Women returners: a study of mature undergraduates and their educational histories

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WOMEN RETURNERS

A STUDY OF MATURE UNDERGRADUATES AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL HISTORIES

by

Margaret A.M. Coats

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy of the Loughborough University of Technology

January 1988

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Women returners:
a study of mature undergraduates and their educational histories

Margaret A.M. Coats

Abstract

This thesis contains an account of research into the experiences of a group of women who returned to education as mature undergraduate students at a university in the Midlands.

The aim of the research was to discover why such women failed to fulfil their academic potential in the conventional system and their motives for returning to education at a later stage.

The study traces their educational histories from initial schooling, through re-entry to education as adults, to their admission to university as mature undergraduate students. A further group of women at various stages of re-entry are identified and described. Their histories are compared with those of the undergraduate sample.

The empirical study is set in the context of a detailed discussion of gender acquisition and the experiences, expectations and attainments of girls at school. Two further issues of social class and family circumstances are explored. The current developments within adult education, both policies and practices, are discussed. Finally, the various educational options available to adults who wish to continue their education are detailed.

The study concludes with an analysis of the re-entry points and educational opportunities available to women and stresses the need for relevant information and advice to be made more readily available.

An appendix contains a full report of a research project carried out by the author, while compiling a directory of the educational and training opportunities available to women in England and Wales.
Acknowledgements

This research was made possible by the award of a Loughborough University of Technology Research Studentship for three years. I am grateful to my Director of Research, Professor L. Cohen, for supporting my application to register for research in the Department of Education.

I acknowledge with thanks the help and advice given to me by my supervisor, Dr Jack Demaine, and other members of staff in the Department of Education at Loughborough University of Technology.

I am grateful for the encouragement and support of my husband, Stan Coats, and other members of my family.

I wish to thank all the friends and colleagues who have discussed this work with me. Most of all, I wish to thank the women who participated in this research and whose experiences are described in this thesis. Without their interest and cooperation this research would not have been possible.

Maggie Coats

January 1988
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Chapter One

Introduction:

the scope of the study and its methodology
INTRODUCTION: THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY AND THE METHODOLOGY

This thesis contains a report of research which set out to examine the educational experiences of a group of women who returned to education as adults. The women in the sample were, at the time of the study, mature undergraduates at a Midlands university. A further sample of women at various points of re-entry to education was added later.

The main aim of the research was -

to explore the educational life-histories of a group of women, both through initial schooling and during their re-entry to education, to discover what factors affected their decision to participate in education as adults.

The research was designed with the following objectives -

1. to identify a sample of women who had successfully re-entered education as adults;

2. to explore the initial educational histories of these women who had returned;

3. to identify the re-entry points used by these women and the subsequent routes they followed;

4. to discover the reasons why these women decided to return and how they selected both starting point and subsequent route;

5. to discover how they viewed their retrospective educational histories now that they were nearing the completion of their re-entered education;

6. to investigate a further sample of women who appeared to be at possible points of re-entry;

7. to compare the educational histories of the women who had successfully returned with those who might potentially be returners;
8. to discover if it is possible to identify which women among the potential returners might proceed further and what intervention might be appropriate at each stage.

Background to the research

My interest in this topic was initiated by my own experiences, both as a mature student and as a tutor in a variety of adult educational settings, particularly with women students. It became apparent that returning to education as an adult could have a profound effect on the lives of some women, both in opening up options previously denied to them and in changing their self-image and identity. I was interested to know how these experiences of education as an adult related to their earlier schooling. I was particularly concerned to discover how and why women came to make their initial move back into an educational setting, often after a considerable period of time away from any formal learning situation.

To carry out this research I took first a sample of women over the age of 21 on entry, who were full-time undergraduate students in a Midlands university, covering in all five years intake. The decision to use this sample was both planned and practical. By starting with a group who had 'successfully' returned to education, it was easier to identify, in retrospect, their points of re-entry. In addition, for research purposes, full-time undergraduate students at one university are easily accessible on a single campus. A further important consideration was that women who had reached an 'advanced' stage in their re-entry route and in many cases were nearing the end on their return to formal education, were able and willing to look back at the path they had taken. Indeed, most of the women welcomed the opportunity to give information about themselves and their experiences.

It was as a result of their information, coupled with my interest in how and why some women do decide to re-enter, that the second part of the study proceeded. Here a smaller sample of women on a variety of courses were included.
The decision to focus the research on the experiences of women students, rather than on men or mixed groups, was deliberate. Several important factors make the educational experiences of women different to those of men. These are -

- there is considerable evidence to suggest that the experiences and expectations of girls at school differ from that of boys;

- the perceived options available to girls on leaving school are different to those of boys;

- the pattern of paid employment for women is likely to differ to that of men; in particular, many women take a break from paid work to care for children and other dependents and are more likely than men to have periods of part-time employment;

- women participate in education, as adults, in larger numbers than men;

- very few studies of adult students have considered the experiences of women; most studies of 'mature' students do not differentiate between the performance of women and men;

- my experiences, as outlined above, made me particularly keen to focus on women.

Given greater resources, it would be valuable to compare the experiences of women students with those of men students but in the absence of that opportunity, I choose to confine myself to women only samples.

"To those whose methodology is suffused with sexism ... a sample composed entirely of men is seen as unproblematical, while one composed entirely of women may be seen as odd." (Roberts 1981)

Methodology

The techniques used in this study were in the following sequence:
(a) the administrative department in the university concerned provided a computer print-out of all female undergraduates over the age of 22 years on admission, giving full names, addresses and dates of birth; this covered admissions in 1979, 1980 and 1981;

(b) contacted all the "home" students by letter, including a questionnaire (Appendix Ia and Ib) - 40 replies;

(c) invited 30 respondents to (b) for an interview, lasting approx. one hour each - 27 replies;

(d) obtained details of two more undergraduate intakes for 1982 and 1983, as for (a);

(e) letters and questionnaires, as for (b), sent to these - 28 replies;

(f) visited and collected information at certain possible re-entry points -

   two community colleges' day-time adult students and one college's evening students

   one FE college evening class

   two Workers Educational Association (WEA) events - day-time New Opportunities for Women (NOW) course and day school on 'Women and Education';

(g) collected completed questionnaires from each of the above re-entry points (Appendix Ic) - 47 replies.

My basic approach to this study was similar to the methodology outlined by Roberts (1981) and Burgess (1985). Primarily, I saw this research as 'feminist' in the sense that it set out deliberately to make women 'visible' within the context of adult education. Previous work, as I have indicated, has not recognised the distinctive experience of women; some studies have not mentioned women at all.
However, I do not accept that any work on women or by women is necessarily 'feminist' unless it recognises that the social conditions of women differ from those of men. My own experience, as a woman, provided a reason to initiate, and a cause to continue, this research. This is reflected not only in the aims and the content of the research but in the methodology.

"Feminists, in stressing the need for a reflexive sociology in which the sociologist takes her own experiences seriously and incorporates them into her work, expose themselves to challenges of a lack of objectivity from those of their male colleagues whose sociological insight does not enable them to see that their own work is affected in a similar way by their experiences and their view of the world as men." (Roberts 1981)

In line with the contributors to Burgess (1985), I intended my research to be qualitative rather than quantitative. Where I give numbers or percentages, these are to illustrate and support the points I make, rather than to be accepted as statistical evidence. The two techniques I used - the questionnaire and the interview - were chosen as the most appropriate for the task, which was essentially to obtain a retrospective life history.

My first samples were made up of women undergraduates who were literate and articulate. In both questionnaires and interviews, it was apparent that most of them were more than willing to provide information about themselves.

The first questionnaire, completed by five years' intake of mature women undergraduates, was designed both to elicit factual information (eg the age of leaving school) as well as more subjective responses (eg the reasons for leaving). In that I set out to examine educational histories, all the questions were retrospective and therefore their responses are liable to rationalisation over time.

For the re-entry sample, the questionnaire was adapted to give more opportunity for subjective comment, encouraging and giving space to the women to re-assess their earlier education and to comment on it. This questionnaire also asked for an indication of future intentions.
This was not only to identify those who had firm plans for their next educational activity but also to see how many had not thought of the future.

The interviews with the undergraduate sample proved to be the most rewarding and fruitful part of the research, which, if time and resources had permitted, I would have extended to include greater numbers.

Essentially these were structured but unscripted interviews, lasting between 40 minutes and one hour. The structure was based directly on a chronological account, starting with junior school and ending with entry to the university. Where necessary, the already completed questionnaire was used as a lead.

The interviews were held in the Education Department of the university, except for the final four, for which I visited the students' homes. All the interviews were taped. The atmosphere was intended to be relaxed and informal in that each woman was offered coffee on arrival. Seated in easy chairs, we spent the first few minutes chatting before I explained a little about myself and the context of the research. I said that I would like to tape the interview and asked permission of the woman before turning on the machine. No one refused.

As Burgess (1985) argues, it is essential in qualitative research to form a relationship between the researcher and the researched. In the same volume, Measor (1985), writing about her research, suggests that 'building relationships' is the key part of the interviewing strategy.

".... we operated with the idea that the quality of the data is dependent on the quality of the relationship you build with people being interviewed."

To build a good relationship, interviews must be inter-active. Oakley (1981) has shown how inappropriate one-way, non-commital dialogues can be. Even though the interview may be designed essentially as an information gathering tool, responding to the person being interviewed.
can result in more detailed information being gathered. This is not simply by asking questions. For example, one woman in my sample appeared rather reticent and uneasy in the interview. When we reached the point of leaving school, I noticed she had joined the WRNS. Many years before I had left school and done the same, so I told her that I was particularly interested in the next phase of her life because I, too, had been in the WRNS. For a few minutes we reminisced about where we had served, what we had done etc - and then resumed the 'interview'. From then on she was relaxed and forthcoming; I am convinced that had I not shared that experience with her, the result would not have been so successful but I reject any suggestion that my 'personal' intervention damaged the validity of the data collected.

The charge that the personality of the interviewer, particularly if inter-active, can affect the objectivity of the exercise is further reduced when all the interviews are conducted by the same person. It is possible that different interviewers send different 'messages' which may illicit different responses. After each interview I played through the tape recording, noting my handling of it and any interventions I made. Although I accept that I may have modified my style as I became more skilled and discovered what leads were most successful, the taped record shows no major changes over time.

