

> Tessa: "I tried to get into college before my results so
> (working   as to work with children. Went for a test for
> class less-   being a nanny at the College of F.E. There was
> achiever)   this stupid Maths test on shapes and how would
>   they fit. Was told they'd be in touch but never
>   did. 200 apply each year and 23 are chosen, so
>   I just gave up."

As the girls would need to be qualified to work in any officially organised creche or nursery school, the only other option remaining open to them was the informal sphere of child-minding and babysitting, neither of which provided regular, paid employment.

However, I would argue that girls who specified such work were being realistic on two accounts. Firstly, they readily saw that such jobs were in short supply and were perfectly prepared to consider other work instead. Indeed, 16% of girls said they would do "anything" as an alternative to their main choice. Secondly, they elected to incorporate their interest in children into their private lives instead.

> Shirley: "I loved kids on my work experience, but hopefully
> (who leapt at a   I'll have my own."
> machinist's
> vacancy before
> school had ended)

These girls were also being realistic in another sense, inasmuch as they saw marriage and raising children as an automatic part of their future lives. Most girls saw marriage and having children as likely, but a long way off.

> Shirley: "I haven't really thought about the future ...
> (Working class   Don't really want to get married for a long
> less-achiever)   time yet, and kids, but not for a long time ...
>   Not interested in boyfriends at the moment,
>   I'd rather go out with my mates."

Girls therefore anticipated later family ties, but as Griffin (1985) states:

> "Marriage and motherhood seemed distant if inevitable
> events."   (p.188)

Admittedly, when pressed, these girls of 15 and 16 years of age would see their 20s as being 'the longer term' and the majority wanted to stay at home while their children were young, but there was no evidence that girls saw employment as a temporary phase whilst waiting to find a partner and start a family, and some wanted to delay marriage in order to develop a career first.

> Tessa: "I'm only interested in being settled in two
> (white   years time, not before. I do want children,
> less-achiever)   about two years after getting married ... and
>   stay at home with them until they're ready for
>   school."
>
> Delia: "I don't want to get married, not yet anyway ...
> (West Indian   I would like kids, yeah! Would prefer to keep
> less-achiever)   working, I've got my mum.[to look after the
>   children].
>
> Natalie: "I would delay marriage 'til after my career
> (white less-   takes off."
> achiever)

The 'longer term' outlook varied in its length from pupil to pupil and Tessa's longer term view was only two years hence. Achieving and middle class pupils were more inclined to delay the idea of marriage in order to develop a career and they were more concerned about the impact of children on their lives, but they still saw themselves as having children at some stage.

> Sarah: "I'm definitely not interested in marriage until
> (working class   my late 20s.... having kids causes delays ....
> achiever)   I want to be free of those constraints."
>
> Pauline: "Can't really see myself getting married young ..
> (middle class   don't know about children.... I would want to
> achiever)   share looking after them with my partner."

I would, therefore, suggest that in listing "working with children" as a

main job preference, these girls were making something of a 'statement

of intent' about their future lives. They saw raising their own children

as an integral part of their whole 'career' future and specified such work

as a long term goal whilst simultaneously considering any job for the time

being. In this, I would argue that they were reacting to the labour

market in a similar way to the boys who spoke of wanting to qualify in

skilled trades as their ultimate objective but were nevertheless prepared

to take 'lesser' employment (see p. 219). Girls were, therefore, being

highly pragmatic taking their working lives as a whole, and as Griffin

(1985) states, perhaps

> "Our ideas on the 'transition from school to work' need to
> expand to include young people's relative positions in the
> sexual and marriage markets."   (p.188)

A further interesting feature of girls' choices at Leafield was the

distinct lack of interest in 'male' occupations. No-one listed science,

technology or engineering among their choices, and only one girl opted

for work with computers. Culley (1988) argues that the siting of computer

equipment in Maths blocks   (associated with the male domain) and the

off-putting influences of boys in 'hogging' equipment are factors to be

considered in turning girls away from the field. I have already described

in Chapter 5 that a scenario of this type prevailed at Leafield (see p.104).

Measor (1984) similarly indicates that pressure to conform to female

stereotypes, emanating from both teachers and male peers, serves to negate

girls' interest in science. The experiences of Natalie, whose dream was

to become a Vet are worth exploring in this context. Her teachers had

ensured that she took all the science subjects but they never quite

'gelled' for her. A number of things about what was taught, how and in

what atmosphere conspired to inhibit her performance and turn her off

science.

> Natalie: "I never found school subjects interesting, even
> (working class Biology - just about plants [said with disinterest].
> less achiever) I loved Chemistry; quite interested in Physics,
> but I would have preferred it if more girls were
> involved, it puts me off. They [boys] put me off
> by messing about."

It should be borne in mind that Natalie was one of the two girls who

so unwillingly demonstrated their successful experiment to a class full of

boys in a Physics lesson (see p.103). She had also said that sometimes

the girls worked outside in the corridor to get some peace and quiet

(see p. 110). However, she was critical of the teacher as well as the

male pupils.

> Natalie: "School doesn't encourage girls in science.
> Mr Perry tends to talk to the boys and ignore
> the girls' questions. You know, it's mostly
> girls going for this Vet's Course. I find that
> really interesting. You see, boys have done the
> school subjects needed [for entry to the Animal
> Technology course] but go into Engineering more
> and 'A' levels, not animals. Yet I needed them
> and felt put off."

That Natalie felt 'put off' and excluded in science is quite clear,

although it is not clear that teachers did actually undermine her in the

way she perceived. Two of her male science teachers were very supportive

and knew of her interest, including Mr Perry. Neither of them were seen

by me to discriminate against girls during my classroom observations of

them, but this observation was limited to just 4 lessons. In any event,

the important issue is that Natalie felt like an outsider in science

classes where she was outnumbered by the boys, and where she felt the

teacher gave boys greater attention. As a result of this, Natalie did

not do well in her science subjects. She took CSEs not 'O' levels and

was forced to modify her 'dream'. The effect of this on her career

aspirations was that she finally opted to go to the local College of
Further Education with greatly modified ambitions.

> Natalie: "I want to do a year at College followed by
> Zoology at some level or possibly then go
> straight into a job with animals. I'd like
> to start at the bottom and work my way up
> but I don't think I'm brainy enough."

Another important factor for Leafield girls was the quality of careers
advice provided by the school. To begin with there was a marked lack of
careers talks on topics that related to girls' interests. Whilst to have
such things may well have the effect of promoting, and hence perpetuating,
a gender divide in occupations (an argument put forward by Cockburn (1987)
in relation to vocational training and YTS), to omit girls' interests is
to provide them with distinct messages about the unimportance of their
needs and their secondary role vis-a-vis boys in a world dominated by
male-orientated occupations. Such was the situation at Leafield where,
in the first term of the 5th year the weekly programme of career talks
included 10 topics on skilled trades, the Forces and technology and just
two, that could be regarded as relevant to girls' job preferences. These
were 'Working with Children' and 'Department Store Work'. As previously
stated, there was a heavy attendance at the former, but after the 'gloom and
doom' messages about the few places available in Nursery Nursing girls
were left with just one other talk that term, essentially on shop work.
In addition, the school poster advertising the schedule of talks for the
term emphasised the male weighting in careers talks by displaying a bold,
4 inch high logo of a man's head wearing an industrial safety helmet.

Careers advice and school work experience placements did not always
match up to girls' expectations. One girl in the 5th form who was taking
woodwork (and was good at her work) explained that she was interested in
Joinery during her talk with the careers Teacher. She complained bitterly
after that when her work experience placement turned out to be in a

children's day nursery. Similarly, Natalie was totally disgusted with

the advice she received.

> Natalie: "I told Mr Rogers I wanted to do Chemistry,
> (whose dream   Biology and Physics to build up to 'A'
> was to become   levels for University and he said it was
> a Vet)   too late, they were all booked up and there
>   was nothing they could offer .... He said,
>   "Work in a Pet Shop, at least it's working
>   with animals". So did the YTS Day people."

In this respect it was interesting that Mr Rogers had indicated to me his

belief that girls harboured aspirations that were too low. He put this

down to their working class origins, yet faced with the two girls above

who were keen to break out of the mould, one in terms of gender stereotypes

and the other in terms of class barriers, he himself acted stereotypically

in underestimating their ability and did not take them seriously. There

were similar incidents with the boys (see pp. 221-222), and on one

occasion, an infuriated fellow teacher told me how Mr Rogers had failed

to redress the situation when a visiting speaker from a local factory had

turned to the girls present and said:

> "I'm talking to the boys now. There'll be a secretarial
> speaker coming later to talk to you girls."

Griffin (1985) also reports the incidence of limited and sexist

careers advice to girls and the Fawcett Society (1984) reports girls as

remembering very little about the advice they received, indicative of its

poor impact. They write:

> "Most girls claimed that the information they had been
> given was of very limited value, apart from the help
> in writing letters of application and completing
> applications forms."   (p.12)

(b) <u>The boys</u>

Such then were the factors surrounding the issue of girls' aspirations

and job preferences, but boys' selections were marked by the same features.

To begin with, boys were similarly governed by traditionally male spheres

of employment in their ideal job choices, and they chose predominantly

from the range of skilled working class occupations that they saw around
them through friends, older brothers and their fathers (see Figure 8(3)).
By far the most popular choices were skilled manual trades and these were
desired by 17% of the boys, with a further 9% preferring car mechanic/
garage work. This was entirely consistent with job opportunities on the
nearby industrial estate which incorporated a large car manufacturing
plant, confirming the findings of Raby and Walford (1981) that job choices
related to practicalities of the local labour market. The boys very
definitely valued skilled trades as opposed to unskilled assembly work.
Aspiring boys wanted apprenticeships because they valued having a trade
and saw it as a form of security against both poor wages and unemployment.
Only one boy listed unskilled work as his first choice.

The third most popular choice with the boys (6%) was the Armed Forces
or uniformed services. Corrigan (1979) also cites this as a favourite
with his Northern town teenage boys and refers to local high levels of
unemployment as being a major influencing factor. I would suggest that
but for the local availability of skilled and unskilled 'masculine' jobs,
such opportunities in the Forces would also have been far more popular
with these Southern town boys.

When considering alternatives to their main choice boys demonstrated
a highly flexible approach. 17% said they would consider 'anything' and
14% were prepared to take YTS. In this respect it is interesting that no
boys voluntarily chose YTS as their first destination. It was, therefore,
something they considered as an alternative if regular paid work was not
found. A further 10% were prepared to stay on in the 6th form or go to
college but 10% still stuck to their original choice of a skilled trade and
acknowledgement of future family responsibilities created a 'push' towards
finding such secure and well-paid work.

> Peter: "I would like at least one child definitely,
> (who wanted a   sometime. But I've got to sort meself out
> skilled trade)   first."

The prospect of parenthood therefore <u>crystallised</u> boys' desire to 'get a good job' but for girls, the caring and mothering role, so powerfully incorporated in their future expectations, served to '<u>blur</u>' aspirations.

Boys' preferences bore little relation to girls' preferences in most occupations. Boys were massively more interested in both skilled and unskilled manual work and the Forces whilst girls preferred the caring jobs (i.e. with children and animals), office work, and 'glamour' jobs in hairdressing, fashion and reception work. There was overlap in catering with equal numbers (3%) of boys and girls wanting this and also some overlap in shop work.

That this should be the case is not surprising. Like girls, the boys looked to their same-sex parent for inspiration. Some boys spoke proudly of their fathers' jobs as skilled craftsmen and wanted to follow in their footsteps.

5th form boy : (after a careers talk)	"My Dad was a mechanic and I grew up with motor-bikes. Now he's a stonemason, he's worked 5 years on one job. I want to be a mechanic but my brother's into stonemasonry."

Some wished to 'improve' upon the job status of their father but they did so by still remaining within the traditional scope for their gender. In total 17% of boys aspired to skilled trades and a further 6% aspired to other skilled work. King (1987) states that some working class parents do aspire for their children and that for boys this takes the form of encouraging them towards apprenticeships. Among my seven working class less-achieving males, three (Peter, Bedford and Eric) specifically wanted apprenticeships and were encouraged both at school and at home to take such a course.

Bedford: (West Indian less achiever)	"I want to be a qualified Electrician and Mr Rogers suggests City and Guilds so I'll stay on for that."

Such was the pull towards apprenticeships that Peter knew exactly what to do when an offer arose:

> Peter: "I started at the College of F.E. on a B.Tec.
> (white less- course but heard immediately of a job at Petts
> achiever) [local printers]. A full apprenticeship in
> printing so I jumped at it."

Boys were also subject to the same stereotypical set of values that

served to restrict girls' choices. Ten careers talks in the first term

of the 5th year had a masculine 'flavour' to them, with three on motor

trades, two on building trades and two on engineering; two others related

to the Armed Forces. Figure 8(4) sets out the full list for the term.

FIGURE 8(4). TITLES OF CAREER TALKS AT LEAFIELD, AUTUMN TERM, 1984

> Royal Air Force
>
> Car plant work
>
> Navy and Marines
>
> Building Trades (general)
>
> Engineering (general)
>
> Building Trades (electrical)
>
> Motor Trades (general)
>
> Engineering
>
> Work with Children
>
> Motor Trades (apprenticeships and YTS)
>
> High Technology + Computing
>
> Builders Merchant/Do-it-Yourself Store
>
> Department Store Work

The popularity of these talks was such that 36 boys and one girl

attended Motor Trades and this was the usual pattern when traditionally

male-orientated industries were being covered. However, as if this

weighting in favour of skilled trades was not sufficient, Mr Rogers went

further in banning three boys from attending the 'Working With Children'

session. Upon discovering their names on the booking sheet he announced:

> "Oh no, I'm not having that. If they show up I'll chuck 'em
> straight out."

His immediate thought was that they must be "skiving off lessons" to
put their names down for such a topic and indeed, he may well have been
right for he knew the boys concerned quite well. However, he also steered
another boy away from what is considered 'female' employment. This boy
responded to a work experience placement for an office typist but he was
turned down by Mr Rogers because, he said, the employer wanted a girl.

Mr Rogers was also one of the teachers in the Head's 'old righties'
category who felt too much was made of racism and sexism (see p. 90) and
he was not averse to sexist humour (see pp.91-93). This, plus his
reaction to both girls and boys who showed non-traditional employment
interests, led me to the conclusion that he, as well as most pupils,
harboured fixed gender ideas about occupations and women's worth.

RACE AND JOB CHOICES

The major finding regarding race and job choices was that no real
difference could be detected between black and white pupils in what they
wanted for the future. All fourteen non-white 5th formers (i.e. of Asian,
West Indian or Eastern origin) returned questionnaires and Figure 8(5)
therefore indicates the responses of the entire cohort of Leafield's black
5th formers for the year.