Measor (1985) stresses the importance of the image of the researcher in an interview. I was careful not to convey a particularly strong 'feminist' image since I did not want to extract any responses that they thought appropriate. In many cases, I appeared very like the women themselves - married, a mother, middle-aged and a mature student. This gave me the opportunity to indicate a shared understanding of their feelings. This leads me to endorse Measor's claim -

"When I was challenged about the validity of my data, my own reaction was really that I felt the data was valid. My intuitive reaction was that the responses were real, and that I had not been 'put off'. Such an emotive statement of course has no validity in social science terms, and it has no ornamentation of scientific rigour."

If there is a weakness in the validity of the data it may arise more
from the nature of the sample. In both the questionnaire and interview samples involving undergraduates, there were many who were familiar with theories about gender and about social class. Their rationalisation of their earlier experiences is likely to be informed by this. In addition, these women had 'successfully' returned to education, had been accepted by a university and, in almost every case were doing well. From this positive position, retrospective views may be different to those in the re-entry sample, who were already struggling or who were still very unsure of their academic potential. Their retrospective feelings about their schooling, for example, may be from a less positive perspective. Thus comparisons between the responses from the undergraduates and the re-entry women must be viewed with caution.

It should be stated that the data gathered from the interviews is not only more detailed but more reflective than that from the questionnaires. The women had more opportunity to expand on what they had written, to explain their circumstances and their comments at length. To some extent this is reflected in the written style of the report which follows. When discussing the interview responses, I use many quotations from the transcript. While I have selected, ordered and commented on their statements, it was part of my intention, in my methodology and in my report, to give women a space to speak for themselves.

The structure of the thesis.

The first five chapters of this thesis attempt to set the empirical work in context. In deciding what issues and topics to discuss I took the women in the samples as a starting point. The object of the research was to discover why and how they had re-entered education. The reasons why they made the decision and the routes they chose to follow were affected in every case by a number of variables. These include –

- their initial schooling experience and the academic qualifications they achieved;
- their feelings, in retrospect, about those experiences;
- the training and jobs which followed after they left school;
- the choices they made at this point and their retrospective feelings about those choices;
- their subsequent personal histories, especially marriage and motherhood;
- the attitudes they had to 'women's role' in society and the influence on this of family and friends;
- the re-entry opportunities available for women in their area (or their potential mobility) and the knowledge they have of these;
- their own, their families and friends, attitudes to education and the value placed on it.

For each of these considerations I explored the available literature and reviewed current thinking on the topic. This forms the content of chapters two, three, four and five.

In Chapter Two I try to set the education of girls and women into an historical perspective. The current educational provision has roots which can be traced back through descriptive and prescriptive material, particularly from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. A survey of this helps in understanding the current provision and attitudes about girls and education.

All the women in my samples had been wholly or mainly educated in this country. Since I have justified the reason for the research on the claim that the experiences and expectations of girls at school differs to that of boys, a fairly full consideration of gender and schooling follows in Chapter Three. However, gendered experiences do not start with admission to compulsory schooling at the age of five, and so a discussion of socialization theories precedes the schooling section.

Many women in my sample were married or living in partnerships; a majority had children. Given the responsibilities that family circumstances force upon women, it is important to consider both their actual family conditions as well as their attitudes to them. Chapter Four starts with an examination of the family. The number of women in the samples who made reference to their husbands and their children reinforces the importance of this when looking at potential or actual re-entry to education.
But family circumstances were not the only major factor to emerge. I had anticipated that gender would be a crucial component of the study; in fact, responses to both questionnaires and interviews exposed the major importance of social class. The second part of Chapter Four examines the significance of social class both for women and for education.

Another factor of great relevance to anyone attempting to re-enter education as an adult, concerns the provision of opportunity, both the availability of openings and information about them. For many women, this must also include proximity and mobility. Chapter Five contains a full discussion of education for adults, both policy and practice. In recent years, particular consideration has been given by some to the potential needs of women in adult education, and this topic is also discussed.

The thesis then moves from a consideration of these background issues to the empirical study itself. Chapter Six covers the undergraduate women, both questionnaire and interview samples; Chapter Seven reports on the re-entry questionnaires.

Chapter Eight provides a summary and conclusion to the study.

Definition of terms.

Before proceeding it is important to clarify any potential confusion over the use of two particular terms used throughout the study - 'mature students' and 'adult education'. Definitions of 'mature' vary widely in institutions, in statistical records and in regulations for admission. In this study I use the term to include all students over the age of 21 years on admission. This presumes that they have had a period out of full-time education between initial schooling and re-entry. Regulations vary from 21, 23 or 25 years in their definition; this is in contrast, to those of 18-19 years who are referred to as of 'conventional' age.

The term 'adult education' has tended to acquire a meaning restricted to educational opportunities provided purely for adults - eg by LEAs
in evening classes, non-vocational and leisure provision etc. For this reason I tend to use the term the 'education of adults' in this thesis. By this I include all opportunities for adults to participate in formal education, whether especially designed for them or as part of 'mainstream' provision for students of conventional age. Technically, universities and institutions of higher education which admit students of 18 plus are for 'adults' but there is a difference between those who progress from school to post-school provision without a break, and who therefore have not completed their 'initial' education, and those who re-enter as 'mature' students. It is these latter who are the subject of this thesis.
Chapter Two

A historical perspective on the education of women and girls
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN.

Introduction.
It is useful to start by considering the education system in this country today, both state and private, in the context of its historical development. It was not masterminded or created in 1870, 1944 or at any other significant date but emerged and was modified over a considerable period of time. Although earlier provision existed, the most formative period starts in the mid-Nineteenth Century.

The growth and change of the system cannot be likened to a smooth progression or expansion but represents an uneven movement, with periods of stagnation and regression, as well as critical events and more marked innovation. At all times its characteristics and its changes can be understood in the light of complex circumstances and conditions of existence in society at that time. Economic, social, political and religious influences can be traced. Nor can it be assumed that consensus always existed; each modification or expansion, each official report or new legislation, was accompanied by debate, controversy and often struggle, amongst various individuals and interest groups.

If all this is true of education as a whole, it is equally true of the history of the education of girls and women. Provision for them can only be understood in this far wider context. And while it is true that at some times and in some areas, education was discussed without reference to the sex of the recipient, at other times this issue was central to the debate.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the main areas of debate and the main changes in provision that have directly affected the education of girls and women since approximately 1850. The details are not essential; the aim is to show how present provision and attitudes to inequality in education reflect many of the patterns and concerns rooted in Victorian society.

The other major dimension which prevails throughout this discussion is that of social class. At no point can the provision of education for girls be considered homogeneous; social class variations are always
evident. Operating with social class is the other dimension of "ability", although in places and in practice, the two become parallel in effect.

One early paper which offers an analysis of the education of girls in outline is Marks (1976). Although many historical accounts pre-date her paper (cf Kamm 1965, Lamb and Pickthorn 1968, Turner 1974) she was one of the first to emphasise both the significance and the complexity of the Nineteenth Century provision. She takes "feminity" as a crucial concept and illustrates how the problematic nature of the concept is reflected in its changing nature over time and its different interpretation for various groups of females. She also shows clearly how the confusion over objectives in education as a whole is likely to reflect concepts of feminity and views of sex specific education. In discussing the purpose of education she writes -

"Some see it as necessarily geared to the "needs" of the pupils, as something which is to prepare them for their future roles in society. In this case, definitions of feminity and masculinity will loom large. Others may believe that education should not be specifically vocational, or should not be designed to produce particular kinds of people, but should be seen as a "good in itself" with universally applicable objectives. People who think this are less likely to stress views about intellectual differences between the sexes, although they may feel that girls need help to "catch up" with boys. Yet others believe that education should be vocational, but they may differ among themselves, about how far vocation, and thus education, should be sex specific. ... Thus those who think more or less exclusively of education as vocational are quite likely to think of boys as having a number of choices while girls are really only faced with one i.e. marriage and motherhood."

Other criteria that influence the provision of educational opportunities for girls are likely to be those applied in the selection of pupils for various types of schooling. Selection may be by social class or income, as in fee-paying schools; by merit, as in selection by attainment and examination; or by preference and choice, as in the comprehensive system. Various different criteria dominated at specific historical periods, although all three can co-exist at any one time. The principle of the criteria may not, of course, be
effective in practice. Marks suggests that whatever the predominant criteria, girls get "slotted in", depending upon the current idea of feminity. Thus the educational experiences of able, middle class girls in the late Nineteenth Century, educated by governesses at home, differed dramatically from that of a middle class girl in the early Twentieth Century, educated at one of the fee-paying High schools. In the first instance, her working class opposite would have been in a Dame or Board school, but in the second, may have secured one of the "free" places at the High school.

Deem (1978) and Sharpe (1976) offer more simplistic educational explanations for the changes in the history of education for girls. Deem relates the provision to the needs of capital with regard to the sexual division of labour.

"In educating girls the main benefits were seen to accrue to homes and to families and ultimately to the development of capitalism, not to girls themselves. The close link between the family, marriage and the education of girls is one which remained strong until the present day."

In one place she acknowledges the complexity of the issue -

"The present education system can be viewed through its historical growth from the 1880s. But rather than being a straightforward or positive progression, the nature of girls education at any particular time reflects the outcome of a number of related factors. These include the stated (official) aim of education, the prevailing idea of feminity, the sexual division of labour and the demand for certain types of labour and levels of skill."

However, she then reaches a similar conclusion -

"At first it will seem less of a struggle to conform to the role that capital makes most acceptable and whose basic principles have been made explicit throughout childhood and indeed history."

It remains to be seen whether an examination of the historical development of the education of girls leads to such a neat conclusion.
Victorian England: the education of middle-class ladies.

All the accounts of the growth of educational provision for girls and women in the Nineteenth Century stress a complete division on social class lines. Daughters of working class parents, whether in rural or urban areas, received totally different educational experiences from those daughters whose fathers were part of the emerging middle class. It is convenient to treat each group separately and then to draw any common threads at the end.

Kamm (1965) gives a fairly straightforward and factual account of the events and individuals that were significant during this period, but without any theoretical context. Delamont and Duffin (1978) and Bryant (1979) present a deeper examination of the growth in educational provision in its societal context but the most detailed analysis comes from Burstyn (1980). It is on her book that I draw most consistently.