The results in Figure 8(5) were indistinguishable from selections
made by white pupils and differences in black pupils' choices were similar
to white pupils' in that the same gender divide operated to separate 'mens'
and 'womens' work. In other studies, (e.g. Warr, Banks and Ullah (1985)),
black pupils have been said to have lower commitment to the labour market
leading to suggestions that this contributes to higher rates of black
unemployment. Eggleston et al. (1986),however, found no evidence for this
in a large-scale survey of black and white school leavers. They suggest
that where black pupils do hold ·aspirations higher than whites these are

FIGURE 8 (5). FIRST AND SECOND CHOICE OCCUPATIONS OF LEAFIELD NON-WHITE

5TH FORMERS, BY GENDER, AS CITED ON 5TH FORM QUESTIONNAIRE

DESTINATION	GIRLS (Nos)		BOYS (Nos)	
	1ST CHOICE	2ND CHOICE	1ST CHOICE	2ND CHOICE
Anything	1	1	1	0
6th form/F.E.	1	1	0	1
H.E./University	1	0	0	0
YTS	0	1	0	1
Unskilled (garage)	0	0	0	1
Skilled (trade)	0	0	1	0
Skilled (catering)	0	1	0	1
Shop Work/Sales	1	0	0	0
Hairdressing/Beauty	1	0	0	0
Nurse	1	0	0	0
Engineering	0	0	1	0
Professional	0	0	2	0
Unstated	0	2	3	4
TOTAL NO. OF PUPILS	6	6	8	8

Source: Questionnaire, Leafield 5th formers (1985)

perfectly realistic in view of their levels of achievement. This was

also the case at Leafield. The numbers involved are very small, but out

of fourteen black pupils just two boys aspired to professions and two girls

to 6th form and university. In all four cases, their hopes were in line

with their ability. In relation to the boys, one Eastern-origin boy

wished to be a Dentist and an Asian-origin boy wanted to go into business.

In both cases their academic record and family connections meant that their

ambitions were feasible. Here, it should be noted, that neither of these

two boys was West Indian in origin and that it was West Indian <u>girls</u>, not

boys, who intended to enter the 6th form and university. Again, their

career plans were well-tuned to their academic success and were by no

means unreasonable. Fuller (1980) found that West Indian girls were more

likely to try to use education as a way of securing better paid and higher

status jobs than their male counterparts. Evidence at Leafield is small

but does not contradict her findings.

One thing that black girls did <u>not</u> do was to state any inclination

towards working with children, something that was common in white girls'

choices, but in all other respects their goals and attitudes could not be

distinguished from those of white pupils.

Black girls had very similar views about marriage:

Sheilah: (West Indian achiever)	"I haven't got a steady boyfriend at the moment and don't really want one. I would like to get married and have children in my late 20s. I would take a break to look after my kids but would prefer a husband who shared everything ..."
Vanda: (West Indian less achiever)	"Marriage? Much later on, in my 20s or 30s. Then two children and stay with them all the time 'til they're grown up."

They also received similar help and encouragement from their parents in

deciding about their futures. For example, Colette and Sheilah reported

strong support and advice about careers from their mothers (see pp.193, 202)

and Winston and Bedford had received advice from their mothers, both of

whom suggested the College of Further Education.

With reference to these two West Indian boys, it should be noted that

both had supportive mothers, and fathers, who although not living at home,

maintained contact with both boys and took an interest in them. Bedford,

in particular, was close to his mother and had this to say about her.

Bedford:	"I'm close to my Mum. I talk to her a lot ... she made me want to be a heart doctor, not stuck in a factory."

Despite this support, Bedford did not have high educational motivation or

achievement. Neither he, nor Winston had enjoyed school and Winston had

very definitely 'gone his own way', being absent from school and not

concentrating on his work. I feel it is doubtful that Winston would have

taken the initiative himself to continue his education and that only

parental 'nudging' and support succeeded in keeping him there. However,

the important point is that black pupils <u>did</u> enjoy parental support for

both educational and occupational goals.

In terms of the careers advice at school black pupils again fared

similarly to white, receiving the same limited and stereotypical talks

and advice as their white peers. Their uptake of these talks and their

views of their work experience were in line with those of all other pupils

and it is to a pupils' critique of careers advice that I now wish to turn

by way of a final comment on how pupils were assisted in formulating

choices for the future.

THE CAREERS SERVICE AT LEAFIELD

Careers Advice

Mr Rogers, the Careers Teacher, was allowed two hours per week on

his timetable for careers work and there was a financial supplement to

his basic salary in acknowledgement of his extra duties. However, the two

hour allocation was totally inadequate for the task in hand. Forty visiting

speakers per year had to be arranged involving a great many telephone calls;

good relations had to be forged with local employers and colleges ; there

was a host of administrative duties; up to date careers literature had to

be assembled and displayed involving liaison with the local authority's

Careers Service, and all 5th formers were interviewed to see what they

were interested in pursuing after age 16 years. There was also the need to

be available to pupils with individual enquiries.

Work Experience

In addition Mr Rogers was responsible for finding work experience placements for most members of the 5th form, amounting to some 200 - 250 placements. The Work Experience scheme operated to provide pupils with a good insight into at least one occupation before leaving school. The standard arrangement was for pupils to have a complete week in a place of work linked, wherever possible, to their field of interest. However, as the girl who wanted to be a joiner and the boy who wanted clerical experience discovered, work experience did not always match up to this ideal. Some of the more disruptive or non-achieving pupils were given longer term work experience placements and these could mean 1 or 2 days per week at work instead of attending school, and in some cases no school attendance at all.

At the other end of the achievement scales, some top 'O' level takers did not go on a work experience scheme because they were busy revising their subjects and had little time to spare. At Leafield, teachers accepted that preparation for exams was more important and work experience was either deferred until after the exams or deemed unnecessary for pupils intending to pursue 'A' levels in the 6th form. Occasionally, a pupil who was undecided about whether to stay on at school or not was given the opportunity to undertake a YTS in time to re-enter the 6th form if they chose to.

Criticisms of Careers Advice at Leafield

Many pupils felt satisfied with the extent of careers advice and other services at the school, and on the questionnaires over 75% stated that they found the advice "very helpful" or "good". This was a higher proportion than discovered by Brown (1987) whose study of comprehensive school pupils revealed just 50% being satisfied with what was on offer. However, at Leafield 8% felt the service was poor and many more than this offered suggestions for how things could be improved.

The improvements suggested bore a striking similarity to those voiced in other studies. For example, Keil and Newton (1980) whose research found 60% of pupils to be satisfied with their careers advice, nevertheless found that pupils (both male and female) wanted <u>more</u> visits, <u>more</u> work experience and more of <u>anything</u> connected to careers advice in general. Leafield pupils displayed the same tendency with girls demonstrating more interest in <u>personal</u>, one-to-one work experience or counselling than the boys. Figure 8(6) lists their suggestions as given on the questionnaire.

FIGURE 8(6). <u>PUPILS' SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING CAREERS PROVISION IN</u>

<u>SCHOOL, BY GENDER, AS CITED ON 5TH FORM QUESTIONNAIRE</u>

SUGGESTION	% GIRLS	% BOYS
More careers talks	26	24
More work experience	20	12
More individual career interviews	23	15

(Total number of Questionnaires = 193)

Source: Questionnaire, Leafield 5th formers, 1985.

From this it can be seen that at least one quarter of 5th formers wanted additional career guidance. Informants also voiced similar opinions to me.

Philip: "More useful would be more work experience, a week is no good."

Sheilah: "Different places to visit and interviewing practice would be helpful."

Tessa: "Careers advice on how to conduct yourself at interviews would be good. I didn't expect a <u>panel</u> interview." (Speaking about her recent interview at Marks and Spencer's.)

Pupils clearly wanted more <u>help</u> in making the transition into work and as in other spheres their requests were essentially practical. They wanted

the opportunity to learn about more types of employment and they wanted
to practice at different kinds of work. They also wanted assistance in
making introductions to employers (e.g. through learning how to write
letters and present themselves). In part, their resistance to lessons
cited earlier as boredom and disinterest, was due to the perceived lack
of relevance these subjects held for the real world. Here also, in
careers advice pupils were wanting to get <u>closer</u> to reality to help them
in their choices. They also criticised work experience schemes for being
too short and wanted the last year of school to be far more related to
trying out different types of work and finding a job.

<u>Pupil Critiques of Careers Advice and Work Experience</u>

Inevitably, some pupils felt thoroughly let down by the advice they
had been given at school. This then gave them a negative view of the whole
service.

Paul: (in 6th form on 'A' level course)	"I didn't think much of it. Two weeks ago I was told about the B.Tec./HND route to University. Wish I'd known because HND is a different, more relevant way in [to jobs]. I enjoyed Control Technology, projects ... more action type things.. .... Thought B.Tec. was an office skills course, didn't see its potential to go on."
Sheilah: (West Indian achiever)	"It wasn't really all that helpful. The leaflets catalogue was not really helpful. Work experience - not really <u>learning</u>, just do the work for a week. I knew of the interview system and did that. A man interviewed me and told me about staying on or going on YTS."
Peter: (white less achiever)	"Well, it's not really good enough. Just talks and a quick word with someone doing careers, they don't follow it up."

Leafield informants therefore appeared to be as disenchanted with their
careers advice as the Asian pupils studied by Brah (1984) who states:

> "The majority indicated that careers advice in school was by
> and large limited to one or two meetings during the fifth
> year with the careers teacher and an occasional careers
> convention."   (p.25)

Baqi (1987) in her study of YTS trainees also found that careers

advice was described as being "insignificant". It would not be true to say
that the majority of Leafield pupils felt this way, but a significant
minority (25%) did, and criticisms came from both achievers and less-
achievers, girls and boys, and blacks and whites.

Through the work experience route, pupils gained an insight into at
least one occupation whilst still at school. Pupils took stock of the
work they had sampled and considered whether or not it would suit them
upon leaving. They were highly perceptive in their comments.

> Peter: "I got put on a Butchery job. Didn't get a chance
> (who was put   to serve until 3 months gone. Got the dirty jobs
> on extended   cleaning out the fridge, packing and mincing pet
> work exper-   meat. Also the tea - boy!"
> ience)

He had also had another experience which disgusted him.

> Peter: "My work experience in Townsend's boatyard was
>   £1 per hour, below the minimum wage level."

Two girls had similar negative experiences which served to change
their minds over what type of work they wanted and when to leave school.
Tessa, for example opted for shop work after her placement.

> Tessa: "I didn't like my office work experience, it
> (less achieving changed my mind about it. Just a skivvy."
> white pupil)

Similarly, Sheilah, who was undecided on whether to enter the 6th form or
not, was provided with an early YTS placement to help her make her choice.
She opted for the 6th form after sampling unskilled office work.

> Sheilah: "I did a Solicitor's YTS for one month but didn't
> (achieving West like it. The job wasn't very interesting, doing
> Indian pupil)   general dogsbody work .... It's all right for
>   them just talking to their clients but it's the
>   people down below who do all the running around
>   for them."

Shilling (1988) argues that vocational experiences do not necessarily
facilitate the transition from school to work and do not always create
a favourable attitude towards work. He suggests that pupils can and do
'see through' the exploitation that is involved in wage labour. Certainly

Tessa and Sheilah decided against office work on such grounds and I

would suggest that experiences such as theirs could account for the fact

that 9% of girls ranked office work as their <u>second</u> choice not their

first (see Figure 8(3)).   It was not clear that Tessa's alternative of

shop work would provide her with anything better, but this is explored in

more detail in Chapter 9 in relation to her actual shop destination (see

p. 241).

Apart from officially organised Work Experience, a quarter of my

informants also had part-time jobs and these consisted primarily of shop

work, waiting, newspaper rounds and (for girls) babysitting. Finn (1984)

states that such work provides pupils with useful contacts for later entry

into full time employment and that at the same time:

> "employers themselves value this labour market experience,
> as demonstrating a youngster's 'initiative' and 'discipline'
> .... "   (p.41)

Leafield pupils certainly valued their little jobs, but more for the

spending money they provided than the experience they could then use to

'sell' themselves to employers or for the contacts they could develop.

Indeed, no part-time job of any Leafield informant led to subsequent full-

time employment for most jobs were essentially very part-time in nature

(e.g. split shift waiting at table).

> Peter: "I'm a waiter down at Harwood [residential centre].
> (less-achieving   Brilliant money, £1.76 an hour."
> pupil)

Both achievers and less-achievers took part-time jobs but achievers tackled

things less likely to interfere with school work (e.g. Saturday shop work)

and were more inclined to drop their jobs as exams drew near. For example:

> Sarah: "I used to do Saturdays in a newsagents but I
> (achieving pupil)   gave it up last term. Couldn't really do both."

Less-achievers took on greater amounts of work often with awkward split

hours before and after school (e.g. Newsrounds and catering/waiting in

nearby residential homes). Sometimes, the part-time job interfered with

school work but pupils still felt that the financial rewards made working

part-time worthwhile.

> Tessa: "My exam results were terrible .... also had a
> (less-achieving   job at night, used to do waitressing 6.30 pm -
> pupil)   8.30 pm and this took up all evening. Only
>   did homework at weekends."

Such jobs plus their Work Experience organised by the school became

a pool of useful experience upon which pupils could assess what they might

like to do in the future. Some liked and some disliked the things they had

tried, but either way the money was considered useful and the experience

valuable. With a new employment phase of their lives opening up in front

of them, full of unknown quantities and a bewildering array of industries

and types of work, this experience of the work place plus careers advice

(from both school and parents) provided crucial reference points from which

to view and evaluate available options.

A SMOOTH TRANSITION?

In many ways the transition from school to work was unproblematic

for Leafield pupils. They were in receipt of advice on jobs and careers

from both parents and the school which did not threaten the current order

of things and unemployment was not a desperate problem locally. Advice

was both class specific and gender specific but few pupils had complaints

on either score. As a result both boys and girls had a clear idea of the

type of work they would entertain. Their choices were divided along

traditional 'gender' lines of women's and men's work. They were also

extremely realistic and pragmatic in relation to employment vacancies in

the local area and in the case of girls, in relation to their whole future

lives which were seen as involving marriage and motherhood. In this respect

both genders showed signs of bearing long-term family plans in mind for

whilst girls spoke of delaying marriage in order to establish themselves

in work before a break, boys spoke of wanting 'good' skilled jobs to provide

them with long-term security and a decent wage in order to support a family.

Pupils were satisfied with the support they received from home in making this transition but were less satisfied with what was offered at school. They particularly wanted more direct work experience and <u>practical</u> careers advice aimed at how to secure a job although pupils used the experience they had had to good advantage, for it informed their ultimate decisions.

Overall, the actions of both the school and the pupils served to perpetuate class and gender divisions in society. The school served to steer pupils towards the needs of the labour market in such a way that it

"reproduces and legitimates a pre-existing pattern in
the process of training and stratifying the workforce."
Bowles and Gintis (1976) (p.265)

It also steered all pupils, irrespective of class origins, towards occupations traditionally associated with their own gender. Simultaneously, working class pupils in setting their horizons in line with, or slightly above that of their same sex parents, were instrumental in their own gender and working class entrapment (Willis, 1977). Middle class pupils similarly ensured <u>their</u> own transition into the realms of the middle class by choosing occupations similar to those of parents.

Racial origins had no apparent effect on ambitions and aspirations at Leafield. No distinction could be made between black girls and white girls choices, or between those of black boys and white boys. Black pupils also received similar careers advice to white pupils both in school and at home.

More girls than boys were interested in gaining white collar qualifications in the 6th form and I have argued that this was more connected to the acceptability of 'office work' for working class girls than to any deep desire for self-advancement. Where black girls were involved in this process, their choices were entirely reasonable in view of their proven academic ability.

Overall, of the three major variables gender, race and class, <u>gender</u> proved to be most powerful in steering attitudes towards work and job

aspirations. Thus, whilst Roberts et al. (1983) found gender to be a more important divide than race in the aspirations of their Birmingham school leavers and King (1987) found gender to <u>interlink</u> with class in forming pupils' orientations towards work and/or marriage, at Leafield, gender transcended both race and class factors to become an all-pervasive influence on the aspirations of pupils. Put simply, knowing the career or job aspirations of a pupil, was far more likely to reveal their <u>gender</u> than either their class or racial origins. Without exception, informants selected gender-sepcific occupations and girls incorporated a vision of subsequent marriage and motherhood as part of their career aspirations.

However, aspirations and expectations do not necessarily coincide with actual destinations. Chapter 9 of this study now focusses on this aspect of pupils' transition into the adult world to establish whose hopes were matched by reality and whose were not. In the process, gender, race and class factors will be examined to establish whether they operated to the same extent in actually securing work or whether they took on different weighting in the 'outside world'.

CHAPTER 9

EXPECTATIONS AND DESTINATIONS

INTRODUCTION

With a crucial phase in their lives beginning, this study now turns

to the actual early destinations of Leafield informants. In so doing, the

relevance of gender, race and class in the job-seeking, YTS or educational

endeavours of pupils will be traced to establish their impact on the process.

ACTUAL 5TH FORMERS' DESTINATIONS

The actual destinations of Leafield 5th formers in 1985 are recorded

in Careers Office data on destinations based on their own records and their

own questionnaire with school leavers (see Figure 9(1)). Although their

data do not offer any gender or ethnic breakdown they do indicate far

higher proportions of pupils in education, YTS or unemployment than ever

intended to enter those fields when compared with the first choice

preferences of my questionnaire informants for the same year. These

preferences, listed in detail in Figure 8(3) are condensed into column 4

of Figure 9(1) (p.235) for ease of comparison. Careers Office data refer

to the known destinations of 236 Leafield 5th formers and my questionnaire

to the responses of 193 pupils that same academic year. Although the two

sets of figures are not absolutely comparable, nevertheless, they are a

strong indicator of unfulfilled aspirations and of many pupils having to

accept second best, or even more flexible alternatives to their chosen

futures.

Brown (1987) found that 60% of his pupils were not following their

previously chosen routes eighteen months after leaving school and from the

evidence of informants, the local Careers Office and my questionnaire

respondents, Leafield pupils appeared to be following a very similar pattern

for over 50% aspired to employment but did not achieve their objective.

In addition, Figure 9(2) shows that of the one-third of Leafield 5th

formers who went onto YTS, 10% became unemployed by the end of the year

FIGURE 9(1). <u>DESTINATIONS OF LEAFIELD 5TH FORMERS (as at 31st October 1985)</u>

<u>COMPARED WITH PUPILS ORIGINALLY ASPIRING TO THOSE DESTINATIONS</u>

<u>FROM EARLIER QUESTIONNAIRE</u>

DESTINATION	Nos	%	% ASPIRING TO THAT DESTINATION BEFOREHAND
6th form (1 yr course)	40	15.00	NIL
6th form (2 yr course)	20	7.50	5.0
College of Further Education	4	1.50	NIL
Employment	55	20.50	72.0*
YTS	88	33.00	2.5
Registered unemployment	29	11.25	NIL
Unknown	30	11.25	-
TOTAL PUPILS	266	100%	79.5%

Sources: Bridgehurst Careers Service, Statistics for 1984/85 year (cols.1-3)

5th form questionnaire, Leafield School (1985) (col. 4)

* This figure <u>excludes</u> 12% who were prepared to consider "anything".

FIGURE 9(2). <u>DESTINATIONS OF 5TH FORMERS WHO ENTERED YTS ONE YEAR AFTER</u>

<u>COMMENCING TRAINING (as at 31st October 1986)</u>

DESTINATION	No.	%
Job with Host Employer	34	40.5
Job elsewhere	25	30.0
Further Education	1	1.0
Continuing YTS	13	15.5
Unemployed	8	9.5
Unknown	3	3.5
TOTAL PUPILS	84	100%

Source: Bridgehurst Careers Service, Statistics for 1985/86 year.

with a further 15% remaining in YTS for a second year. Allowing for these additional pupils whose work ambitions would not be fulfilled, it can be estimated that at least 55% of Leafield 5th formers did not achieve their ambitions in relation to jobs within 12 to 18 months of leaving school despite their highly realistic aspirations, and that this figure could be as high as 70% if the destinations of some of the 'unknowns' and pupils willing to take 'anything' were taken into account.

ATTITUDES TO WORK

One important consideration in this respect is pupils' own attitudes to work. Here, it must be emphasised that the pupils at Leafield were not work-shy. Many of the less-achievers were just bursting to leave school and get out to work and for the most part, both achievers and less-achievers who stayed on in the 6th form had a specific job or career in sight and were not continuing their education in order to avoid going out to work. Indeed the reverse was sometimes the case, a pupil would sometimes start in the 6th form or College of Further Education because no suitable job had been found, but leave immediately upon finding work (see p.247).

For the less-achievers in particular, leaving school and starting work represented entering the real world at last. It provided financial rewards and with these the promise of some degree of independence and increased respect from parents.

> Shirley: "I was pleased to get out to get paid. Treated
> (white less- a lot more like an adult by my parents,
> achiever) especially Dad."

For those who entered the 6th form, this also represented an important progression into the adult world. All such informants said they were now granted a lot more freedom and were no longer treated 'like children'.

> Sheilah: "We're treated differently now, not like kids ...
> (West Indian They treat you like equals ... and attendance
> achiever) not so rigid, just let them know you won't be in."

> Paul: "It's harder ... you do it to get what you want.
> (white You're treated more like adults, it's up to you
> achiever) if you get your work done."

There was <u>no</u> evidence at Leafield to suggest West Indian pupils were less committed to work than their white counterparts as suggested by Warr et al (1985). Indeed their aspirations and motivation towards employment could not be distinguished in any way from those of their same sex white peers, a feature noted by Drew and Jones (1988) in relation to Sheffield and Bradford black school leavers. They were, however, sometimes apprehensive about what the outcome of their job hunting might be.

> Eddie: "You can only try can't you. You know, do
> (West Indian   your best to find something."
> less-achiever)
>
> Shirley: "You won't catch me on the dole. I'd do
> (white less   anything rather than be signing on."
> achiever)

Less-achieving pupils set themselves highly realistic ideals in terms of their occupational choices and were even more pragmatic in what they were prepared to do if necessary. Figures 8(2) and 8(3) in the preceding chapter revealed job preferences and alternative choices for in-depth informants and 5th years respectively. The range of jobs selected as 'preferred' demonstrated a willingness to accept limited scope in employment opportunities. As Raby (1979) states:

> "The jobs to which they aspired strongly reflected the jobs
> available in the local area in which the youngsters lived."
> (p.256)

Beyond this, pupils were prepared to take alternative work, YTS, or consider 'anything' rather than be unemployed or forced back into school. This pattern was borne out in the actual early destinations of informants who, if anything, displayed greater pragmatism in the event than the pre-Easter questionnaire suggested, indicating a wider acceptance of YTS in particular, as an alternative if first choices did not materialise.
In addition, there was no evidence of pupils 'pricing themselves out of the market'in seeking work. Pupils were more concerned to get <u>any</u> job than worry about the rate of pay, a finding similar to that of Main (1987).

Among the less-achievers <u>no-one</u> stayed on at school beyond the minimum school leaving age. They were all very keen to start work or move on to further education away from the school environment and two did so before the school term had officially ended.

Achieving pupils were equally realistic in their choices, bearing in mind their 'O' level successes. Indeed, if anything there was a tendency to underaspire vis-a-vis achievement(as discussed on p.201) regarding career choices and developed later in this chapter concerning actual destinations (see p.245).

FIRST DESTINATIONS OF INFORMANTS

The <u>first</u> destinations of my fourteen <u>less-achieving</u> informants are shown in Figure 9(3):

FIGURE 9 (3). LESS-ACHIEVERS - FIRST DESTINATIONS UPON LEAVING 5TH FORM BY GENDER AND ETHNIC ORIGIN

First Destination	White Boy	W.I. Boy	White Girl	W.I. Girl	TOTAL
6th form or Coll. of F.E.	1	2	1	0	4
YTS	2	1	0	3	6
Temp. or P/t Empt.	0	0	1	0	1
Perm. F/T Empt.	0	1	1	1	3
Unemployment	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	3	4	3	4	14

Source: Leafield informants (1985)

Figure 9(4) overleaf then shows the first destinations of my six <u>achieving</u> informants indicating that without exception, all six continued with their education.

FIGURE 9 (4). ACHIEVERS - FIRST DESTINATIONS UPON LEAVING 5TH FORM

BY GENDER AND ETHNIC ORIGIN

First Destination	White Boy	W.I. Boy	White Girl	W.I. Girl	TOTAL
6th form or Coll. of F.E.	1	0	3	2	6
YTS	0	0	0	0	0
Temp. or P/T Empt.	0	0	0	0	0
Perm. F/T Empt.	0	0	0	0	0
Unemployment	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	0	3	2	6

Source: Leafield informants, 1985

PERMANENT WORK

Figure 9(3) shows that only three out of 14 less-achieving school leavers were able to find a permanent job as their first destination after school. Furthermore these three had introductions to their jobs from family or friends. Griffin (1985), Day (1987) and Brown (1987) all report the belief among pupils that 'who you know, not what you know' is more important in securing work. Jenkins (1982) and Finn (1984) go beyond this by demonstrating that family and other informal contacts were of prime importance in finding work, especially for Easter leavers (Finn, 1984).

At Leafield, informants have already been demonstrated as taking heed of parental advice in formulating job aspirations and making choices, but here it is apparent that parents or friends were instrumental in every case of a pupil actually obtaining permanent work. An inference to be made from this is that pupils found it difficult to obtain permanent jobs

<u>without</u> such help. Certainly informants on Youth Training Schemes had been to many interviews without success (see p.258).

> Shirley: "I started my job in early March ... Another
> (white less- Leafield girl, Julie, got a job there and I
> achiever) went there, cycled 15 miles and saw the
> Production Manager. Got an application form
> and filled it in. Got the job and started
> the following Monday."

Shirley 'ditched' her opportunity to revise for 3 CSEs in order to take this job although she returned on the due dates to sit two of them, passing with low grades. For Shirley there was no question of lingering at school in the face of such an opportunity, one which she actively pursued under her own initiative. This was in line with advice from her parents who favoured securing <u>any</u> job rather than being too selective.

> Shirley: "Their advice used to be to get a job and keep
> looking for something better. Helping me to
> sort it all out... That backing made me feel
> good."

Brown (1987) found some non-achieving pupils to be in favour of leaving at Easter in order to 'beat the rush' for jobs that inevitably followed the summer term exodus. Shirley too, it would seem, protected her own interests by leaving school early to accept a job.

Vanda's job hunting also involved a friend's recommendation which led to success.

> Vanda: "I applied for two jobs then a friend said there
> (West Indian was a job in Hatfield's [local greengrocers].
> less-achiever) I went in and three days later I got it.

Similarly, Eric had an introduction to a Juke Box company. In this case, his mother had worked for them in the past and she still had contacts there having previously been secretary to the Manager. She phoned him and made her son known to him.

> Eric: "I knew the Manager through my Mum and my aunt.
> (West Indian It led to an interview and I was OK."
> less-achiever)

Eric was particularly pleased because the job involved training in electrical

PAGE MISSING IN

ORIGINAL

Kirby and Roberts (1984) found that part-time work with prospects was seen as preferable to either staying on at school or accepting YTS. Tessa felt the same, she never considered the former and did not like the idea of the latter.

In this context, Tessa was one of the 10% of girls who had earlier specified their ideal job to be 'working with children' and that her alternative, acceptable choice was 'office work'. She had previously followed up both of these choices before settling on the idea of shop work. She had failed to be selected onto a local Nursery Nurses course at the College of Further Education and had disliked her office work experience placement, declaring she was "just a skivvy" (see pp. 213 & 229). In the light of this experience, Tessa felt that part-time shop work with prospects, where she might be rewarded for her willingness to be flexible and stand in for absent staff, was infinitely preferable to the monotonous routine of office work. She was prepared to stick with something that enabled her to demonstrate her own worth in the hope that this would lead to advancement onto the full-time permanent payroll. It was a well thought out strategy informed by the success of a neighbour whom she hoped she could emulate, and in part, both her parents and the experience of a male peer were instrumental in the job choice she made.

Brown (1987), found that only 18% of his school leavers obtained permanent jobs and that a further 72% went either into the 6th form or YTS. Whilst Leafield numbers are small, it can be seen that just 22% (3 out of 14) obtained full-time employment. The jobs found were in line with stated job choices cited before leaving in all cases except Shirley's. She, however, did not complete her questionnaire until after starting her job in March and indicated that she was prepared to "stick to that" rather than look elsewhere (see p. 209).

These jobs were also found either as a result of a direct parental contact, information from a friend or family 'pushing' after interview.

Dex (1982) and Jenkins (1982) have indicated the importance of parental contacts of this kind but have emphasised that white pupils benefitted more from such contacts than blacks. At Leafield, however, Shirley and Tessa were white whilst Vanda and Eric were black, thus the informal network appeared to work equally well for all four pupils irrespective of race.