The 'separate spheres' of Victorian society were most rigidly defined, with men occupying the world of work outside of the home and women the domestic world within. Women's role as wife and mother was to provide an ordered haven for her husband when he returned home from work and a structured and controlled environment for her children and her servants. Her skills were domestic, in management rather than in practical ways, since servants performed all the actual tasks, except in the poorest middle-class home. But her skills were social too, in that the wife was expected to entertain both family and friends with her 'accomplishments'. A little music, art, embroidery and languages were fashionably acceptable but too much learning was not.

Children were brought up to anticipate and prepare for their respective roles. Boys were sent from home to public school at an early age, or to grammar school if the family were less affluent, to be educated in the classical style prior to entering the professions, the services, the church or perhaps the family firm. Daughters were expected to be both outwardly constrained and inwardly conforming. Education consisted in acquiring the accomplishments of a lady, either from a governess at home or by attending one of the small 'private' schools found in most towns, especially in the south of England. The appalling academic standards of these schools were exposed by the
Taunton Commission in 1867.

While there was a constant demand throughout the century for increasing the educational provision for boys, no such demand for girls emerged until around 1850, and then only from isolated and unco-ordinated sources.

If the ideal was to preserve the 'separate spheres', the reality was not always so clearly defined. Some daughters envied their brothers opportunities and resented their enforced idleness and lack of stimulation. There was a shortage of good governesses. The job had always attracted women from a particular strata - the genteel but impoverished daughter, spinsters who needed to support themselves. Daughters of clergy were especially suitable, since they provided a moral and religious dimension as well as a background of learning. However, increasing demands for governesses led to more unqualified and unsuitable applicants as well as to an influx of young European women. To counteract this, the Governesses Benevolent Institution founded the Church of England Queen’s College in 1848. The Non-conformist Bedford College opened soon after. Ten years later the demand problem had become a supply problem, as too many qualified young women emerged from the colleges and were unable to find employment. It is at this point that some of the activists in the campaign to extend the educational opportunities for girls first emerged.

The details of the campaign are complex and difficult to summarise. Several notable individuals combined their activities. Their demands were basically that daughters should have the same educational opportunities as sons, should receive schooling of an academic nature and should be permitted to take the entrance examinations for higher education and be admitted to universities and colleges. The campaign developed two major thrusts - on the one hand the 'uncompromising' who wanted an education as academic as that offered to boys and equal opportunities to compete with them; on the other hand, the 'separatists' who sought a modified form, more suitable for girls and a more specific preparation for womanhood.

This division resulted from what Delamont (1978) calls the "contradiction" or the double-bind facing Victorian women. The ideal future for a daughter was a successful marriage and motherhood but
there was a surplus of women and therefore some daughters were forced into a life of dependency on male members of the family – the cousins and aunts who so often appear in family sagas. The problem was to combine the preparation for both eventualities, without damaging the possibility of either. To educate a girl might diminish her chances of a good marriage, but to acquire useless accomplishments was no training for a worthwhile future. Hence all the institutions, schools and colleges, which opened for girls had to walk the fine line between academic attainment and ladylike conformity. Atkinson (1978) shows clearly how this was reflected in physical activities; Okeley (1978) suggests that girls' boarding schools today are still coping with a similar problem.

The demand for education for girls aroused fierce opposition from a variety of sources – political, medical and religious. Bustyn shows how these centered around certain themes, primarily medical, moral or economic. As one argument was challenged in public debate, another took its place. Some of the views of the opposition now read as idiotic ideas, yet strains of each argument can still be detected in present day theory and practice.

Physiological arguments covered a range of reasons why women could not, and should not, be admitted to higher education. Whilst it was not often openly argued that they were inferior or less intelligent, the main point was that they were different, due possibly to a difference in size or shape of brain. It would be unsuitable for them to study the same subjects as men and unfair for them to take the same examinations. Far more contentious, however, were the medical reasons for not allowing women into higher education because of the dangers of "mental strain" during puberty and menstruation. The implications of this went far beyond mere incapacity to explain how this mental strain could cause severe damage to reproductive organs causing sterility. This, though, had very serious consequences, for if intelligent middle-class women could not reproduce successfully, the very fabric of society was threatened. It was therefore in the "national interest" that women should stay at home preparing themselves for domesticity and motherhood. But that was not all, for mental strain and intellectual activity might make women "masculine" both physically and mentally and then who would want to marry them? Not only were parents unwilling to risk this fate for their daughters but, again, there was
a danger that family life would collapse. In the interests of society, indeed in the interests of the human race, women must be discouraged from education.

The religious and moral arguments took up a similar refrain, only in this case it was the "Divine Will" that ordered that men and women should be different. Women were to be rewarded with a higher spiritual role and by their purity, maintain the moral fabric of society. Through self-denial and good works, they could find fulfillment without being contaminated. There is no doubt that opposition on religious grounds was very effective and did cause serious guilt feeling among some of the women who first entered higher education. The first women's colleges made conspicuous provision for the spiritual and moral welfare of their students.

Finally, the economic grounds for opposing education for women have a familiar ring. Higher education, it was argued, would be wasted on a woman for she would only marry. Women could not be allowed into the professions, since they would take the jobs from men; a fear that was used against women's participation in work at all levels. If women were to be admitted, then wages would fall and there would be a surplus of labour. Of course, no woman at this time, could hope to combine a career with marriage, so educated women might prefer their independence and decide not to marry - and here we come full circle back to the end of the family and the threat to society.

The results of this opposition were that the advocates of women's education had to modify their demands and be seen to be respectable members of society and not threats to the social order - again a strategy sometimes adopted today. This made almost impossible demands on the early women students when schools and colleges were first opened. Not only did they have to prove their academic standards, which meant proving the superior ability of their students, but they had also to retain the image of feminity and respectability. Above all, their students must remain marriageable - but yet equipped for independence should they not eventually marry.

The detailed account by Burstyn illustrates well the complexity of change and the various processes that had to be worked through. From the first realisation of a "problem" - a recognised injustice or need
- came the raising of awareness; the devising of strategy and tactics; the taking of specific action; playing to the "rules"; conflict within the movement and division of aim; the identifying of the opposition; enlisting support of the "establishment"; setting up of actual institutions despite opposition; the proof by results; the gradual increase in provision. Finally came official recognition that education for girls was permissible but within certain constraints.

At the same time it must be recognised that other educational "reforms" were under way - the extension of grammar school provision for boys; the challenge to classicism by science; the need to revise the provision and aims of schooling for working-class pupils. Changes occurred in state policy and in the image of the family; in the diffusion of ideas and in the dominant ideology. All these changes affected the education of girls.

The women and their supporters who struggled to extend and improve the educational opportunities for girls and young women were forced to compromise, in order to fit the constraints of the society of which they were part. By the end of the century, many middle-class girls were receiving an 'academic' education but were starting to specialise in certain subjects - the arts and languages, rather than mathematics and science. Some certainly were going on to higher education but faced opposition in the process, especially in areas such as medicine. Others went into 'feminine' occupations such as teaching and nursing and later the Civil Service; others to the expanding areas of business, notably into office work. Very few challenged the male professions - the law, medicine and, none at all, the Church. Initially all women gave up their career on marriage; to educate a woman to be a good wife and mother might just be acceptable but to allow that wife or mother to continue working was considered totally unacceptable.

Throughout this historical debate, many present day issues emerge. Although the social context appears very different, debates about the role of women - their aptitudes, abilities and opportunities - seem depressingly familiar. The "contradictions" still exist for many girls today and, although there is an appearance of choice, the options are remarkably similar. These will be reflected in later sections of the
chapter but meanwhile, we need to see what happened to the less favoured girls in Victorian society.

Victorian England: the education of working-class girls.

The regional distribution of educational resources made prominent by Byrne (1975,1978) suggests that, historically, the opportunities available must have depended primarily on where the pupil lived, since the provision was not uniform. This was true for working-class girls and boys and indeed for middle-class children too, unless sent to boarding school.

During the Nineteenth Century the differences in provision between rural and urban areas were extreme and children in each would be affected by the demands of farm or factory. The respective roles of girls and boys might differ - minding younger siblings or helping at home while both parents worked; helping in the fields or working in mine or mill. The introduction of the various Factory Acts during the Nineteenth Century and their effects on both women and children, had implications for the length and frequency of available schooling at various ages and in various places.

The claim by Delamont (1978b) that the schooling experiences of working-class boys and girls in the Nineteenth Century were largely undifferentiated by sex has been challenged by Purvis (1981). Although the only education available was in 'Dame schools' and 'Sunday schools', the type of provision varied considerably, mainly due to the skills and aptitudes of the individual teacher. Nevertheless there is evidence to suggest that girls everywhere received instruction in knitting and needlework - skills which were essential for their future domestic role, whether or not they were in paid work as well.

The middle-class controlled 'Charity schools' founded by the two national religious societies (Established and Dissenting) had specific aims in providing education for working-class children, one of which
was to prepare them for their future roles as workers, domestic servants and eventually, wives and mothers. This emphasis comes over clearly in a local report dated 1798 –

"The girls are taught to read, knit, spin, sew and mend their own clothes so as to fit them to be useful daughters and good wives; the boys (besides being improved in their reading) are instructed in writing and arithmetic."

All pupils were taught to read, especially the Bible, but there was debate over the usefulness of writing, and girls often appeared to sacrifice their arithmetic to practise extra needlework. The influence of the middle-class ideology of separate spheres can be seen here, even though many working-class women continued to work both before and during marriage and motherhood.

Charity schools were both mixed and single sex, according to size and location; a common practice was to combine the infants with the girls and segregate the older boys. There is also evidence in Purvis (1981) to suggest that the length and frequency of schooling varied for girls and boys. Girls were kept away from school more frequently to help with domestic chores; boys, in rural areas particularly, often missed school to help with farm work. Girls were often kept at school for longer than boys, who could usually find work at an earlier age.

The introduction of pupil-teacher apprenticeships in 1848 opened the way for more girls to continue their education and to enter a paid job until marriage. Skills in sewing and knitting were required for entrance and then taught in turn. The 'payment by results' scheme introduced in 1862 ensured that pupils attended more regularly but were taught the essentials within a very narrow curriculum.