Nevertheless, it has to be said that eleven less-achievers did not enter paid work. Of these only two had intended to continue their education at the College of Further Education and the remainder had specified jobs, not education or YTS, as their preference. This means that out of a small group of 14 less-achieving school leavers in a southern town with below national average unemployment there were nine who could not meet their objective of getting a job. This despite their modest and realistic appraisal of jobs and what they would like to do. The routes of these pupils were subsequently through further education or YTS as a means of training in readiness for later full employment and the pathways taken by these pupils are traced in the following two sections.

STAYING ON OR GOING TO COLLEGE

One option that was open to all informants was either staying on in the 6th form or going to the College of Further Education. It has already been stated that no parents were pushing their children out into the job market and none would have raised objections to their child continuing with any form of education. Most would have preferred it if their son or daughter had chosen to stay on at school (see p. 192).

Pupils were also encouraged by their teachers to stay on into the 6th form if they so wished. Pupils knew that various vocational courses were open to them and that 6th form was not just a place for the 'posh' and the 'brainy ones'. A combination of a course plus substantial work experience was also possible, and there was always the option to enter

the 6th form in order to re-sit failed exams or take 'O' levels where

CSE grades had proved promising. In addition, virtually every pupil

acknowledged that "you're treated more like an adult" in 6th form which

was something very dear to their hearts and a source of grievance in the

lower part of the school. Yet this knowledge was not sufficient to lead

less-achievers into 6th form studies.

> Eric: "I could have got a lot more out of school, didn't
> (West Indian) try hard enough and I've got a slight regret
> less- already. But for my job I would have regretted
> achiever) it and wanted to stay on .... wouldn't feel like
> a school kid in 6th form."

> Peter: "6th form is like a totally different world ....
> (White less- so much more relaxed, smaller. They've got more
> achiever) time for you."

Despite this, neither Eric nor Peter considered staying on at school.

Eric got a job with a local company

> "wiring up Juke Boxes ..... apprenticeship included."

Peter started a B.Tec. course at the College of Further Education because he

> "wanted to get out of school badly."

One reason for this was that pupils still saw school as largely

irrelevant to the outside world. It was better to leave and try one's

hand in the job market or obtain vocational training than stay on, wasting

time at school. In Natalie's view it was necessary to leave school in

order to start learning about the outside world, and it was the beginning

of 'real' adult life.

> Natalie: "I want to get out into the real world. Do some
> growing up before going to college .... I want
> time to go around town, I've got an ambition to
> visit the local Museum [of science]. I've never
> been to one."

I would argue that an additional reason for less-achievers not staying

at school was that in 5th form they had been involved in CSEs not 'O' levels.

Failed 'O'-levels were worth re-sitting for they were an entrée into

'A'-levels and a useful 'selling point' in the job market. There was,

therefore, <u>plenty</u> of relevance in 6th form re-takes for passing meant the freedom to continue with career plans. CSEs did not have this same buying power vis-a-vis further education and pupils were, in any case, sceptical about their utility in securing work (see p.175). They saw no real point in staying on to re-sit CSEs, it being better to try one's hand at employment which was, after all, the ultimate goal.

(a) <u>Achievers</u>

Achieving pupils then, had no conflict of interests in deciding to enter the 6th form, and indeed, from Figure 9(4), it can be seen that all six achievers did so. An average of 50 pupils entered the first year of the 6th form each year, the usual uptake being 20% of the 5th form. Two thirds of these took one year courses primarily of a vocational nature such as B.Tec. National, RSA or Pitman's examinations, and City and Guilds. A few re-took failed 'O' levels or CSEs. Among these was Colette, who was the only informant who needed to re-sit failed and low-grade 'O' levels. She did so rather than give up on her plan to do Business Studies at university level.

For the remaining five achievers 6th form was a part of a natural progression into their chosen careers. Pauline and Paul, the two middle class achievers, began the A-level programmes intended to lead them towards Occupational Therapy and Agricultural Engineering respectively. Lynn, a working class achiever, was also taking 'A' levels in preparation for training as a teacher. The remaining two working class achievers, Sarah and Sheilah, chose less academic routes with the intention of moving out into the world of work after one year in the 6th form. Both girls began courses directly in line with their aspirations stated in 5th form. Sarah began an RSA Secretarial course and armed with this qualification her intention was to work in a Travel Agency. Sheilah began a B.Tec. course in Business Studies and still wanted to leave school after a year and work

in an office according to her earlier plan. She hoped that some computer or accountancy training would be incorporated in that job and still preferred this idea to staying on longer at school or college. In this respect, it should be borne in mind that both Sheilah and Sarah had received limiting 'sensible' advice on careers at home from their mothers and sisters (see pp. 193 & 201). Both girls had been encouraged not to aim too high and to obtain a qualification that would equip them for easier access into the job market. Both girls stuck to this course of action despite good 'O' level achievements. Sarah passed 6 'O' levels (mostly Cs and Ds) plus 4 grade I CSEs, and Sheilah passed 4 'O' levels (also mostly Cs and Ds) plus one grade I CSE. However, neither girl wavered from her original choice to use 6th form as a quick way towards a practical, 'saleable' skill in the labour market.

(b) Less-achievers

According to Figure 9(1), four less-achieving informants also entered either 6th form or went into further education via college. These four were Peter and Natalie (two white pupils), plus Bedford and Winston (two West Indian boys). This was true as far as initial destinations were concerned, but for some their time in further education was very limited indeed and it would be untrue to depict these pupils as becoming seriously engaged in studies beyond the minimum school leaving age.

Bedford for example, cited 6th form as his preferred destination after 5th form. This decision was taken in the light of poor CSE passes and the fact that he resisted YTS as "cheap labour". By the summer of 1985, he had obtained 3 CSEs with low grades and had been told that he did not work hard enough by his teachers.

Bedford: "Got told off for that. Mum expected more."

However, he had been a bit unlucky. He lost a lot of time in his final 5th form year through hurting his arm (which was in plaster for a number

of weeks) and this disrupted his work experience with a firm of electrical contractors, and also meant he had difficulty in writing for the best part of one whole term.

Bedford wanted to be a qualified electrician and agreed to the careers teacher's suggestion of staying on to sit City and Guilds to help him into the trade for he saw this as being preferable to YTS. However, the call of paid work was too great and within a few weeks of term starting he left to accept a job on a building site. Some months later he had had a succession of such manual jobs and was to be seen digging a hole in the road in town.

> Bedford: "Oh yeah, that's right, I didn't stay long. Had
> (chest deep in   lots of different jobs since then, like this one."
> a hole he was
> digging)

Bedford was the only one of these four to enter the 6th form. The others preferred to move to the College of Further Education.

In Peter's case college was an <u>alternative</u> to school which he hated, YTS which he was ambivalent about and unemployment which he found unacceptable. Like Bedford he began a B.Tec. course because he valued having a skill and had left school with just 2 CSE passes. Peter had shifted from his earlier questionnaire decision to be a Fireman and now wanted to have a trade. As with Bedford, he was not prepared to consider YTS but B.Tec. studies were an alternative route towards relevant skill training. He too left his course as soon as a job materialised. Peter was delighted with what he had found. He spoke with great pride and enthusiasm about his new trainee's position with a firm of printers. It represented both a wage <u>and</u> training in something he perceived as worthwhile. For him there was no question of staying on at College in the face of a job of this calibre. He had been ready and willing to join the world of work for at least the last year of schooling and had undertaken both work experience and part-time jobs. He was well satisfied with the position he had secured.

> Peter: "I like it a lot. There's a three month trial
> period then a 3-year apprenticeship. Binding,
> printing, litho, typesetting, art work ....
> really good after lots of part-time work. £54
> a week take home pay!"

Winston was the third boy to enter a College of Further Education
having passed 2 low-grade CSEs. Winston was organised by his mother into
moving to another part of the country to live with his father and into
attending the College serving that area. He too started a B.Tec.
course. It is not known whether he stayed the course as contact with him
was lost at this point, but certainly he was there, and enjoying it,
according to his mother as the first term drew to a close.

_ The only other person to undertake a course at the local college
was Natalie, and she represented the only one of the four less-achieving
informants to be there through her own efforts and dogged career motivation
in the face of obstructions.

Natalie held a dream of becoming a Vet, and wanted to work with animals
in some professional way. She had felt insulted when the careers teacher
at Leafield had seriously suggested working in a pet shop on the
grounds that "at least it's working with animals" (see p.218).

As with Paul and Pauline, the achieving pupils who had a specific
career in sight, Natalie also had been strongly influenced by her family,
albeit in a different way. She had grown up on a farm and had gained a
passion for animals.

> Natalie: "One teacher once said I was brainy enough to be
> a Vet and told my parents but they've never shown
> any interest. My father grew up on a farm and
> took it for granted."

Natalie then had not had encouragement from home but had developed an
interest in her father's husbandry work from talking to him and remembering
things from her early childhood. She also had a fond recollection of going
around with her grandfather who had run a farm and with whom she had been
raised as a youngster. Such was her desire to work with animals that she

could say this about the future:

> Natalie: "I don't think I'd ever get married, my life
> would be complete if I got a Zoo job."

However, her ambitions had to be moderated by her level of achievement
for she knew that her grades were not good enough to continue with 'A' levels
She had been offered just one 'O' level in Chemistry but refused this

"because it meant staying on after Easter."
In the event she took 7 CSEs including 3 science subjects and passed 5 of
them, with mostly '4' grades.

Despite her 'poor' advice from the Careers Teacher, she had been
placed on one week's work experience with a local animal rescue sanctuary
which she loved. Then, a fortuitous event enabled her to pursue what she
wanted. She attended the local YTS Open Day held at the local College
where yet another person suggested Pet Shop work to her, but Natalie
explained what else had happened to her that day.

> Natalie: "I found out that same day by accident about their
> Animal Technology training course. I was talking
> to this man and I just happened to have asked the
> Head of Department and he showed me round and
> everything. Saw the animals and that. He was very
> encouraging, the most ever."

Albeit that 'luck' caused her to speak to precisely the right person
on the YTS Open Day, to her credit, Natalie had attended that day with the
intention of pursuing her interests if possible. Later, she was accepted
for Animal Technology which was a full-time 3 year course at the College.
Later, two months after starting the course she had this to say:

> Natalie: "It's quite difficult, Biology is 'O' level-like
> and the technical subjects .... I'm working better
> at the F.E. than at school, got 80% recently in a
> Physics test on 'Energy'."

Natalie was delighted with her success in getting on this course which
she had achieved in the face of very 'negative' advice from careers
advisers and no particular interest in her ambition from home. The course
work was harder than she imagined but she showed every sign of wanting to

stick the course. Indeed, in view of her job aspirations she had every reason to do so.

(c) The utility of continuing education

Overall, Natalie was the only one of four less-achievers to be in further education of her own volition. Winston was somewhat 'press ganged' into college by his mother and the other two boys who had primarily wanted work, abandoned their studies as soon as a job arose. There was every sign that continuing education was, therefore, used primarily as a stop-gap by less-achievers who wished to avoid both YTS and unemployment. Dex (1982) arrived at similar conclusions in her longitudinal study of black and white school leavers for the Department of Employment.

For achievers, however, the picture was quite different. The studies and examinations that could be undertaken in 6th form represented a logical progression towards career objectives whether these involved 'A' level study leading to higher education, or a one-year vocational course in preparation for skilled work. Again Dex (1982) has shown that girls have a greater tendency towards staying on at school than their male counterparts and this has been linked to girls' greater desire to obtain qualifications leading towards better paid, clean, white collar employment. Both Dex (1982) and Eggleston et al. (1986) found that black girls in particular used 6th form to retake exams, whilst Fuller (1980) and Dex (1982) argue that black girls use education to further their ambitions far more than black boys who tend to reject school more.

At Leafield there were some indications that girls in general were more likely to utilise 6th form studies than boys but not necessarily for highly academic routes. Nine girls and no boys used the 6th form to re-take CSEs in 1984 but boys and girls were roughly equally represented in 6th form as a whole and took 'A' levels in almost equal numbers (12 girls and 14 boys) in 1985. Among my informants, there was a tendency for girls to

use the 6th form in persuance of white collar or professional employment. Here, both white and West Indian girls were involved in such ambitions such that there was nothing to choose between them. Two white and one West Indian girl were aiming for professional careers or university and one white plus one West Indian girl wanted qualified office work after a one-year 6th form course. The white girls represented 3 out of 10 white informants and the black girls 2 out of 10, thus both white and black girls used the 6th form for these ends in similar proportions. White and black male informants leant more towards the labour market as evidenced by the two boys (one white and one black) who deserted their studies in favour of paid work. Overall, just five girls (3 white, 2 black) and one boy (white) stayed in the 6th form, on their intended courses for the whole of the academic year and their studies were for particular white collar or academic qualifications. No West Indian boys opted for such a course of action, thus as both Riley (1985b) and Eggleston et al. (1986) state, boys more than girls opted to leave school and try either work or vocational training, and this seemed particularly true for West Indian boys at Leafield.

THE UPTAKE OF YTS

The idea of going onto the Youth Training Scheme had a mixed reception at Leafield. The Careers Teacher, Mr Rogers, was very much in favour of it and had a reputation among pupils for singing its virtues.

> Natalie: "Mr Rogers does plug YTS ... but not necessarily
> (white pupil)   at a high level."

Natalie was referring to her own careers interview when Mr Rogers had suggested she work in a pet shop in view of her interest in animals. She was disgusted because her aim was to work with animals in some qualified way.

Mr Rogers himself made no secret of favouring YTS for school leavers. As I heard him explaining to one pupil who was not keen on applying for a placement:

> Careers: "What have you got to lose? If you get a job
> Teacher   you can leave and if not, well, you're getting
>   trained."

(a) Negative Attitudes Towards YTS

The feeling that you got the "bum jobs" on YTS, or were "used" led job-seeking pupils to prefer almost any kind of permanent work to a "scheme". This general feeling can be summed up from the questionnaire data. No boys and only three girls from a total of 193 pupils cited YTS as their preferred choice upon leaving school. However, the pragmatism mentioned earlier regarding job choices was again displayed over YTS. An average of 12% of questionnaire pupils (10% of girls and 14% of boys) were prepared to go on a scheme if nothing better was available.

Mr Rogers suspected that family influences were largely responsible for pupils' negative reactions to YTS. He felt that in listening to the youngsters' objections

> "you can hear the parents talking, that's very clear."

Evidence from informants would appear to substantiate his opinion for pupils spoke of both family and friends in citing their reasons for rejecting YTS.

> Bedford: "I dislike YTS - cheap labour. All my family
> (West Indian   thinks so, but others at school don't agree
> less achiever) and think I'm a swot for not going on it."