With the introduction of the State system following the 1870 Education Act, the previously fragmented and unco-ordinated provision was supplanted by a uniform system which became compulsory in 1880 and free in 1891. Purvis argues that all the provision available before then was differentiated by sex in some way. For girls, their future domestic role either as servant or as wife and mother was influential, but after 1870, it became more explicit and pervasive in its importance.
Whilst the educational opportunities for middle-class girls were expanding towards the end of the Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century, the provision for working-class girls became increasingly influenced by the domestic ideology that had previously constrained their middle-class contemporaries. The influence of the middle-class ideal of separate spheres and women's place within the home diffused downwards to the working-class in various ways and with moderate effect. Throughout the Nineteenth Century and Twentieth Century, in many parts of the country married women and mothers continued to work of necessity and/or choice - the opportunities were there in mills, factories and sweatshops. Nevertheless there were major events and influences that caused specific efforts to be made to try overtly to influence working-class women to stay at home and to persuade husbands that a working wife was a sign of their incapacity to provide. This trend cannot be understood without reference to such events as the Boer War, which showed how physically impoverished many young men had become. This discovery, coupled with the ideas of Social Darwinism, led to an emphasis on the need to maintain the standards of the 'race'. Davin (1978) has shown how the drop in birthrate, combined with a very high infant mortality rate, aroused concern and led to the implementation of a programme to educate the nation's mothers. Despite evidence of appalling poverty in both official and verbatim reports, the emphasis was on public health provision and the importance of good mothering.

Although these reforms did not directly concern the schools, their influence was felt and the education of girls was affected. The same concern that had deplored the mental and physical strain that education would cause for middle-class girls now became directed to teaching their working-class counterparts to be good wives and mothers. Health and hygiene became known as 'domestic science'. This was to be taught in schools, in case the example and teaching in the home was not sufficiently good to improve the standards of the daughters. Grants were given for compulsory domestic subjects in elementary schools. The demand for girls to enter domestic service fitted well with this trend, since having learned the basics in school, a period working in a middle-class home would improve the standard still further, prior to taking on their own domestic
Two separate strands emerge here: middle-class girls, now allowed an academic education, were not expected to do domestic science, while working-class girls were increasingly offered a curriculum more directly relevant to their future role as wives and mothers. Yet, in reality, middle-class girls were less likely to continue with paid work after marriage, while substantial numbers of working-class women had to work throughout their lives. A few of the more able working-class girls would find their way into free places at the growing number of secondary and high schools, which continued to offer a small amount of domestic science to their 'less able' pupils, perhaps in place of Latin or 'real' science. With the education provision thus divided by sex, by social class and by ability, the official reports of the Twentieth Century take up the story.

The education of girls in the Twentieth Century.

In this section I intend to look at the educational provision for girls since 1900. As in the previous century, the schooling available for girls of the two social classes was different in emphasis, content and intention but less markedly so as the century progressed and some avenues opened to allow a minority of working-class girls to join their more privileged sisters.

To assess the provision and the changes, I propose to use as source material the various official reports instigated by the Board of Education (later, the Ministry of Education and still later, the Department of Education and Science). From these reports I have extracted the content that deals specifically with the difference in treatment of girls and boys.

The extent to which Government reports reflect or affect public thinking or educational practice is debatable. Wolpe (1974) claims that such documents contain "the official ideology of the form that education should take".
Table 2.1 Women's contribution to the labour force 1901-1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% men</th>
<th>% women</th>
<th>women as % of total labour force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hakim C. (1978)

Table 2.2 Economic activity rates of married women 1911 - 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>all ages</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EOC Annual Report 1981

Table 2.3 Labour Force participation rates 1901 - 1971

Percentage in each group who are economically active

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men 15-64</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women 15-59</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married women</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hakim C. (1979)
Without a full examination of social history, these reports cannot be placed in their social context. To select those aspects of society that are relevant to education is difficult. For example, the psychological and indeed physiological, knowledge available at the time was influential on these reports. The reporting committee usually referred to 'expert' opinions in these matters, especially when discussing the differences between girls and boys. Much of this expert opinion is now known to be inaccurate; indeed some of the advice seems laughable today. So educational provision, related to knowledge of the the individual needs and interests of the child, although important, is a confused criteria. The other concern, evident in most reports, is the extent to which education should be seen as preparation for adult roles in society. This preoccupies much of the content of these documents. Again this reflects a normative position - preparation for what it was considered their adult working roles should be, rather than what these roles probably would be. In terms of statistics, the contemporary structure of the labour market can be examined. From census returns, for example, the actual numbers of working women, single and married, are available, together with details of the type of jobs they did and the numbers involved. And such information was available to the Committees who compiled these reports, should they have wished to consult it. Although they may be forgiven for not detecting future trends or recognising the long term effects of two major wars, their lack of reference to women's employment figures is most marked. Given the amount of evidence that some of these reports generated and the wide range of sources consulted, it is significant that the working pattern of women's future lives was, in most cases, ignored. Even if it was recognised, it may have been considered undesirable.

To set these documents in their historical perspective in this way, the following statistical tables are included:

(i) Womens contribution to the labour force 1901-1971.
   (Hakim 1978) (Table 2.1)
    (EOC 1981) (Table 2.2)
     (Hakim 1979) (Table 2.3)
Table 2.4 Women workers in major occupational groups
(Women as a percentage of all)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proprietors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher profession</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower profession</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forewomen</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hakim C. (1978)
Table 2.5 Economic activity rates for married females

Percentage of age group economically active

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 45-54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 35-44</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25-34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 20-24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OU U221 Course text Unit 10-11 (1983)
The opening of the Twentieth Century saw some recommendations of the 1885 Bryce Report implemented in the 1901 Education Act. With the creation of Local Education Authorities and the expansion of secondary schooling, the state provision of education for both girls and boys was basically established. But secondary education was not free, because selectivity by income and social class for both girls and boys existed. There were more secondary school places for boys and the great divide between academic secondary schools and more practical elementary and technical schools created a tradition which is still influential. David (1980) has shown how the responsibility for education for children of all classes passed slowly from the family to the state, with the advent of compulsory schooling. At this point it was clearly established that girls needed to be educated as well as boys but that their future roles were quite different.

At the elementary level, the 1904 School Code attempted to widen the curriculum to include history, geography, music etc - and for girls, cookery, laundry work and housewifery. Girls found time for these extra subjects whilst boys did elementary science or mathematics. The emphasis of these early reports (1904 Elementary School Code; 1904 Regulations for Secondary Schools; 1906 Report upon Questions affecting Higher Elementary Schools) was upon providing the education most fitting for future roles within their distinctive social class and their appropriate station in life. Thus class and sex again determined the type of education received. In 1921 7.2% of all pupils, age 11-16, were in Secondary schools; 55% in Elementary schools.

In terms of the different experiences of girls and boys, the most significant document in the first quarter of the Century was the 1923 Board of Education Report by the Consultative Committee on "Differentiation of the Curriculum for Boys and Girls respectively in Secondary Schools."

This Report, aimed at the schools teaching mainly middle-class girls and boys, laid a firm foundation for all secondary schooling for the
following 60 years. Some of the findings of this committee sound very familiar to present day readers.

The Report was written and published in the somewhat confused years following the Great War, which had seen a dramatic and visible change in the expectations of roles of women and men and in perceptions of their social relationships and responsibilities. Following the recruitment of women for work in munition factories during the war, the chaos of de-mobilization and growing economic crisis, the pressure on women to return to their domestic roles was overt and cruel. The report makes no open reference to the social changes of the time but refers back, with some regret, to the closing stages of the preceding century when women demanded equality -

"but if their new strength was gained, old and delicate graces were perhaps lost, and the individuality of womanhood was in some respects sacrificed on the austere altar of sex equality."

This was to be followed by a period of equality - but also of difference. The "equal but different" thesis underlies the whole Report.

Reviewing the existing curriculum as required by the Board, the science and mathematics question arises again -

"As regards girls, it must include practical instruction in Domestic Subjects, such as Cookery, Needlework, Laundry-work, Housekeeping and Household Hygiene. For older girls (over 15) Natural Science may be wholly or partially dropped and Mathematics may be confined to Arithmetic, in order to make room for a fuller course in a combination of Domestic Subjects."

Even the current single-sex versus mixed schooling debate is foreshadowed in the this 1923 Report -

"In co-educational secondary schools .. girls may take Botany where boys take General Experimental Science or Physics.. but many more girls in these schools take Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics than in ordinary girls' schools"
".. girls are allowed to take Botany instead of Physics, and Needlework instead of Trigonometry..."

and social class differences are detected -

"There are always, however, some girls of the professional class in these schools, who take the full Science course with success."

One of the major concerns of this Report was to expose and deplore the undue academic influence of university preparation on the whole of the Secondary school. Whilst it is fair to to say that less academic boys were also affected by this emphasis, for girls the situation was seen as particularly undesirable -

"... especially in its bearing on girls' schools, where one of the most important aims of the training, that of fitting girls for the duties of motherhood and for work in the home, has been unduly obscured by the academic trend given in many instances to the curricula ..."

Little reference is made to other openings for girls at this stage - "languages and geography would be useful for girls intending to enter business" and "many girls will go on to careers in competition with men". (In the 1921 Census, 40% of all white collar workers were female.)

Underlying all the discussion of the different needs of girls and boys were 'expert' opinions about physical and mental developmental differences at this stage. There was still great concern about the dangers of too much competition, too much strain being placed on adolescent girls, and two recommendations were made in order to ease the situation. It was suggested that girls should have a shorter school day and take public examinations a year later than boys.

The Report includes pages of evidence from experts and teachers of the observed differences between girls and boys, including lists of adjectives that read like a Bem sex-role inventory. But even then, they conclude that the differences within the sexes are greater than those between them. The influence of external factors were recognised
- the less time allocated because girls did extra subjects; a lower standard of teaching in girls' schools; the demand of home responsibilities etc.

The 1923 Committee reported a clear subject difference in levels of attainment - girls doing better at English, History, Languages and Biology; boys in Latin, Mathematics and the Natural Sciences. These findings, with the exception of Latin, predict exactly the present attainment differences between girls and boys.

Recommendations about what to do about this appear confused, mainly because the Committee could not decide why such differences existed. On the one hand they regret girls lower levels in Mathematics, but since most took only arithmetic and extra Domestic subjects, that does not seem surprising. On the other hand they recommend that girls should drop Mathematics earlier; then latter advocate better teaching in Maths and Physics for girls. In English, they recommend compensatory attempts to improve girls "logical analysis" and boys "literary style".

In terms of girls' future roles, the Committee appear equally confused. They recognise the dual role -

"There is room for more sympathetic experiment to find out how the natural instincts of the girl may be used to best advantage in assisting her all-round development while at school and in fitting her for home life as well as for a professional or business career."

but still recognise the girls' 'real' interests -

"It must be remembered that, to the majority of girls, the possibility of an early marriage is probably always present, consciously or sub-consciously, and this consideration may, in certain instances, tend to make them less ambitious and less interested in school subjects as are not obviously of some use in ordinary life."

And yet despite all this, in their final recommendations they write -

"Thus the ordinary girl, whether she looks forward to the married
state or not, should be given an education which prepares her to earn her livelihood"

"We feel very strongly that girls should not be debarred from any opportunities of development open to their brothers and should be free, if they so desire, to study any subject of the ordinary school routine acceptable for boys."

Given at the time the rapid social changes occurring, it is not surprising that this 1923 Report should also appear confused, resulting in a final, rather naive, appeal for flexibility. In retrospect, while it is surprising that so little recognition was made of the changing position of women, the overall summary and conclusion seems noticeably up to date. It is notable that such findings and recommendations have been in existence for over 80 years without much visible change. Indeed some of the later publications seem more traditional and regressive than this.

The secondary schools were the focus of interest for that 1923 Report, but the next two documents concentrate on the rest of the school population. The 1926 Report on the Education of the Adolescent (Hadow) focussed on all other types of provision for the secondary age range. This included Higher Elementary classes and schools, as well as Technical schools. This report struggled to find a balance between the interests and needs of individual pupils and the claims of society as a whole, in proposing a wider, all-embracing provision for this age band with a strong component of 'practical work'. For girls 'practical' clearly meant domestic. Whilst hoping to remove the bias of existing schools - industrial (for boys), commercial (for girls and boys) or domestic (for girls), the subjects for each school were listed as follows:

" (i) the industrial group for boys, in which special attention was paid to science and maths, woodwork and metalwork;
   (ii) the commercial group for girls and boys, which included shorthand, book keeping and type writing;
   (iii) the domestic group for girls, which included cookery, laundry work, needlework, sick nursing, elementary chemistry and hygiene."
The Hadow Committee were anxious that such bias should not be "vocational" and indeed they did not approve of the teaching of typing in schools. Nevertheless the foundations for future choices were laid.

Girls' future choices seemed to centre on one place -

"We consider that courses in homecraft should be planned so as to render girls fit on leaving school to undertake intelligently the various household duties which devolve on most women ... They should be shown that on efficient care and management of the home, depend the health, happiness and prosperity of the nation. Distaste for the work of the home has arisen, in great measure, from the fact that housecraft has not been generally regarded as a skilled occupation for which definite training is essential, and it has too often been practised by those who, through lack of training or undeveloped intelligence, have been incapable of performing it efficiently and of commanding the respect of their fellows. Greater efficiency in the housewife would go far to raise her status in the estimation of the community."

To assist girls in acquiring these skills - and this status - it was suggested that a small flat should be provided in the school, so that they could practice with good equipment and in pleasant surroundings. Whilst the section on handicrafts for boys suggested that girls could learn to use tools too, if they wished, there was no suggestion that boys should do housecraft. The distribution of tasks was seen as 'natural'.

For these pupils then - the less affluent though not necessarily less able - their future roles are clear. There is no suggestion of role conflict here; working class girls are only to be good housewives and mothers.

It is significant that this distinction between the future roles of girls and boys should be evident only at the secondary stage. In a similar Committee Report, published just five years later and also chaired by Hadow (Report of the Consultative Committee on the Primary School 1931), there is very little emphasis on difference at all.
Those compiling the Primary Report were sure that differences between girls and boys did exist but seemed to suggest that these were not important and might even be socially emphasised -

"Both sexes alike inherit instincts but in different degrees of intensity. For instance, the maternal, affectionate and submissive instincts are stronger in girls; the hunting, fighting and assertive instincts are more marked in boys. But this slight bias is, in many instances, much increased by the effects of tradition and convention."

Even though teachers reported great differences in the behaviour and attainment between girls and boys, the overall message of the Report is that both sexes should receive basically the same education. Physical education is certainly singled out for separate instruction and possibly handicrafts in later years, but without the domestic emphasis evident at the secondary level. Even the mixed versus single-sex debate is reduced to the consideration of practicalities - the size of school and the facilities available.

This Hadow Report (1931) contains a very wide coverage of the physiological and psychological development of girls and boys and of the need for a broad curriculum to encourage physical, mental and spiritual growth, using a variety of teaching methods and encouraging co-operation with parents. It reads like an earlier version of Plowden - a progressive document and quite unlike the traditionally constrained discussion of its secondary counterpart.

With the publication of the Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education with special reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools (the Spens Report) in 1938, attention once more focused on the Secondary level. Its brief was -

"To consider and report upon the organization and inter-relation of schools, other than those administered under the Elementary Code, which provide education for pupils beyond the age of 11 plus; regard being had in particular to the framework and content of the education of pupils who do not remain at school beyond the age of about 16."
Table 2.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1924-5</td>
<td>21,962</td>
<td>19,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-6</td>
<td>23,488</td>
<td>19,634</td>
</tr>
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<td>1926-9</td>
<td>27,811</td>
<td>20,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-2</td>
<td>33,618</td>
<td>24,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-5</td>
<td>34,776</td>
<td>23,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-6</td>
<td>37,779</td>
<td>27,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-7</td>
<td>37,221</td>
<td>26,784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934-5</td>
<td>3,353</td>
<td>2,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-6</td>
<td>3,829</td>
<td>2,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-7</td>
<td>4,793</td>
<td>2,859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spens Report (1938)
By the late 1930s, these schools catered for around 16.8% of the age group, of whom approximately 13.7% had been educated in public elementary schools. Up to 1932 almost 50% of the secondary pupils in them were 'free places', but new regulations in 1933 meant a reduction in free places and the instigation of the 'special' (part fee paying) system. In 1937, 77% of all secondary pupils were from public elementary schools; 46% were free; 7.4% partially free. In 1937, 27.6% of secondary pupils left between the ages of 14-16 (the 'early leavers') and thus did not reach the School Certificate stage. Spens has no breakdown on the respective numbers of girls and boys in these schools or of the total number of boys only, girls only and mixed schools. The only available figures are for early leavers of whom 36.6% were boys and 44.4% were girls. The total number of girls and boys taking School Certificate at both first and higher levels, are shown in Table 2.6. The destinations of school leavers over a period of time are shown in Table 2.7; 5.3% of boys and 2.9% of girls going on to university.

The report was critical of the heavy academic curriculum covered in grammar schools and the undue emphasis placed on preparation for university entrance. However, in discussing the numerically far fewer technical high schools, the Report states quite clearly that "vocational" courses are not considered suitable for grammar schools, though commercial subjects and domestic science might be considered in the sixth form - presumably for those not attempting university entrance.

Addressing specifically the development of the curriculum of girls' schools and the adoption of the same curriculum as boys, the Spens Report sees this as a result of the moves towards equality evident at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Turning to the smaller technical high school sector (29,431 pupils as opposed to 409,033 pupils in grammar schools), the emphasis is clearly sex-typed. For girls trade schools lead to work only in hairdressing or needlework; junior technical schools to home management; junior commercial schools to clerical work. There were even nine junior housewifery schools still in existence, which prepared girls for domestic service.

So whilst the grammar schools were encouraged to prepare girls for a wide choice of careers, the technical schools led to very restricted
options. The Spens Committee did recognise that many girls also assisted with work in the home and parents were advised that this might lead to overstrain. The final recommendations present a very full account of the physical, mental and emotional developments of adolescence, with relatively little difference for girls and boys, and reach a fairly neutral position —

"Schools of every type fulfill their proper purpose in so far as they foster the free growth of individuality, helping every boy and girl to achieve the highest degree of individual development of which he or she is capable in and through the life of society."

No difference for girls or boys in the curriculum of the grammar school emerges except that, in rural schools, it is suggested that boys should study the mechanical side of farming, whilst girls preserve fruit and vegetables. However, the pupils in technical schools were to retain their vocational (and sexist) bias, though the Report wanted closer liaison between the two types of school and an opportunity for transfer at 13 plus. But since the numbers of such schools were few and mainly in urban areas, this 'intermediate' sector of the emerging tripartite system, was relatively unimportant except for those girls and boys who narrowly missed grammar school places and subsequently received a far more restricted education. The Report called for an expansion of this area and laid the basis for the later provision of modern, technical and grammar schools.

World War II intervened and saw major upheavals in the political, social and economic sectors of society. In the planning and restructuring of the war years and in the post-war implementation, education was assumed to have a major role. One significant document, again focusing on the secondary age range, was the Report of the Committee of the Secondary Schools Examination Council on "Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools" - the Norwood Report, published in 1943.

In starting to read the Norwood Report after reading earlier documents, one change is immediately apparent. In the introduction we read —

"We regard it as the purpose of education to help each individual to
realise the full powers of his personality - body, mind and spirit - in and through active membership of a society."

The sentence seems to echo the main objective of the Spens Report, with one significant difference - Spens and all earlier documents use the neuter terms child or pupil and the non sex-specific pronouns "their" or boy/girl and he/she. Norwood uses the generic masculine form throughout, unless specifically relating to girls as separate from boys. This Report, as Wolpe (1974) suggests, makes girls invisible. When they do emerge it is totally with reference to their future domestic role. So although the Norwood Report takes up and extends the notion that education should start from the needs and interests of the individual, those needs and interests are initially sex specific, before ability and aptitude are recognised.

In previewing the 1944 Education Act, the Norwood Report marks a milestone in educational thinking. This is shown not only in the emphasis on 'child centered education' but also in the emergence of three distinctive types of secondary school - grammar, technical and modern; in the 11 plus selection examination; the single subject Certificate examination (which became the General Certificate of Education) and statutory awards for university places. It even far-sightedly proposed the future Certificate of Secondary Education, with suggestions for an examination "conducted by teachers .. ".