> Shirley: "The girl next door did YTS in a hairdressers.
> (white less   All year they said how good she was .... saying
> achiever)   she'd be kept on. In the end, he didn't, said
>   he couldn't afford it."

In Shirley's case, she secured a permanent job before the official school leaving date so never needed to reconsider its utility, but pupils also formed independent opinions of the YTS based on their personal experiences.

> Sheilah: "I did a solicitor's YTS ... doing general
> (West Indian   dogsbody work."
> achiever)

In Sheilah's case her early YTS experience was sufficient to make her change her mind and enter 6th form to gain some extra qualifications in

the hope that then she would be able to secure a full-time job (see p.229).

Kirby and Roberts (1984) also found that YTS and school work experience was viewed as 'cheap labour'. Brown's (1987) informants felt the same way but acknowledged that YTS could provide useful training.

At Leafield, some informants were also ambivalent towards YTS. They resented the pay, and comments about "cheap labour" were frequent, but on the other hand most pupils recognised that it was better than doing nothing. Doubters were influenced by what their parents said, just as the anti-YTS pupils had been and their ultimate decision could go either way according to what was said at home.

Peter, who was prepared to consider YTS and took home lots of leaflets, was discouraged by his mother. He lived alone with her, and money was a bit tight. She steered his thinking in a way that Griffin (1985) reports happening to her female respondents.

> Peter: "I originally wanted YTS as a mechanic but the
> Careers Office said don't go in for the main
> things that everyone else does. I liked computer
> studies but you got far behind if you didn't
> have one at home. Got booted out of that event-
> ually for messing about and put on a Butchery
> job work experience .... got lots of leaflets
> from the career talks and Mum said YTS means
> going out to get a flat."

Peter took a further education route towards City and Guilds training, which he dropped immediately upon securing an apprenticeship in printing (see p.245). However, it is worth noting that his interest in YTS was only in the 'mechanic' area, an area in which, as Mr Rogers explained, the old-style apprenticeships had now been replaced by linked YTS schemes. Peter's interest in YTS was, therefore, instrumental in that it might provide him with training for a skilled, manual trade, a popular choice with many boys. This he subsequently found for himself in printing.

This instrumental approach towards training and employment displayed by Peter and others who had found jobs with 'prospects' for themselves (e.g. Tessa), was also evident in the thinking of those who did accept

YTS placements. In all cases, YTS was used because it was viewed as a direct entrée into permanent employment with the same employer or as useful experience in readiness for snapping up a permanent job as soon as one arose. However, in practice, the experience was frequently more disjointed than anticipated.

(b) <u>YTS Placements and Subsequent Employment Histories</u>

From Figure 9(3) it might be thought that YTS was a popular option for school leavers for six out 14 less-achieving informants went straight onto a scheme upon leaving school. However, it is insufficient to look at these figures without considering (a) the pupils' own attitudes to YTS and <u>why</u>

they accepted their placements, and

(b) their early work histories upon joining

their schemes.

In view of this the intentions and experiences of YTS trainees appear below. Philip and Duncan were two white boys who hoped that something substantial would come of their YTS placements, indeed they had received some promises.

Philip left school at Easter with no CSEs and had been on two days work experience per week with a firm of coach builders since Christmas to help combat his poor attendance and his disaffection with school. This became his full-time YTS placement after Easter when he became 16 years old and he hoped it would lead to a permanent job:

> Philip: "because I've been told so by the boss."
> (white less
> achiever)

Philip did not hold out a lot of hope about finding a job by himself and this had led him into an acceptance of a YTS placement, saying that jobs "weren't very good". When asked what he meant by this he said that there were not enough jobs to go round and those that were available were not always suitable. Philip was not an easy person to talk to. His ability to express himself was limited and his comments were

frequently monosyllabic and non-explanatory. Pressed on the question of

why jobs were no good he offered:

    Philip: "Perhaps because jobs and people don't
          match up."

Philip was concerned that unskilled jobs were in short supply and that he

did not have the qualifications to apply for the skilled jobs that <u>were</u>

available. He wanted to work his way into painting and decorating like

his father, and to eventually be self-employed in the absence of being

successful in coachbuilding.

    Philip's hopes that his YTS placement might lead to a permanent job

did not come to fruition. Indeed, he did not give them time to do so.

At a follow up interview in November 1985, he had left his YTS to take a

job as a delivery driver's mate with a soft drinks company. He could not

give his reasons for this choice other than to say his new job was "better".

He had made the change four months earlier in favour of this job which was

full-time but casual, not permanent. Indeed, the company was closing its

local depot in three months time.

    Duncan similarly used YTS because it held a promise of something

better. He started a workshop scheme after Easter (as he was taking no

CSEs), on the promise of a bricklaying placement later on if one arose,

the latter being his preferred type of work. However, Duncan also felt

the lure of a 'proper job'. He left the workshop to take a painting and

decorating job although he soon became disillusioned with it.

    Duncan: "I left after a month because the pay was so
   (white less- bad. £36 for a 45 hour week!"
   achiever)

After a month's unemployment he was "bored" and the Careers Office found

him a second YTS placement doing carpentry in a community workshop.

    Duncan: "There's a good atmosphere there, it's a good
          laugh ... but I'll probably start looking for
          a permanent job after Christmas."

    These two YTS takers were white, but the remaining four were of West

Indian origin. There was a proportionately higher uptake of YTS among

black informants than white and Baqi (1987) suggests that black pupils

in particular use YTS rather than be unemployed. At Leafield there was

evidence to suggest that less-achieving black girls had greater difficulty

in securing paid work straight from school than either their black male,

or white male and female counterparts. Thus other pupils <u>avoided</u> having

to consider YTS as an option because job seeking proved fruitful. Black

girls by this token, were more likely to be <u>forced</u> to accept YTS or nothing.

Eddie, who failed 2 CSEs and passed one was placed in a community

printing workshop. Regarding his job preferences, he had stated on his

questionnaire that he would take "anything".

> Eddie: "It may go on for 2 years including printing
> (West Indian   work."
> less-acheiver)

His ambition was to "go up in printing" and his expectations were modest.

> Eddie: "I want a decent job, normal hours. I would
>   expect prejudice because I've heard of it
>   from family and friends."

Eddie was another difficult boy to talk to. He approached school and life

with general disinterest, as well as our conversations. Earlier, Eddie

had had this to say about school:

> Eddie: "School was rubbish. I don't know why, it
>   just was...." (and) "school's alright for
>   reading and writing, nothing else."

Eddie and his brother lived with their father.

> Eddie: "Mum's not around - we don't speak of her."

He thought his father's job was as an Electrician with an agency but he

was not sure if he was qualified. His father had wanted Eddie to stay on

at school or go to college but Eddie was not interested. He accepted YTS

> Eddie: "because there's nothing else."

The other three West Indian YTS-takers were girls. Of these, Delia

missed all 3 of her CSE exams through being ill, although teachers suspected

her of simple absenteeism.

> Delia: "I left at 15 because I was ill and they sent a
> (West Indian   letter about I couldn't do my exams ... I had
> less-achiever)   a chest infection. They knew because of notes."

Delia wanted to be a hairdresser and a suitable YTS placement was

found for her.

> Delia: "I did get YTS in a hairdressers but had to
>   stop because my blood was low. The doctor
>   said it was too much standing."

Despite these suggestions that perhaps hairdressing was not an appropriate

occupation for her, Delia still wanted to train as a hairdresser. Of

all the informants she was the most unrealistic in her outlook in view

of her health and had been unemployed for some months at the time of the

follow up interview.

> Delia: "The things I wanted they said I couldn't do,
>   like hairdressing and work in a shop because
>   of my health record. I wanted to be a nurse but
>   they said it was too hard."

As a result, Delia was sat around at home most days of the week

with her mother who was on social security benefit. She was in danger of

forming a similar occupational pattern to her mother who had had various

part-time jobs over the years.

> Delia: "My mother was a cleaner for Habervilles [a private
>   hospital] but now she's unemployed cos of high
>   blood pressure. Doctor said stop work, even a
>   cleaning job."

Her vision of the future was more of an escape route than a progressive

plan of action.

> Delia: "Money for a start. I don't want to get married,
>   not yet anyway. Possibly emigrate to another
>   country, to my Mum or Dad's country, Jamaica or
>   Barbados. Saw Barbados at 14. More family over
>   there, everybody's friendly with everyone. It's
>   OK around here, don't get any racial remarks or
>   anything, but her next door is a bit moany."

Sonia, who was also unemployed at the time of the November follow up,

had similar hankerings to 'return' to the West Indies. She lived in care

because her mother was dead, her father was in custody and she had not got on well with an aunt whom she had previously lived with. She had passed 5 out of 7 CSEs and started off on a YTS placement with a large chain of newsagents having specified a preference for shop work. Here she had hit racial prejudice.

> Sonia: "A part-time woman used to talk about blacks
> (West Indian   causing trouble ... and she was saying I talked
> less-achiever)   a lot to my friends when I was working."

Sonia reported this to the Careers Office and she was offered a move to another branch. In this it is interesting to note that the Careers Office did not challenge the employer on the event that took place, and their 'solution' was to move Sonia elsewhere. Lee and Wrench   (1987) have argued that YTS perpetuates existing racist bias in the labour market and that managing agents are powerless to stop employers' racism. Austen (1987) takes a similar view. In Sonia's case, the Careers Office did not confront overt prejudice on the part of employees, choosing to remove Sonia rather than tackle the racism she encountered. At this point Sonia declined the transfer preferring instead to seek permanent work. At the time of the follow up she had had three recent interviews with two more coming up shortly, one in a frozen food store and one in a hairdressers.

Sonia was a quick tempered girl and this had got her into trouble both in and outside school. Swearing at teachers in school had given her a bad reputation and she had been taken to court for fighting with a girl who called her "A dumb nigger" at a leisure centre. She was given a conditional discharge. Her life did not go smoothly.

Sonia's ambition was to get herself settled into a well-paid job and then do some travelling.

> Sonia: "I don't want no kids. If I had a hairdressing
>   job I'd stay with it. Get a flat and do it up
>   real posh. All before I'm 18. I want to do it
>   before I'm 18 cos I get chucked out of here then.
>   [Her warden-assisted bed-sit in town.] I was
>   born in America. My Dad was from Trinidad and

> my Mum was from St Vincent. I was 10 years old
> when I came from there. I'm trying to save to
> go back to the West Indies for a holiday."

She was the only female informant to be very anti-children, although two

achieving girls were ambivalent on this issue. Her ambition to get a

regular job and have a smart flat was all the more poignant because she

had not had a home to really call her own for some years.

The final pupil to be involved with YTS was Diane and little is known

of her progress because contact with her was lost after 5th form. During

her last few months in the 5th form, Diane had gained a reputation with

her teacher as "a silly girl" despite being "quite able"; she was often

absent and anti-school in her attitude. Diane wanted to be a nurse and she

had been down for 8 CSEs but only turned up to take 6 of these and was

unclassified in 3 of them. The remaining 3 she passed with '4' and '5'

grades. There was no real scope for Diane to pursue her nursing interests

with such grades and she drifted away from school and was always "busy" or

"going off to an interview" when I called to see her. The Careers Office

had tried to place her on a YTS but Diane proved as elusive with them as

she was with me. From the little she told me, Diane was not favourably

inclined towards YTS and preferred to try for interviews for permanent

jobs, but the type of work she aimed for and her success rate are unknown.

However, she was unemployed and seeking work during follow up in the

November of the year of leaving.

The major pattern in the uptake of YTS was that pupils simply used

schemes as a stop-gap until permanent jobs turned up. Even Philip, whose

employer intimated that he might be taken on full-time did not turn down

the 'here and now' offer of paid work when it arose. Only Eddie (West

Indian) stuck to his community workshop scheme and this was consistent with

his negative view that both prejudice and unemployment risks were present

in the working world. For the white boys the pattern was to leave YTS

for a full-time job even if that job was precarious in nature or poorly

paid. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the jobs the boys secured they soon left or were made redundant, pivoting them back into another YTS or into another equally precarious job (see p.255). For the black girls the situation was much the same. Disillusioned with her YTS experience Sonia decided to go for lots of interviews for jobs rather than accept a transfer placement. Delia did the same after her YTS proved unsuitable on health grounds, although she did not seek out interviews as actively as Sonia. Diane also spent her time looking for jobs and attending interviews. The main difference between these black girls and their white male counterparts was that the girls suffered long spells (a few months) of unemployment upon abandoning YTS whereas the boys managed to move into a succession of jobs, albeit that they left these shortly afterwards because they were unsatisfactory in some way. This leads to the question of racial prejudice amongst employers, something which can be hard to prove but which Leafield black pupils had some evidence for.

RACIAL PREJUDICE IN RECRUITMENT

The evidence that Leafield informants met with racial prejudice from local employers was by no means conclusive but my black informants had experiences they could draw upon in forming the opinion that they would meet discrimination on the grounds of racial origins when seeking work. In this respect, informants could recall more 'concrete' examples of prejudice from their job-seeking phase than they could from daily school life. As racist remarks were passed at school quite frequently (see p.147), this can perhaps be taken as a measure that outcomes in the job market were more important to black pupils than those in the school setting. Whilst comments about school were passed off light-heartedly, discrimination encountered in seeking employment was taken far more seriously. Here, black informants pooled their other life experiences with actual job-seeking experiences to create a whole picture of the world of work which left them

feeling doubtful about their equal chances of finding a job.

Eddie: "I would expect prejudice because I've heard
(who settled   of it from the family and my friends."
for a YTS comm-
unity workshop
placement)

Sheilah: "I think my chances of a job will be the same as
                 anyone else's but there was a YTS form which
                 asked for your colour, I wasn't sure about that."

Bedford: "I think I'll have to do more to get a job.
                 My mother was a teacher in Jamaica but she
                 tried and couldn't get a job over here ...
                 Black people cleaned up the country [after
                 World War II] and then they weren't wanted."

Out of ten black informants, two felt they had encountered racism

directly from employers. Sonia's experience on her YTS placement has

already been discussed (see p.258), but Vanda believed she had faced

something similar before finding herself a shop assistant's job with a

greengrocer:

Vanda: "Half of it is colour in getting a job. I was on
                 my second interview, I went in and there was this
                 [white] boy, a right dimwit, and I heard it a few
                 days later that he got it."

Black youth suffers higher unemployment in Britain than white youth

(Department of Employment (1984)), and both direct and indirect discrimi-

nation has been established amongst British employers in, for example,

Nottingham and Birmingham, in studies by Hubbuck and Carter (1980) and

Jenkins (1982). It is unlikely that Bridgehurst should differ greatly from

other cities in this respect and two black pupils out of a small cohort of

ten were able to recall adverse experiences. Roberts et al. (1983) in a

study of West Midlands black and white school leavers found a relationship

between race, gender and qualification level such that whilst all black

pupils had to look longer and try harder in order to find work, it was the

black, unqualified girls who fared least well in the employment stakes.