In its detailed coverage of the curriculum of grammar schools, the findings earlier emphasised in the 1923 Curriculum paper are reinforced, alongside attitudes that had not been previously stated. For example, girls attainments in mathematics are noted -

"It is very rare for any boy to give up mathematics during the main school course or to omit it from School Certificate examinations. With girls the situation is different; in girls schools the place assigned to mathematics varies far more ... thus in some schools very few girls drop the subject; in others a third or even more omit it from School Certificate examinations."

In the chapter on physical education, a footnote specifically states that "his and he" include "her and she" - the only subject to state this. There is no clear differentiation except that both individual
achievement as well as cooperation and team work should be included.

It is in domestic subjects (needlework, cookery, laundry and housewifery) that the concern for girls emerges most clearly. Since, it was argued, there is no guarantee that home training would make girls good makers of homes, some such course is essential for all girls before they leave school. Three reasons for including domestic subjects are given –

"... that knowledge of such subjects is a necessary equipment for all girls as potential makers of homes; that the subjects have the advantage of adding a practical approach to the theoretical; and for girls going on to Domestic Science colleges or leading to similar posts, they are essential."

"For many it is felt, Domestic subjects provide a centre of interest, natural and congenial to them; certain other subjects, for example Natural Science, are seen to have meaning if they are related to something which has a dominant appeal."

- and especially for less academic girls.

Brief acknowledgement is made to the then current war time changes in the position of women - but any suggestion that education should reflect role changes is firmly refuted, or rather, relegated to the world of Scouts and Guides. The effects of evacuation are noted and the "imperfect housing" acknowledged; for whilst schools cannot solve social evils, they can teach the next generation how to use the new conditions, if they are provided.

In considering commerce and careers in business, the Norwood Report reverts again to the male pupil, but no generalised term is used when suggesting that typing and shorthand are not suitable for the Grammar school and should be left until after leaving at the age of 16.

The whole Report reflects the unreality of mens and womens roles, suspended in war time abnormality and unsure what patterns will emerge. The only certainty is that the world of work, especially in the professions, will be for boys; the domestic responsibilities will be for girls. Whether girls are intentionally excluded we do not know
but the result is heavily one-sided.

The Norwood Report was followed by a Government White Paper in 1943 and the Education Act of 1944. This set up a structure for post-war schooling which remained unchanged for the next 20 years, providing for allocation at 11-plus to the tripartite system based on "age, ability and aptitude." But, meanwhile, other areas of education received some attention.

The Norwood Report made several references to the opportunities for both part-time and full-time educational provision after leaving school. They envisaged part-time provision for all those who did not remain at school until 18 and for adults. Some ideas from Norwood were taken up in a Ministry of Education pamphlet Further Education (1947). This publication surveyed the provision of the various day and evening courses in several types of college, covering subjects that were both vocational and leisure orientated. Women were singled out for special mention but again only in reference to their domestic role.

"By women's special interests are meant those which centre around the home."

The Further Education pamphlet argued for better facilities to increase the teaching of housecraft, since happiness in the home depended on knowledge and skill. Wide ranging provisions were listed - cookery, dressmaking, repairs and decoration of furniture, planning the day, budgeting, health and nutrition, theory and practical child study etc. The pamphlet does commend a social function for classes, and music, drama and crafts are mentioned. It suggests that day-time provision might be popular but no mention is made of a nursery or creche.

For women, Further Education in official terms was seen as a purposeful use of leisure which could enhance women's domestic role. There was no mention of vocational classes for women except the ubiquitous shorthand and typing - for school leavers not for married women, of course.
At this point I want to diverge slightly from the 'official' documents of the period to cover the publication in 1948 of John Newsom's book *The Education of Girls*. There are two reasons for this: firstly, that it was a book specifically concerned with all aspects of girls in school and women teachers. Secondly, because the author was an authority of repute, holding influential posts in educational administration and chairing the subsequent committee which led to the report entitled *Half our future* (1963).

At first it is difficult to take the book seriously. It is tempting to reject such a ludicrously stereotyped advocate for girls domesticity, which now appears as a blatant justification for sexism. Even seen in context, the author refused to acknowledge the reality of women's experience and echoed Victorian sentiments which were, even then, completely outdated. But the sentiments he expressed are still influential, particularly in the 1980s.

"The future of women's education lies not in attempting to iron out their differences from men, to reduce them to neuters, but to teach girls how to grow into women and to re-learn the graces which so many have forgotten in the past 30 years."

"Teachers in girls schools then should be for the most part attractive women who, even if unmarried, look as though they could have married if they had liked."

As with the official documents, it is impossible to estimate the influence of such views originating from such a source, but they do serve as a reminder how little some attitudes had changed over the previous 100 years.

Post-war growth and the demand for more labour, both in quantity and quality, began to affect education, just as it affected the position of women, in the 1950s. The figures from Hakim (1978) show the trends clearly. (Table 2.3) Certainly the trends may appear exaggerated because of the absence of 1941 figures but something quite dramatic was happening in the role of women in society.

The first document of the decade - *Early Leaving* (1954) set out to identify the "wastage" by early leaving of pupils from schools which
Table 2.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of intake</th>
<th>Estimated total intake</th>
<th>Age of leaving (cumulative figures)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Under 16</td>
<td>Under 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys 1927</td>
<td>36,310</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys 1928</td>
<td>35,936</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys 1929</td>
<td>35,281</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys 1930</td>
<td>33,323</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 1927</td>
<td>11,526</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 1928</td>
<td>10,539</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 1929</td>
<td>9,819</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>9,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 1930</td>
<td>8,548</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10,083</td>
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<td>Boys 1927-1928</td>
<td>78,555</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>17,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl s 1929-1930</td>
<td>62,855</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>18,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys 1930-1931</td>
<td>62,123</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>20,317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Early Leaving (1954)

Table 2.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of school life</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Proportion of all boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed long enough to take Advanced course</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left too early to take Advanced course</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,519</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This analysis shows, as far as academic ability alone is concerned, how many more boys and girls could have followed advanced sixth form courses.

25. The following points emerge from these two tables.

(a) Far fewer girls than boys now take advanced courses.

(b) There is enough academic ability to justify an increase in the number

Source: Early Leaving (1954)
provided courses beyond the statutory leaving age — primarily the wastage from grammar schools. The report is an important document in educational terms and a useful one in the discussion of the education of girls for three reasons:

i) it gives very full figures, broken down by sex, age and social class for grammar school pupils as a whole; for early leavers and for courses taken;

ii) it paid specific attention to the significance of home background on the attainment and attitudes of school pupils;

iii) it recognised publicly that the allocation at 11 plus was not always accurate and that a rising school population and standards presented challenges to many secondary modern schools.

The extensive tables in the Early Leaving Report enable a comparison to be made between the attainments of boys and girls over a period of time (1927-49). Table 2.8 gives figures in terms of entry to grammar school and age of leaving; post-war figures show slightly more girls than boys entering but more boys than girls staying on to 18. Table 2.9 gives the attainment of boys and girls in the 1946 intake (the latest year for which schooling would be completed by 1953, the year the Report was compiled). Not only do more girls leave early and attain a lower qualification, but fewer complete sixth form courses.

The Report then considers the subject choices of those who do complete Advanced levels and the familiar pattern emerges. More girls than boys take arts subjects; more boys than girls take maths and science. The Report offers some explanation for these differences in attainment, finding influences in the home, in peer groups and in career choice.

"The problems of boys and girls are in some ways different. On the whole boys stay rather longer at school and do rather better academically than girls. This is true in all social groups with the reservation that in the professional and managerial group there is no greater tendency for girls to leave before the end of a five year course. This suggests some difference of social convention, but in general our evidence confirms the common belief that many parents attach more importance to their sons' education than to their
daughters'. Girls may be brought home from school for domestic reasons and our evidence shows that more girls than boys leave because of a shortage of money at home.

But it is not only a difference of parental attitude that distinguishes the boys and girls problems. We must also reckon with the attitude of the boys and girls themselves, which is at least as likely to be responsible for their leaving. It appears that petty irritation with school is a commoner reason for leaving among girls, but we do not find that a school's social customs, such as regulations about uniform, area major influence on the age of leaving, even though for some girls that maybe very irksome. Career reasons are more commonly found among boys.

The effects of the difference between boys and girls careers begin within the school itself. There are some careers attracting a large number of girls for which passes at Advanced level are not required but which are not open to them before the age of 18. This fact has led to the establishment in many girls schools of general sixth form courses, sometimes with a specific vocational bias. For boys there are few similar openings and general sixth form courses are very uncommon; boys normally leave grammar schools at 16 if they are not thought suitable for an advanced course.

Within the schools themselves, sixth forms are generally larger in boys schools; facilities for teaching science in girls schools may be lacking or qualified staff not available. Career choice also reflects a clear pattern. Many girls do just one year in the sixth form before going into nursing or teaching; one half of all girls leavers go into clerical work, for which sixth form work is not required.

Social class emerges as a major variable in both early leaving and attainment. The Report tries to recommend several ways of combating this, through maintenance allowances etc. For girls the correlation between social class and attainment is more marked than for boys, with higher social class parents encouraging their daughters to stay longer and to take Advanced levels. Only 6.4% of "professional/managerial" girls but 42.5% of "unskilled" girls leave early; 41.1% of professional/managerial girls, 6.1% of unskilled, stay to 18.

The picture presented by the Early Leaving Report is depressing in
Table 2.10

Percentage of Population at certain Ages in Schools and Further Education in 1957-58 (England and Wales).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number in Age-Group</th>
<th>Percentage in school</th>
<th>Percentage in Further Education (excluding Universities)</th>
<th>Evening* Enrolments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Part-Time Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>309,000</td>
<td>37-4</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>16-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>272,000</td>
<td>20-0</td>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>24-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>277,000</td>
<td>11-1</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>24-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>289,000</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>18-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>299,000</td>
<td>0-7</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>13-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>291,000</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>9-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>291,000</td>
<td>35-7</td>
<td>4-0</td>
<td>5-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>263,000</td>
<td>18-5</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>7-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>269,000</td>
<td>8-8</td>
<td>2-0</td>
<td>6-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>283,000</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>1-1</td>
<td>2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>287,000</td>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>0-6</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>285,000</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>0-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crowther Report (1959)
terms of the attainment of girls in relation to that of boys, but
couraging on two counts. This is the first official document that
actually looks at the boys and girls figures separately, as if sex is
considered significant and girls at school are visible at last. Given
the previous total emphasis on the domestic role and the refusal to
consider seriously any career for girls except clerical, the tone of
this report, which both identifies and regrets "wastage" is
remarkable. Granted that these are grammar school pupils and therefore
selected mainly from middle class homes, nevertheless some girls are
at last emerging from domestic obscurity. I have considered this
publication in some detail since it is the first of the post-war
reports to see the education of girls as a serious problem.

The Crowther Report (1959) takes up the story where the Early Leaving
Report ends. The Committee were asked -

"to consider, in relation to the changing social and industrial
needs of our society, and the needs of its individual citizens, the
education of boys and girls between 15 and 18 ..."

This brief included those still at school and those who had left. Data
on those still in education was relatively easy to obtain (Table 2.10)
but, to cover those outside, the Committee carried out three surveys.
Only one of these included girls; the other two - recruits to the
Armed Forces and those taking ONC/HNC, were all male. They did note,
however, that 4% of girls in this age group (15-18) were already
married.

The Crowther Report is notable in terms of the education of girls, in
that it did make a deliberate reference to the changing patterns in
society, particularly with regard to women's role in the family.

"Men and women live longer and marry earlier than they used to, but
they have smaller families. More married women have paid employment.
All this is of course a matter of general knowledge: the purpose of
this chapter will be to give some indication of what the
consequences are of these facts have been, and ought to be, for
education. What is taught in schools cannot, at least directly or
quickly, influence these general social changes; but they profoundly
affect what can and needs to be done in schools."
Figures from the 1951 Census showed the marked increase in the number of economically active women, especially the increase of older women returning to work. The Crowther Report is the first document to note that marriage and child care can be noted as a "break in a women's career" rather than an end in itself, and that choice of training and career should bear this in mind.

"Girls should be encouraged to qualify before marriage in a greater number of professions or occupations which will provide opportunities for them in later years."

It is probable that the career in mind is teaching, since the Report's main emphasis is on the need for more teachers, including women "returners", and the notion of career implies that the more able girls were targeted here. Indeed the Report stresses the need to follow the "interests" of the less able girls in providing courses for their final years - their "interests" being wholly identified with love and marriage.

"There can be no doubt that at this stage boys thoughts turn most often to a career and only secondly to marriage and the family, and that the converse obtains with girls. It is plain then, that if it is sound educational policy to take account of natural interests, there is a clear case for a curriculum which respects the different roles they play.

At this time, therefore, the prospect of courtship and marriage should rightly influence the education of the adolescent girl. Though the general objectives of secondary education remain unchanged, her direct interest, in dress, personal appearance and in problems of personal relations should be given a central place in her education. The greater psychological and social maturity of girls makes such subjects acceptable and socially necessary."

The recognition of changes in family patterns and in women's working life makes little difference to the great emphasis placed on preparation for marriage for girls. According to the Report, moral responsibility to preserve the family, to combat sexual freedom and to prevent teenage pregnancy should be reflected in education. Many would
### Table 2.11

*Principal Courses Taken by Full-time Students aged 18 and under, in Further Education, 1957-58 (England and Wales).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Certificate of Education (O and A levels)</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate degree</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary National Diplomas*</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other diplomas in engineering, building, etc.: including pre-technical courses</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nautical</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other industrial—clothing, textiles, catering</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce (including &quot;pre-commercial&quot; courses)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing, etc. (preliminary courses)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Science</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: Crowther Report (1959)**

### Table 2.11

*Principal Courses Taken by Part-time Day Students Aged 18 and Under, in Further Education, 1957-58 (England and Wales).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Certificate of Education (A and O Levels)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Courses including pre-technical courses</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art (mainly industrial or commercial)</td>
<td>210,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce including pre-commercial courses</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing, etc. (preliminary courses)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive Trades</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Science</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Courses</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: Crowther Report (1959)**
still find this an acceptable position.

In discussing the content of boys' and girls' education, the authors found themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand they had stressed the need to follow the specific "interests" of each group towards their future roles; but on the other, they recognise that such differences should not be "over stressed". They consider that the usual tendency to see maths, physics and chemistry as "boys" subjects; biology, arts and languages as "girls" is "something to be corrected not accepted."

This confusion persists when they consider provision after school for both boys and girls. Having argued at length that girls' interest in marriage should be accommodated, they then regret that there is so little part-time educational provision after school for girls and that only a few continue at all. Only one half of all boys, one fifth of all girls, school leavers from secondary modern schools continue with any education after school.

Moving on to discuss those pupils, mainly in grammar schools, who stay at school until 18 (40% of boys; 30% of girls) the emphasis changes again. Whilst regretting the "unsatisfactory" science provision in girls schools, due to their small size and lack of female science teachers, they go on to discuss the whole concept of specialization and preparation for university in terms of boys only. Girls' lower attainment in GCE 'A' levels is influenced by the training requirements for girls jobs (teaching and nursing again) which do not demand 'A' levels for entrance but have a minimum entry age of 18. Thus many girls take "general" sixth form courses or fewer 'A' levels but - "it would be a pity if such courses disappeared."

Finally, with reference to the technical school pupils, the Crowther Report again highlights the lack of post-school training opportunities for girls, except in commerce, (Table 2.11), whilst stressing throughout this section the need to meet the "challenge of technology" and to expand full-time education in these areas. The nature of industry and the girls' expectations of marriage are seen as reasons why girls do not continue with their education.

"It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the country has
hardly as yet made a beginning with the education of girls after they leave school."

Having emphasised during schooling, that their future role will be marriage, it should not be surprising that girls show little inclination to follow any alternatives once they leave.

The Crowther Report, then, failed to face the reality of the future adult life of many women. On one hand it recognised the changes, but did not see education as having any part to play in preparing girls to cope with these changes. The experiences of boys and girls were still seen as totally different. And it reinforced yet again the clear difference between middle-class grammar school girls and those at secondary modern or technical schools.

In relation to my study of women re-entrants to education, the Crowther Report represents the time when the majority were at school. The predominant ideas reflected in the Report and the obvious realities of women at work must have been influential on my sample and on the decisions they made. Also influential was the Newsom Report which followed in 1963.

The brief of the Newsom Committee was to "consider the education, between the ages of 13 and 16, of pupils of average or less than average ability .." thus largely those in technical or secondary modern schools. Like the Crowther Committee before them, they express awareness of the changes in society that affect boys and girls.

"This is a century which has seen and is still seeing, marked changes in the status and economic role of women. Girls themselves need to be made aware of the new opportunities which may be open to them and boys and girls will be faced with evolving a new concept of partnership in personal relations at work and in marriage."

The need for a more highly trained workforce also underlies the Newsom Report and the importance of exploiting the unexpected reserves of talent in modern schools. A far higher number could undertake skilled work were apprenticeships and training available "especially true of girls of whom only a very small percentage enter employment involving any kind of training." Having noted these changes and the need for new
opportunities for girls, the Report promptly forgets all about them.
When it comes to the details, the choice for girls is limited to the
traditional areas - catering; nursing; dressmaking and needlecraft;
retail distribution and commerce.

Again, like Crowther, the importance of relating school content to
interests and future roles is stressed and again, "vocational" for
girls means marriage.

"For all girls there is a group of interests relating to what many,
perhaps most of them, would regard as their most important
vocational concern, marriage. It is true that at the age of 14 and
15, this may appear chiefly as a preoccupation with personal
appearance and boy friends, but many girls are ready to respond to
work relating to the wider aspects of homemaking and family life and
the care and upbringing of children."

With the "less able" in mind, the curriculum for secondary modern
schools is discussed, with priority given to the practical subjects.
As before, future domesticity looms large in the life of every girl.

"Housecraft and needlework easily justify their place in the
curriculum to most girls ..."

who, even if they are fed up with work at home anyway -

"... yet they may need all the more the education a good school
course can give in the wider aspects of homemaking and in the skills
which will reduce the element of domestic drudgery."

Great emphasis is placed on the "reality" of the experience, by using
housecraft flats in school, inviting in real children to look after
and visiting and caring for the elderly. In line with the changing
relations in marriage, boys too should be involved - at least in the
discussions.

By the early 1960s not much had changed for the less academic girl.
But in the same year as Newsom, another committee on education
published their report in which girls appear in a rather different
light. This was the Robbins Report on Higher Education (1963).
It can be argued that the Robbins Report marks a turning point in higher education in Britain. It starts from the premise that "courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who want to do so" and then goes on to examine in depth the constraints, especially social class, which affect accessibility to higher education. Girls are not ignored -

"We shall greatly welcome a tendency for more girls to stay on at school, if only from the national point of view of making better use of what must be the greatest source of unused talent at a time when there is an immediate shortage of teachers and of many other types of qualified person."

Projections for the development of university places in the 1980s includes both an increase in the percentage of girls and a recognition of the needs of adults.

Projections - always notoriously difficult - based on attainment however, have proved to be less accurate. Predictions of 3 'A' level passes for boys and girls in 1980 were for 10.7% and 5.0% of the population; in 1985 for 12.1% and 5.6% respectively. Actual passes for boys and girls in 1979 were 9.3% and 7.9% respectively. But in 1981, 260,720 university places were available (156,685 for men; 104,035 for women) which was approximately 100,000 below the Robbins projection.

Before moving on to more recent documents, I want to take a brief look at another report of the 1960s - the Plowden Report of 1967. In terms of the differences between boys and girls, very little has changed since 1931. The knowledge of physical and psychological characteristics may have advanced, with serious implications for individual children. More boys than girls find themselves with "behaviour problems" and thus referred to Child Guidance clinics or allocated to special schools. But in terms of the curriculum of "normal" schools and the differential treatment of girls and boys, only handicrafts and physical education are mentioned. The introduction of new craft activities means that the distinction
between what is done by girls and boys has partially disappeared and this is welcomed. Except possibly for the older children, it is quite artificial and unhelpful to differentiate on grounds of sex. In physical education, however -

"Girls and boys at the top of the primary school will be acquainted with the rudiments of the main national games - netball, hockey and tennis for the girls; football and cricket for the boys."

but it is stressed, not to the exclusion of a variety of athletic and acrobatic activities, swimming and outdoor pursuits for both sexes.