At Leafield, it seemed also to be black, less-achieving girls that were

disadvantaged in seeking work for both black boys and black achieving girls

met with employment success. To be black, female and poorly qualified created something of a triple disadvantage to the extent that three out of four Leafield girls in this category were unemployed at the time of the post-school follow up.

OVERVIEW OF INFORMANTS' DESTINATIONS

A final question to ask of informants is whether or not occupational aspirations were matched by reality, and if so, for whom.

For achieving pupils, all of whom entered the 6th form the answer is chiefly in the affirmative. Limited follow up on achievers two years after leaving the 5th form revealed that five out of six had been able to achieve their career goals without modification. Sarah (white) _did_ secure work with a Travel Agent after completing her RSA secretarial course and Sheilah (West Indian) obtained office work to her liking following her B.Tec. course. Lynn (white) and Pauline (white) obtained 'A'-level grades that allowed them to pursue teacher training and occupational therapist's training respectively in line with their earlier ambitions. Colette (West Indian), who was one year behind her peers in the 6th form due to a year spent retaking 'O' levels was all set to pass her 'A' levels upon last contact with her (May, 1988) and was awaiting the result of polytechnic applications to read for a B.Sc. in Business Studies. Only Paul (white) had failed his 'A' levels and not been heard of since that time.

For the less-achievers the answer has to be a qualified negative. Eric (West Indian), Shirley (white) and Vanda (West Indian) secured permanent full-time jobs straight from school through parental contacts or word of mouth from friends. A fourth pupil, Tessa (white), entered part-time work in the hope that it would lead to something full-time as it had for a neighbour. These pupils who found themselves a job or apprenticeship upon leaving school tended to stick with these, at least in the short term, and were generally pleased with their jobs.

Four further pupils, Peter (white), Winston (West Indian), Bedford (West Indian) and Natalie (white) opted for further education. Both Peter and Bedford left very soon after term began when jobs were obtained with Peter being thrilled over securing an apprenticeship. Thus there were indications that further education was used as a stop gap by less-achievers until paid work was found.

The pattern among YTS-takers was very similar. Placements were used primarily as something to do until a job turned up, but pupils who abandoned either education or YTS tended to find jobs of an unsatisfactory or erratic nature and there was more movement between jobs than for pupils who had secured work as a <u>first</u> destination after leaving school. As Corrigan (1979) states:

> "They change jobs very quickly; have periods of temporary
> unemployment; get another job; can't stand it and leave."
> (p.92)

Both Duncan and Philip (white boys) were displaying this tendency in November, six months after leaving school, and subsequent follow up a year later revealed an extended pattern of intermittent work. By this time both boys had moved on to a succession of building site and factory jobs with Philip settling (at least for a few months) with a firm of timber merchants. In addition, even more less-achieving pupils were caught in the same spiral. Bedford smiled when I reminded him about seeing him digging a hole in the road.

> Bedford: "Oh yeah, I've had a few jobs since then. I'm
> (West Indian   down at Tindales now [local factory]."
> less-achiever)

Also Peter, who had been so pleased with his apprenticeship in printing had lost his job many months before for absenteeism and not knuckling down to the work. He proceeded to a variety of casual jobs on building sites and in factories.

It is not known whether Winston remained in his Welsh College of Further Education as contact with both him and family was lost, but his

female counterpart, Natalie did <u>not</u> stay her course. Despite all her

efforts to get onto an Animal Technology course she was to be seen on a

supermarket check-out a year later.

> Natalie: "You've got to be stupid to stick this job ...
> but I'm getting engaged and I'm saving up for
> my bottom drawer ... My boyfriend wants me to
> go back to college later when he's earning
> enough money. I'd like to go back."

Marriage plans overrode her employment aspirations despite her earlier

declaration that she would never get married and life would be complete if

she got a "Zoo job". The impact that marriage plans can have on curbing

female career aspirations has also been noted by Griffin (1985) and King

(1987) in their researches with school leavers. .

For some, however, commencing YTS was a road that ended only in

unemployment. Delia, Sonia and Diane (all black girls) experienced

difficulty in either sticking to YTS or getting a job as an alternative.

They moved into a pattern of intermittent work and 'signing on'.and suffered

more frequent and longer spells of unemployment than the boys who started

on YTS.

Class, Race and Gender Dimensions in Destinations

Informants with middle class job aspirations and academic achievement

to match experienced little difficulty in obtaining <u>exactly</u> what they

wanted irrespective of their actual class and racial origins, but girls

were the only ones to succeed in this category. Three white and two black

girls were successful in achieving their ambitions but there were no black

male achievers in the 6th form. Also the white boy, Paul, of middle class

origins failed his 'A' levels. There had been prior indications from his

form teacher that his attitude to work was not quite up to standard (see

p.189) and that he became disenchanted with 'A' levels upon hearing about

the more practically orientated B.Tec. and HND routes he could have pursued

(see p.228). These factors could have contributed to his failure. It is

well documented that middle class pupils such as Pauline and Paul, fare

well in the search for jobs (e.g. Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980), but it is less well documented for aspiring white and black pupils from the working class. Riley (1985b) has argued that able black girls can successfully compete in the job market and the job attainment of working class, black achieving girls at Leafield serve to support her findings. White achieving girls in the same class position also fared well, but for both groups there was some evidence of under-aspiration, and in consequence lower job attainment, than their academic ability merited.

The situation was different for working class less-achievers. Here, all the pupils had working class origins and black boys fared as well as white boys in gaining employment and training but black girls did not fare as well as their white counterparts. The only pupils to be unemployed four to six months after leaving school were black girls although they had declined YTS placements offered to them.
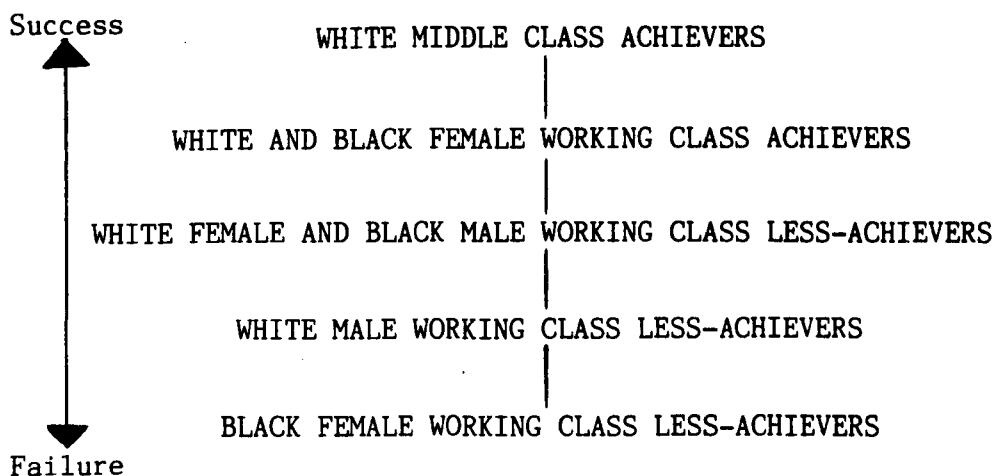
The uptake of YTS was predominantly from white boys and black girls with no or few qualifications (CSEs). Among these the boys found it easier to move on to other paid work than the girls, a feature also noted by Dex (1982). Hence, although both rejected YTS after a while, this resulted in unemployment only for the black girls. There was some evidence of racial prejudice exercised towards two black girls as an indicator of barriers to their finding work.

Overall, nearly half my informants (9 less-achievers) were not doing what they had intended six months after leaving school. This figure rose to include one achieving pupil within the next 18 months. In the main, they accepted this with the same kind of realism displayed in formulating their earlier job choices. They simply accepted what they saw as the best among available options. Thus, just as initial job choices were based on what was available and practicable locally, so alternatives, including YTS, were accepted as a matter of course, when faced with limited opportunities.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?

In conclusion, it can be said that job expectations were <u>not</u> being met

at Leafield for the majority of pupils. From the patterns of job attainment

that existed among my twenty informants, a 'hierarchy of success' could be

discerned as illustrated in Figure 9(5).

<u>FIGURE 9(5)</u>. <u>DIAGRAM TO SHOW HIERARCHY OF SUCCESS IN JOB ATTAINMENT FOR MY</u>

<u>LEAFIELD INFORMANTS ACCORDING TO GENDER, RACE AND CLASS FACTORS</u>

Success

WHITE MIDDLE CLASS ACHIEVERS

WHITE AND BLACK FEMALE WORKING CLASS ACHIEVERS

WHITE FEMALE AND BLACK MALE WORKING CLASS LESS-ACHIEVERS

WHITE MALE WORKING CLASS LESS-ACHIEVERS

BLACK FEMALE WORKING CLASS LESS-ACHIEVERS

Failure

This 'hierarchy of success' indicates some subtle interconnections

of race and gender in enhancing or detracting from life chances with gender

playing a crucial role in association with level of achievement at both

ends of the continuum of 'success' or 'failure'. Black girls in particular

seemed to 'sink or swim' according to proven academic ability, this being

the key to either their further education and choice of career or their

<u>unemployability</u>. Black less-achieving working class boys held more of the

'middle ground', alongside white working class less-achieving girls, faring

<u>better</u> than their white male counterparts.   Crucially though, white

boys with <u>no</u> CSEs gained access to more jobs than black girls with <u>some</u> CSEs,

indicating greater difficulties for black girls in securing work.

Wright (1978), Roberts et al. (1983) and Riley (1985b) have researched

some of these interconnections with Wright favouring the power of class to override racial dimensions, and Roberts et al. and Riley favouring the power of race in combination with gender and achievement to be determining factors in the labour market. I would argue that all are correct in their own way and that different permutations of gender, race and class in conjunction with achievement serve to create a 'hierarchy of success' built primarily along class lines but thereafter with a strong influence from first gender and then race in combination with qualification levels. The outcome of this was that middle class pupils stood a strong chance of job success but working class pupils were divided by gender and racial considerations such that black female working class less-achievers suffered a triple, if not quadruple disadvantage, but black boys with similarly low qualifications could avoid the worst of unemployment and black girls with 'O' levels could rise above gender, race and class factors to successfully engage in careers.

However, gender, race and class affect not only the process of finding work, but also all of its antecedents. For this reason, the concluding chapter of this thesis will evaluate the relative importance of gender, race and class as they affected the experiences of pupils in the whole process of moving from education into the world of hoped-for employment. In so doing, it will be seen that each variable rose or fell in its significance at different points in the process.

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to review the evidence from this study in terms of the relative importance of gender, race and class in the school experiences, attitudes, aspirations and eventual destinations of Leafield pupils. These major forces on pupils' lives will be examined in turn to establish the areas of school life and transition to the adult world most affected by each. In addition, gender, race and class will be discussed in conjunction with each other for it is of key importance to examine collective as well as discrete effects and to establish inter-relationships (if any) between particular factors. This is crucial in order to understand their impact at the level of the individual, for, as discussed in Chapter 1, individuals experience being male or female, and white or black and working class or middle class at one and the same time as being their whole selves.

THE IMPACT OF GENDER

To what extent did gender affect pupils' lives at school and their eventual aspirations and acquisitions after the 5th form?

Evidence from participant observation indicated a major role for gender in shaping pupils' daily experiences and anticipated futures, a feature which was confirmed by subsequent questionnaire data and discussions with informants.

Experiencing School

Beginning with school experiences, it was apparent that gender firmly controlled interactions in the classroom (see Chapter 5). Firstly, pupils themselves operated a form of voluntary segregation in seating arrangements so that boys and girls sat almost exclusively with same-sex peers. Friendships were also based around pupils' own gender which ensured

gender-specific clustering both in project or group work and at breaktimes when pupils walked or talked together with 'their mates'. Polarisation along gender lines was exaggerated by the girls' use of the toilets as a base during breaks (see also Griffin, 1985)) and the boys use of the sports pitches and bicycle sheds.

Interactions between boys and girls were largely competitive, not co-operative. This applied again both within and outside the classroom. In class, there was much comparing of marks and indications of 'competing' between the sexes. Classroom 'mucking' was also frequently aimed at the opposite sex (e.g. via boys flicking items at girls or girls making remarks about boys).

Girls and boys also made highly gender-specific subject choices at Leafield, in some cases steered by curriculum limitations or teachers' actions (Delamont, 1980). In subtle ways this led to disadvantage among the girls, not the boys. For example, girls were loathe to enter metal-work or woodwork for they knew they would be virtually isolated in among a group of males and recoiled from the teasing and barracking they would receive from the boys. Criticism was also likely from female peers who found such interests either strange, or deliberately orchestrated in order to be in boys' company. Boys entering the 'feminine' domain (e.g. needle-work) were not faced with these challenges to either their interests or motives, and in another area, that of catering, courses were seen by boys and staff as useful in providing saleable skills in the job market, some-thing not present in the perceptions of those girls who chose 'male' areas of the curriculum.

Similarly, girls lost out in typically 'masculine' areas of the curriculum such as computing and the sciences. Boys hogged both equipment and teacher attention in these lessons leaving girls on the periphery (see also Culley, 1988). Boys could also be loud and boisterous and some

teachers took pains to 'protect' girls from this disruptive environment
(e.g. by seating them outside the main classroom environment in corridors
or in the library). By both types of well-intentioned event girls became
marginalised and not part of the mainstream learning experience. In a
few lessons, teachers were seen to perpetuate the myth of the less confident
girl pupil, and to ignore girls' interests. The boys were allowed to
take up prime teacher time and attention thereby enhancing the hidden
process which left girls on the margins (Measor (1984)).

Girls were also disadvantaged by virtue of sexual harassment that was
meted out by the boys and not matched either in frequency or vigour by
anything girls could perpetuate against boys. Sexual insults were a common
feature of boys' arguments with (or about) girls, and girls were 'fair
game' for horseplay (see also Cowie and Lees (1981), and Wood (1987)),
including 'touching up', grabbing bodies and gestures full of innuendo.
Girls did not solicit such advances and without exception female informants
aged 15 to 16 years were not interested in boys sexually, but this did not
stop the boys in seeing them as 'fair game'. Indeed, female disinterest
can be seen as providing a 'challenge' to male dominance which boys had to
negate by oppressive actions towards them.

I would argue that features of daily life at school such as those
mentioned above affected pupils' perceptions of school. For boys, the
arena was theirs, without let or hindrance, but girls were mindful that
boys could, and indeed did, interfere with their educational progress in
subtle ways. I would further argue that girls' social groupings were also
in part a response to the actions of boys. Girls displayed far greater
solidarity with their girlfriends and placed greater emphasis on the
importance of these friendships than did boys, frequently selecting
'female-only' refuges inside the school to be on their own away from male
interference (see also Griffin, 1985). This can be viewed as a strategy

to combat the unwanted advances of boys and as a protection mechanism which in turn created separate spheres to an even greater degree and to a point which could even be described as antagonism between the sexes.

Future Aspirations of Girls and Boys

Surmounting the above-mentioned considerations lay the fact that girls and boys at Leafield saw their futures quite differently. Girls both implicitly and explicitly incorporated subsequent marriage and childraising in their employment plans and aspirations for the future (see Chapters 5 and 8). They saw both of these events as being a long way off (i.e. some 10 to 15 years hence in their late twenties), but acknowledged the effect that those changes would have on their working lives. As a result, girls built in the prospect of marriage and motherhood into their job aspirations and expectations. Some, like Sarah, wanted to get their career underway and consolidated before marriage interfered, others like Deborah and Vanda acknowledged that their paid work would have to stop, at least for a few years, whilst raising children. Either way, having a family was seen as having a profound effect upon their working life, and I would argue, girls' career and employment choices were significantly steered by the value placed on the 'caring' role of women in our society irrespective of their class background. Female job aspirations incorporated all those occupations deemed to be suitable 'women's work' (i.e. teaching, secretarial and office work; shop work; hair, fashion and beauty occupations; nursing and caring for children or animals). Such choices were heavily weighted by the type and quality of careers advice they had received at school which was essentially stereotypical in nature. Girls were primarily steered towards limited scope in shop and office work via career talks whilst boys were faced with a wide range of talks encompassing skilled manual trades and engineering. This advice was 'traditional' in being both gender and class-specific.

All the girls' choices involved providing services or care direct to
other individuals thus fitting the acceptable stereotype of the nurturing
and caring female figure. This was particularly clear in the case of the
working class less-achieving girls who ideally wanted to work with children.
Here I would suggest that their lack of academic success had closed off
certain career options for them, and their already limited scope in view
of few qualifications was further compounded by the Parentcraft courses
these girls attended. Skeggs (1988) found that girls' caring courses led
them to see total mothering as the best way to rear children thus leading
them away from the job market. Parentcraft therefore helped to restrict
girls' horizons and I would suggest that Leafield girls, in stating an
interest in working with children, were displaying realism as to where
their futures lay both in terms of (a) weighing up their strengths and
qualities (as indicated by school-based qualifications and curricula) which
would govern their success in the job market, and (b) by adjusting their
vision of the future to include a major role in looking after children,
albeit in their own home and not as a paid occupation. Girls who made
this choice were, I believe, making a statement about what their whole
futures would contain, a future in which paid work and family care would
be integrated. A point made also by Griffin (1985) in calling for a fresh
analysis of girls' aspirations.

For the boys no such meshing of potentially conflicting interests was
necessary in formulating their occupational choices. Boys also selected
work from their own 'male' domain favouring skilled trades and apprentice-
ships above any other type of work. This again, I would argue, was entirely
consistent with their picture of the future. Boys saw a single, not a dual
role ahead of them, one that hopefully involved work through to retirement
age without interruption. For boys, the concept of marriage and having a
family seemed equally as inevitable as among the girls but for them this
had the opposite effect. For boys, having a family meant having financial

responsibilities as the provider. A <u>secure</u> job, one that yielded a <u>good</u> wage, was therefore of paramount importance in this respect. Boys predominantly saw a skilled trade as offering these two desirable features of paid work. Firstly, having a skill meant being in demand and acted as a safeguard against unemployment; secondly, a skill was more saleable and commanded a higher wage in the job market than unskilled work. On both accounts, skilled work was seen as the 'answer' for life.

Early Destinations

In terms of actually <u>starting</u> employment or further education, male and female informants entered   precisely the types of occupations or training generally associated with their gender. Those in work also acquired either their first or second choice destination as cited on their 5th form questionnaires. However, for the school leavers a pattern emerged whereby, within a few months of leaving, white male informants had fallen into a cycle of short-term unsatisfactory jobs and white girls were largely engaged in further education or settled into jobs. Race as well as gender appeared to be a factor in destinations such that whilst <u>white</u> boys were the intermittent workers, <u>black</u> girls were the ones who were unemployed. This feature is discussed in more detail on pp. 277 - 280.

Taking working class informants as a   whole, more girls utilised further education than boys, a feature noted by other researchers (e.g. Fuller (1980), Dex (1982)). Whilst this may well be to escape the worst effects of unemployment (as felt by less-achieving black girls), Leafield informants who stuck to 6th form or college did so with specific career objectives in mind and not simply to fill in time. Here they were acting unlike their male counterparts who displayed a tendency to use further education only as a stop-gap until a job arose. I would suggest that boys' greater emphasis on getting out of school and obtaining a 'decent' job as soon as possible reflected their implicit acceptance of an adult

role as provider and supporter of a family and dependants. Girls, I would
suggest escaped this imperative for their implicit assumptions incorporated
breaks in employment and there was less single-minded emphasis on paid work
As a result, I believe girls found it easier to make the choice to stay
on at school,for the pressure to join the workforce at the earliest possible
opportunity was not as great. One irony in this, was that working class
girls, in delaying entry into paid work were actually _improving_ their
chances of obtaining work to their liking based on the returns that further
qualifications would bring. Working class boys, it would seem, either
did not favour or did not dare risk this option. Work was of paramount
importance and success was spelt by securing it at the earliest opportunity. .

THE IMPACT OF RACE

Experiencing School

Aspects of race were far less overt at Leafield in terms of having
an effect upon school experiences. Black pupils were not as vociferous
in making complaints about the establishment, teachers or classmates as,
for example, were white girls. Indeed, to establish how race affected
school life it was necessary to 'reverse' the research process and rely
mainly on observations of and conversations with white teachers and pupils
rather than gather data on experiences directly _from_ black pupils. Black
pupils could not recount specific school incidents that had seemed racially
inspired and tended to dismiss racist name-calling treating it as a minor
issue and with the contempt it deserved. It was, therefore necessary to
uncover the covert (and sometimes unintended) aspects of white racism at
Leafield, details of which are contained in Chapter 6.

Starting with the school curriculum, any multi-cultural inputs
at Leafield operated on a particularly 'ad hoc' basis. Lesson content was
governed primarily by the willingness of individual teachers to revise old
teaching methods and introduce new material aids, and the Section 11
appointee was used mainly to ease the general teaching load and not solely

to the benefit of ethnic minority education, a feature noted in other
LEAs by Dorn and Hibbert (1987).

Racist Humour

A great deal of white racism took the form of 'humour' and this was
something practised by both staff and students. In both cases it would be
more accurate to say male staff and male students. Again, white pupils,
not black, were the ones who 'picked up' on this and were able to recount
events to me. Teachers, in being familiar with pupils, indulged in jokes
about ethnic minorities, their food, their customs and their names.
White pupils viewed such banter as a positive attribute, one that demon-
strated the teachers 'could have a laugh' (Beynon (1984)). Indeed, such
humour was taken by white pupils to be 'proof' that their teachers were
not racist for in joking about the Irish and Pakistanis, for example,
teachers were seen as giving everybody the same treatment whether they
were white or black.

White pupils similarly picked on racial differences to inform their
'mucking about'. Mimicking perceived racial differences (e.g. big lips
and accents) and racist name-calling were common forms of raising a laugh
at a black person's expense. Such events that I observed always involved
a white audience available on the scene to be amused, or at least diverted
momentarily from their other pursuits. Black pupils appeared not to allow
such behaviour to interfere with their attitudes towards school, choosing
to ignore it and guaging school more according to their own levels of
achievement.

In Chapter 6, I have suggested that the absence of both a written
multi-cultural and anti-racist policy served to encourage white racism for
no guidelines existed to help teachers who wished to combat classroom and
breaktime incidents. However, even with such a policy, it is possible to
stick to the letter of the law without fully implementing its meaning, and
pupils would still be largely at the 'mercy' of their teachers and peers in

the relative privacy of the classroom. Indeed, Troyna and Ball (1985) argue that rising pupil/teacher ratios and falling teacher morale are not conducive to innovatory practices. As such, even <u>with</u> a written policy, things may not change at the 'chalk face' and the covert prejudices harboured by white pupils might not be addressed.

<u>White Pupil Racism</u>

At Leafield, I would argue that the overt signs of racial jibing were just the tip of the iceberg providing a glimpse of the bulk of racism which lay beneath the surface. White racism, as expressed openly by some informants took the form of disliking different cultural practices (e.g. food and dress) and resenting the rights of 'immigrants' to jobs, houses and social benefits. In this respect, no distinction was made between British-born individuals and those who had actually arrived from abroad. There was also an abhorrence of intermarriage and mixed race friendships in two male informants. One powerful message from these Leafield pupils was their intense hatred of Asians, or 'Pakis'. Here, <u>all</u> Asian people, irrespective of origins were termed 'Pakis' and it was this particular ethnic minority that was most resented for setting up shops, taking housing and accepting benefits. The cultural distinctiveness of Asian people was also resented owing to an implicit belief that people who live in Britain should try to be like 'us'. Here, West Indian-origin people fared slightly better, escaping the worst of white prejudice by virtue of speaking English as a mother-tongue, conforming to Western dress and enjoying (and also contributing to) popular music.

Here, a link could be found between gender and white racism for white boys were more inclined to make perjorative statements than white girls. Conversely, white girls far more than white boys offered sympathy in their remarks when discussing the way black people were treated in school. Here I would argue that boys' greater dedication to finding and keeping

employment for life led to their greater fear of 'foreigners' taking jobs, and to the attendant risk of unemployment that could follow if too many people were seeking too few jobs. Girls, in incorporating the 'caring' role in both paid work and a projected home life, were more readily able to identify with the needs and problems of black people and therefore demonstrated a 'protective' and 'caring' stance in support of them. For both white boys and girls, these views were entirely consistent with what society expected of them and they expected of themselves.

Black Pupils' Aspirations

Moving on to black pupils' aspirations and job expectations, only black girls' lack of interest in working with children differentiated their job choices from those of their white counterparts. Black girls aspired to white collar office work, sales work, and hairdressing to the same extent as their white peers (see Chapter 8 and Figure 8(2)) and in all cases, aspirations were realistic in view of their proven 'O' level or CSE ability. Black boys also made choices indistinguishable from those of their white counterparts. Black boys valued skilled trades just as white boys did and here again aspirations were practical and realistic when viewed against both personal academic achievement (CSE passes only) and available work in the local labour market (see also Eggleston et al. (1986)). Black pupils were also just as keen to start work as their white peers and were equally industrious in seeking work, something also noted by Drew and Jones (1988).

One notable feature among my ten black informants (who represented the entire cohort of West Indian-origin pupils in the 5th year) was that there were no male achievers. No black boys had been put in for 'O' level examinations, but two of the six black girls had. These two girls found school interesting unlike their black peers of both sexes and expressed the desire to continue with education in the 6th form in order to gain additional qualifications ready for the working world. Fuller (1980), Dex (1982) and

Eggleston et al. (1986) have documented black girls' greater interest in utilising further education. As Wrench (1987) states:

> "This might be understood in terms of greater ambition and a determination to gain vocational training and educational qualifications by these young people, but might also reflect a knowledge of the greater difficulties they face in the labour market through racism."   (p.135)

At Leafield, the two black girls, Sheilah and Colette, who did stay on at school definitely did so in order to obtain qualifications required for the careers they had in mind (Sheilah wanted RSA secretarial skills in readiness for office work and Colette wanted 'A' levels to do a B.Sc. in Business Studies). Ironically, the pupils who <u>left</u> school at 16 years of age were the ones who anticipated racial discrimination in finding work (see Chapter 9 for examples of black pupils' concerns), but this did not lead them to reconsider their choice to leave school as soon as possible.

Early Destinations

Race appeared to be an important factor in securing work but this interlinked with gender such that an overall statement regarding black pupils' employment destinations cannot be made without reference to gender. Indeed, beyond this, academic achievement was also an important factor such that:

(i)   black achieving girls succeeded in obtaining the work or
       training they desired;

(ii) black less-achieving boys succeeded in finding work or training
       in line with their objectives

but (iii) black less-achieving girls were far more likely to rely on YTS
       or be unemployed after leaving school.

As previously stated, Sheilah and Colette, the two achieving black pupils succeeded in obtaining office work and 'A' levels respectively and entered into the work and higher education of their choice. This is in line with Riley's (1985b) contention that young black women who succeed

academically are able to successfully challenge oppression and racism in the labour market. Two black less-achieving boys and one black less achieving girl were also able to secure employment but the two who did this most successfully had personal contacts to thank for it. Eric obtained his apprenticeship through the representations his mother made to her ex-boss, and Vanda found her grocery shop work through being told by a friend that a vacancy was coming up and approaching the proprietor directly. In Vanda's case the contact a friend could make was particularly helpful for she had already experienced a refusal from an employer where she suspected racial prejudice (see Chapter 9). Bedford also found work or rather a succession of unskilled manual jobs, but these were without the benefit of contacts. The work he found was not as secure or satisfactory as that found by Eric and Vanda who were content with their jobs and remained in them at least until the time of the November follow up.

Parental and other informal contacts were therefore as crucial for black pupils in securing work as for their white counterparts. At Leafield, such informal networks seemed to operate as frequently for black informants as for white, contrary to the findings of other studies (e.g. Jenkins, 1982).

Parental contacts and informal networks were lacking for the four black pupils (1 boy and 3 girls) whose first destination was YTS. Of these, only the black boy Eddie remained on his scheme and all three black girls were unemployed and actively seeking work the following November. There was some evidence that racial discrimination had taken its toll on two of these pupils, although they chose different solutions. Eddie, who had earlier expressed an expectation of prejudice amongst employers subsequently preferred the security of his two-year printing community workshop to the vagaries of the job market and did not make attempts to break away from YTS in the way his less-achieving white counterparts did. In addition Sonia, who also began YTS came up against racism from a fellow employee

who complained about her. After that she decided to abandon YTS and try
for full time permanent work on her own, instead. The net result was that
Sonia and two other less-achieving black girls were the only three out of 20
informants to be unemployed at the time of the November follow up.

It can be argued that girls like Sonia, Delia and Diane do not
represent the same calibre of prospective YTS trainees as white girls owing
to the greater tendency of black girls to utilise further education thus
reducing the quality of the YTS pool (Wrench, 1987), and that this in turn
affects their YTS success. However, this cannot account for the
unemployment of these three Leafield black girls. Delia had to leave her
hairdressing placement for health reasons, Sonia left because of racial
discord at her place of work and her rejection of a transfer, and Diane
resisted YTS placements altogether.

What did distinguish these black girls, however, was their inability
to obtain alternative employment upon giving up YTS and here they were
singularly unsuccessful vis-a-vis their white peers. Their two white male
YTS counterparts also gave up their YTS placements but did so because work
was obtained elsewhere. This work, however poorly paid or unsatisfactory
was nevertheless obtainable in a way that did not seem possible for black
girls, indeed boys proceeded to obtain a succession of these jobs whereas
black girls could not find any. In view of the fact that Sonia and Diane
in particular were very busy attending a host of interviews, I would suggest
that there was resistance amongst employers towards engaging black girls
that did not occur for either white or black boys. Indeed, the two black
boys, Eddie and Bedford had not even needed to resort to YTS for they found
paid work instead and were able to keep in work. In this respect, there
was some indication that black boys were more successful than completely
unqualified white boys because Duncan and Philip had left school with no
qualifications at all and had started on YTS before being able to find

'proper' jobs. Black boys had avoided this step by securing work.

Expressed another way, qualifications above the level of CSE were crucial to black girls in determining their job success, and less qualified black girls faced far more difficulty in finding work than either their white female or white male less-achieving peers, a feature also noted by Roberts et al. (1983). Black boys' experiences of the labour market were indistinguishable from those of their white male and female peers indicating a _specific_ disadvantage in being female and black and poorly qualified.

THE IMPACT OF CLASS

Experiencing School

The subtleties of class origins pervaded many aspects of schooling and the transition into work, scheme or unemployment.

To begin with, class more than gender or race, affected pupils' attitudes _towards_ school. Thus, class origins informed opinions regarding the worth of schooling for both boys and girls, blacks and whites. The main thrust of working class opinion was that school was both boring and a complete waste of time (see Chapter 7). Working class pupils saw no real relevance for their lives in the subjects they were forced to study and they could not see any application of the knowledge transmitted in school in their anticipated future working lives. By extension, exams, (and in particular CSE examinations) were seen as largely irrelevant in both seeking and acquiring work. There was widespread belief that employers were more concerned with your appearance and personal qualities than pieces of paper, and that 'who you know, not what you know' was of major importance in securing a job. Evidence collected during the job seeking phase of informants would appear to show that pupils were correct in holding these views (see Chapter 9). Jenkins (1982), Finn (1984) and others have emphasised the importance of the informal network primarily for white pupils but at Leafield it was clear that the efficacy of such networks also held true for blacks and whites, males and females.

Middle class pupils at Leafield did not share the view that school was boring and irrelevant to their futures. Indeed, there was a complete polarisation of attitudes as recorded by Lacey (1970) almost twenty years ago. Middle class pupils found school interesting and the subjects they took had plenty of relevance for they provided a vital link towards gaining 'O' and 'A' level qualifications required in order to train for the jobs and careers they aspired to. Polarisation at Leafield was also indicated by the less-achievers' terminology for achieving pupils whom they referred to as the 'brainy' and 'posh' ones.

This polarisation of attitudes towards school was obscured only by the pro-school attitudes of a few achieving working class pupils. Evidence from informants suggested that such pupils were unique in having both a genuine interest in school and highly positive parental support for education and its continuation in the 6th form. This support was forthcoming for a minority of pupils irrespective of gender although there was evidence that West Indian-origin mothers in particular, were keen for their sons and daughters to remain in education and seek further qualifications (see also Riley, 1985b)).

Considering the curriculum, there was evidence that some teachers made no attempt to access working class pupils' interests in the classroom (see Chapter 7). Pleas for alternative topics and teaching methods did not meet with a positive response. As such, middle class values in education predominated and pupils with middle class origins, or middle class occupational aspirations, were the ones most suited to the knowledge transmitted at school through familial 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu (1973)) This enabled them to engage successfully with the values and knowledge on offer which would stand them in good stead for passing the examinations so crucial to their career aspirations.

Class and Aspirations

Another important feature of class origins was the effect that this had on job aspirations. Almost without exception, working class informants selected working class occupations and middle class ones selected middle class occupations. Only middle class pupils made choices that could be termed 'careers'. For both classes, the impact of parental influences was marked, for all pupils were mindful of parental advice and parental job experiences in what they themselves aspired to. As in many other studies (e.g. Corrigan (1979), Raby (1979), Griffin (1985) and Brown (1987), Leafield pupils selected occupations primarily from what they saw around them, both in terms of what parents and siblings did for a living and in terms of the scope available in the local labour market. The particular notice that pupils took of family advice in forming their aspirations and job choices, led, in the case of working class pupils to a perpetuation of their class position akin to the working class entrapment described by Willis (1977) in his study of how his 'lads' ended up on the factory floor.

This was compounded by the help parents and friends gave to school leavers via the contacts they could make with employers. The result of family contacts was intergenerational continuity whereby sons and daughters gained successful introductions to the work places or occupational spheres of a parent. The result of advice from working class friends also created situations whereby pupils came to be working either alongside or in the same industry as neighbours or friends, as happened to Shirley and Tessa, (see Chapter 9). Such advice and assistance was compounded by the traditional working class nature of careers advice at the school with talks centering on skilled trades for boys and shop, office and child-care work for girls.

The advice of working class parents was also instrumental in limiting the career aspirations of working class achievers. Thus, although support for education and qualifications was proffered, advice on occupations was

cautious, such that vocational and short-term courses were more frequently suggested with the practical aim of assisting the young person into secure work. Far reaching, long-term and 'risky' goals were not advocated by working class parents and as informants invariably took parental advice into consideration, this led to a pattern of under-achievement in employment destinations among achieving working class pupils vis-a-vis their academic ability.

Early Destinations

Actual employment destinations for middle class informants closely followed their job aspirations but for working class informants the situation was different. Those who did secure work generally found themselves in either their preferred or second choice job based on earlier questionnaire returns. However, only 50% were actually doing what they had aspired to 18 months after leaving and Careers Office statistics combined with my questionnaire data revealed over half of all 5th formers having unfulfilled ambitions.

Working class informants relied far more on YTS or further education than they had originally envisaged doing (see also Dex (1982)), indicating that these two avenues were utilised as a 'stop-gap' until employment could be found. Indeed, working class boys in particular, soon 'ditched' their placements in favour of full time jobs even though these were frequently erratic, poorly paid or involved long hours (see Chapter 9). A pattern emerged whereby white working class boys in particular were drawn into a cycle of such jobs interspersed with short periods of unemployment- a cycle identified by Corrigan (1979) among Northern town boys.

For working class girls the pattern was rather different and depended more on racial origins and levels of achievement. White less-achieving working class girls tended to secure permanent work and stick with it (or enter further education), but black working class less-achieving girls relied more heavily on YTS as a starting point and suffered more

unemployment upon leaving or refusing schemes, a pattern which has already received attention on pp. 277-280. These differing routes (i.e. work/ education versus YTS) disappeared when considering black and white achieving working class girls. Here, both black and white entered the 6th form in order to obtain additional qualifications and all informants in this group then proceeded to job and college destinations of their choice, indicating as Riley (1985b) suggests, that qualified black girls can hold their own in the labour market.

CONCLUSION

Taking Leafield life in school as a reference point, gender, race and class all played an important part in shaping classroom and other school experiences. Emanating from teachers came evidence that both sexual and racial discrimination were employed in the classroom and that working class interests were not accommodated in their teaching. Teachers also typified pupils according to broad racial and class stereotypes. The curriculum was also found to be primarily gender-biased whilst displaying insensitivity towards the interests and needs of both black and working class pupils. Careers advice was also restrictive, serving to limit the horizons of pupils primarily according to gender but also according to class.

From the perspective of the pupils, class informed their opinions of school such that working class pupils held predominantly anti-school attitudes. Class overrode gender and racial considerations in attitudes towards school, but gender rose above all other considerations in the area of pupil-pupil interactions which centered primarily on separateness and an element of competition and vying with the opposite sex, but also involved boys in direct harassment of girls both inside and outside lessons. Racial tensions were not present at Leafield, and racial prejudice in school was not an issue as far as black informants were concerned but white racism lurked beneath the surface in the attitudes and beliefs of white pupils to an extent not recognised by black pupils. White racism transcended

the class divide but there was some evidence that girls displayed greater sympathy and concern for the mal-treatment of black people than did boys. This is attributed to the socialised propensity in girls to develop a more 'caring' and 'nurturing' role towards others.

In the area of aspirations for the future, race did not appear to be a factor in what pupils ideally chose for themselves. However, race, or rather being black, interconnected with gender later in disfavouring black girls in the labour market. Class and gender were of <u>crucial</u> importance in job aspirations however, such that pupils simultaneously made both class-specific and gender-specific choices for the future. Of the two, gender overrode class inasmuch as traditionally 'male' and 'female' occupations were selected by all pupils irrespective of class position or academic ability. In addition, all female informants took into account the prospect of marriage and motherhood and this was incorporated in their aspirations, either by their interest in working with children or by their estimation of time spent out of the job market raising children.

Class background was also a powerful factor encouraging pupils to make realistic assessments of the job market and pragmatic choices in jobs based on the occupations of other members of the family and friends. Working class backgrounds could sometimes be negated by achieving pupils in <u>conjunction</u> with parental support for white collar occupational goals but even so, there was evidence that academically able working class pupils did not harbour 'high-flying' ambitions and in fact under-aspired vis-a-vis their proven ability.

However, in the area of actual early destinations race sprang to the fore as a major variable impeding the acquisition of desired employment. Here there was linkage between gender, race and class such that less-achieving working class black girls were the only informants to be unemployed when the study was concluded. In contrast, white middle class

pupils and achieving black and white working class pupils aspiring to middle class occupations were successful in matching their aspirations. Here, more girls than boys were upwardly mobile from working class origins.

Most white working class pupils found work in line with their choices but for some this involved accepting YTS placements in their chosen field, and for many their occupational choices were so flexible that it was not difficult to 'match' destinations with aspirations.

To summarise, class origins played a primary role in the formation of pupils' attitudes towards school and class, race and gender were involved in how teachers reacted to pupils. Gender considerations were of prime importance in how pupils interacted with each other. Class and gender were crucial to the occupational choices and career aspirations of pupils and race plus gender was crucial to whether these were achieved in the market place. The interaction of these variables in pupils' lives meant that white middle-class pupils thrived at school and were more likely to succeed in their chosen careers but that white working class pupils found school irrelevant to their subsequent manual jobs. Girls and boys polarised both at school and in their job aspirations. Race provided an added dimension linked to gender such that black, working class, less-achieving girls were particularly disadvantaged in terms of actual destinations upon leaving school and gaining qualifications held the key to black working class girls' success.

Put broadly the main impact of gender, race and class on Leafield pupils can be summarised as follows:

- Class informed attitudes to school, achievement and going out to work

- Gender informed personal interactions and job choices

- Race informed the degree of success in the labour market in conjunction with gender and achievement.

CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

I am currently doing research into how pupils have got on at school, and what they have thought of it all, including their plans for the future. Your opinions are important and you can help me enormously in my work if you are willing to answer the following questions. All replies are strictly confidential to me and will not be seen by any member of staff, parent, or any other person.

Please hand this questionnaire back to me at the end of this session

Thank you,

Amanda

Amanda Macfarlane.

1) NAME: (2) FORM:

3) ADDRESS:

4) WHEN DO YOU INTEND TO LEAVE SCHOOL?

5) WHAT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU LEAVE?

6) WHAT ELSE ARE YOU PREPARED TO DO, IF NECESSARY?

7) DO YOU ALREADY HAVE A JOB FIXED UP?   YES / NO

   If so, please give type of work and employer's name:-

8) WHAT HAVE YOU DONE SO FAR TOWARDS FINDING WORK, FURTHER TRAINING, etc?   (Please tick correct boxes)

Attended school careers talks	
Visited Careers Office	
Requested career information	
Written to employers	
Attended interviews	
Spoken with relatives	
Spoken with friends	
Other action (Please give details)	

9) WHAT WORK EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU DONE?

10) WHAT DID YOU THINK OF IT?

11) DO YOU THINK YOUR SCHOOLING HAS HELPED YOU TO GET A JOB?

YES / NO

      Please give your reasons:-

---

12) WHAT, IF ANYTHING HAVE YOU LIKED ABOUT SCHOOL?

---

13) WHAT, IF ANYTHING, HAVE YOU DISLIKED ABOUT SCHOOL?

---

14) IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT COULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE SCHOOLING?

---

15) WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE CAREERS ADVICE AVAILABLE IN SCHOOL?

---

16) WHAT ELSE COULD BE DONE TO HELP WITH ADVICE ON JOBS?

---

17) HOW DO YOU RATE YOUR CHANCES OF FINDING A GOOD JOB?
    (Please tick correct box)

Very good	
Good	
Fair	
Poor	

NAMES AND GROUPINGS OF THE TWENTY IN-DEPTH INFORMANTS

THE GIRLS

	White Girls		Black Girls
Pauline	Middle class achiever	Colette	Working class achiever
Sarah	Working class achiever	Sheilah	Working class achiever
Linda	Working class achiever	Diane	Working class less-achiever
Natalie	Working class less-achiever	Delia	Working class less-achiever
Tessa	Working class less-achiever	Sonia	Working class less-achiever
Shirley	Working class less-achiever	Vanda	Working class less-achiever

THE BOYS

	White Boys		Black Boys
Paul	Middle class achiever	Eric	Working class less-achiever
Peter	Working class less-achiever	Bedford	Working class less-achiever
Philip	Working class less-achiever	Winston	Working class less-achiever
Duncan	Working class less-achiever	Eddie	Working class less-achiever

<u>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE THESIS</u>

<u>Abbreviations</u>

LEA	-	Local Education Authority
F.E.	-	Further Education
DES	-	Department of Education and Science
RSA	-	Royal Society of Arts
B.Tec.	-	Business and Technical Education Council
OND	-	Ordinary National Diploma
HND	-	Higher National Diploma
YOP	-	Youth Opportunities Programme
YTS	-	Youth Training Scheme
W.I.	-	West Indian origin (see below)

<u>Terminology</u>

Asian	=	Individuals of Asian origin irrespective of actual country of birth
West Indian	=	Individuals of West Indian origin irrespective of actual country of birth
Black	=	Pupils of West Indian origin only unless otherwise stated. (For a discussion of this, see Chapter 1 , p. 8)
Achievers	=	Pupils sitting predominantly 'O'-levels, with or without CSEs
Less-achievers	=	Pupils sitting predominantly CSEs, with or without the occasional 'O'-level

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