All other subjects and activities are presumed throughout to be equally applicable for both girls and boys. Nor is any difference in attainment, though noted in the various surveys quoted, seen as a cause for concern but as a reflection of different maturation rates of the two sexes.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, major controversy and potential changes were evident in education, mainly surrounding the question of comprehensive reorganization. The move towards comprehensivization affected girls in several ways, although the significance of the changes were not apparent at the time. Firstly, the elimination of the 11-plus selective examination should have enabled more girls to enter the "academic" path through these schools, since the weighting against girls was removed; but there has been no evidence to show whether or not girls and boys are allocated equally in those schools that do band or stream on ability. Secondly, the removal of selection should, in theory, have enabled more working-class pupils to attain higher standards since working-class girls were doubly disadvantaged in the old selective system. However there is no evidence to suggest that this has happened; middle-class girls are still over represented at entry to higher education; working-class girls have the lowest chance of entry. Finally, the concept of comprehensive schooling was assumed to be coeducational and the majority of schools were re-organized to combine single-sex schools where necessary. Indeed, apart from the few remaining selective schools and religious schools, the majority of comprehensive schools are mixed. But recent studies have suggested that mixed schooling may benefit boys, socially and academically, but reduce the academic attainment of girls. The whole idea of
comprehensive schooling had various effects on the basis of social class and sex, although the differential implications for girls and boys were not recognised until later.

Following the growing awareness of sex discrimination in all areas of society and the legislation of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975, the effect of discrimination on education began to emerge as an issue for research and debate. Apart from the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the first official document to focus on the issue was the H.M. Inspectors' Report of 1975 (DES Education Survey No.21).

"During the autumn of 1973 members of HM Inspectorate undertook at Government request, a study of the extent to which curricular differences and customs contributed to inequality of opportunity for boys and girls. The study was to cover single sex and mixed schools and was to indicate whether any changes were necessary."

The inspectors were guarded in their approach -

"It was recognised from the outset that the work of schools to some extent reflected and responded to outside attitudes, including those of parents and employers, and some account was taken of this in conducting the survey."

At nursery and infant level, they say that no curricular differences were noted, although the behaviour of boys and girls was expected to be different. At primary level, the survey notes the effect of a mainly feminine environment, since most primary teachers are women, plus the expectation that separate sex roles will be reflected in activities. The predominance of domestic interests for girls and mechanical activities for boys is noted, and they recommend that separation for craft at this stage is undesireable. This re-echoes Plowden of ten years before. Separation for PE is accepted as inevitable and the preference of boys for football rather than music gets mention, but no further comment. Finally, at primary level, there is some recognition that attitudes learned early may persist; for example, that science, usually taught by a male teacher may give the impression that it is a boys' subject.

Middle schools, where they exist, reflect a similar pattern to primary schools, with craft and PE singled out again for separate classes,
### Table 2.12
Percentages of pupils being offered, choosing and taking particular subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Being offered</th>
<th>Choosing</th>
<th>Taking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Per cent of total</td>
<td>Per cent of previous column</td>
<td>Per cent of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DES (1975)

### Table 2.13
Corrected percentages for comparing segregated and mixed schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Being offered</th>
<th>Choosing</th>
<th>Taking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single sex</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Single sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Per cent of totals of pupils</td>
<td>Per cent of those to whom offered</td>
<td>Per cent of totals of pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>French</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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<td>90</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
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<td>61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
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<td>Art</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>Music</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DES (1975)
although the restriction of certain crafts to single-sex groups is thought to be lessening.

At secondary level, 98% of all mixed schools separate for some subject(s) below the age of 16. This includes separation for the same subject (e.g., PE) or for completely different subjects (e.g., needlework/woodwork). The lack of any real choice due to preemptive patterns during the first three years means that segregation during the fourth and fifth years is seen as inevitable. Some 27% of schools show this pattern—e.g., where metalwork is a pre-requisite for technical drawing; since no girls can do metalwork, no girls can opt for technical drawing.

Apart from the common core, usually RE, PE, maths and English, options presented in composite, plus lack of resources, make any free choice of subject impossible. Table 2.12 shows the results in terms of subject choice; Table 2.13 relates the choices to types of school. Thus mixed schools offer more choice but pupils in single-sex schools are more likely to choose a "cross sex" subject.

The survey notes that trends established up to GCE 'O' level are persistent and that even more differentiation occurs at 'A' level. They note the significance of this for career choice but found no evidence that careers advice was discriminatory in quantity, though probably affected by traditional bias in content.

A brief survey of Further Education colleges shows that the patterns identified earlier still persist—women in traditional "feminine" courses in response to demand; more men on part-time and day-release courses. This is partly blamed on employers and partly on women's unwillingness to participate, though they concede that the reasons for this need to be investigated.

"Principals of those colleges consulted have expressed the view that further education is non-discriminatory in the sense that any man or woman possessing the necessary entry qualifications can be accepted for a course. The problems are the low level of aspiration on the part of many girls; the type and level of employment which they seek; and society's low expectations for women in career terms which in turn limit the ambitions of individuals."
So Further Education is absolved from all blame and the solution, they decide, is to give more guidance early on in the school.

In the second part of the survey - the commentary and conclusions - the tone is vague and unconvincing. They start by going back to the old adage that equality of opportunity does not necessarily entail identical opportunity. Having hedged around the position of women in society as an explanation and examined the relevant facts, like lack of resources, they admit that there may be "some evidence" that schools treat girls unfairly. Three major points are made -

i) that a real choice of subjects does not always exist;

ii) that the difference in subjects studied are "too striking to be accepted without question";

iii) composite courses restrict some areas for girls.

On mixed or single-sex schools they are non-committal. Discussing the influence of attitudes in society, they return to the question of future roles -

"Across all sections of society it has been normal to regard the boy as the breadwinner and the girl as the future mother, deputising for the mother when circumstances so demand ... In general, parents are likely to show more concern about the future economic prospects of their sons than they do about those of their daughters. There are indications, however, that attitudes are changing .... "

Two final sections move into polemic about the wastage of talent -

"The prevailing picture is of traditional assumptions being worked out through the various curricular patterns of secondary schools and of support for and acceptance of these patterns by the majority of teachers, parents and pupils. It may be that society can justify the striking differences that exist between the subjects studied by boys and girls in secondary schools, but it is more likely that a society that needs to develop to the full the talents and skills of all its people will find the discrepancy disturbing"
and in asking schools to carry out an analysis of their curriculum and the choices available they say -

"...that would be one step towards eradicating prejudices about the roles of men and women which frustrate individual development and cause a wastage of talent a country can ill afford."

Five years later a more directive document from the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC 1980) allows us to evaluate the current position and the tendency for change. Of all the publications of the EOC - a Government funded body - this gives the most general survey of the different educational experiences of girls and boys, with clear guidelines for improvement. The emphasis throughout is on equality of opportunity and the differences in subject choice at secondary level is seen as the most serious problem of all.

Having summarised the legal requirements under the SDA, the booklet goes on to list guidelines for good practice in both primary and secondary schools. Building on the DES survey (1975), the EOC guide highlights the sex stereotyped nature of materials and activities at primary level and the implications of those, especially for the spatial development of girls. Again craft differences are discussed. But this guide goes further than any previous publication to draw on recent research into the sexist nature of reading schemes and books and the influence of the "hidden" curriculum.

The content of the section on secondary schools again echoes the earlier point about curriculum choice and careers guidance but goes no further. Here the influences of the "hidden" curriculum are not indicated, although there is now considerable evidence to suggest discrimination exists in many covert ways. Final guidelines are addressed to Local Education Authorities.

It seems that it is still possible to detect patterns reported in the 1923 document from the Board of Education on differences in the curriculum.

Reviewing the "official" documents of the last 60 years helps to expose the breadth and depth of attitudes towards sex discrimination in schools and their remarkable persistency through time. Two or three
interconnected themes emerge, some taking precedence at one time, others becoming more significant at others. The themes centre on three variables - sex, ability and social class.

Throughout the century the education of girls was considered something of a problem - how much? what type? for whom? to what end? On the one hand, there was an awareness that girls' attainment differed from that of boys, both in level and in kind. This was recognised as a problem that could and should be solved. How to get more girls to do maths and science was considered in 1923 as well as in 1983. On the other hand, there was a reactionary theme that consistently appeared until very recently - how to prepare girls for their main vocation, their future role as wife and mother. To solve this dilemma, another variable was used - that of social class, though this was often disguised as ability. Middle-class girls in academic schools and streams need not be too bothered by domestic requirements but should prepare for a career, though of course a dual role was inevitable for most. Working-class girls and those in less academic schools and streams, should not bother too much with preparation for work - any of the traditional semi-skilled women's jobs would do. But these girls should prepare for their future domestic role, no matter that for them, too, the reality would undoubtedly be a dual role for all, or at least part, of their lives.

In retrospect these themes appear in different guise throughout - until 1975. That the same variables do still exist and can be seen as significant in secondary schools today is no longer "officially" recognised even though it has been demonstrated many times in research.

To find out what is happening to girls at school today we now turn to the recent literature. In addition to presenting research findings that are currently significant, it may also indicate what influences were operating unrecognised on the education of girls throughout the century.
OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN CHAPTER TWO.

1923 CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION 'Differentiation of the Curriculum for Boys and Girls respectively in Secondary Schools.'

1926 REPORT OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION (HADOW) 'The Education of the Adolescent.'

1931 REPORT OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION (HADOW) 'The Primary School.'

1938 REPORT OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION (SPENS) 'Secondary Education with special reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools.'

1943 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS EXAMINATION COUNCIL (NORWOOD) 'The Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools.'

1947 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION 'Further Education.' Ministry of Education Pamphlet No.8.

1954 CENTRAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION 'Early Leaving.' Report for the Ministry of Education.

1959 REPORT OF THE CENTRAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION. (CROWTHER) '15 to 18'.

1963 REPORT OF THE CENTRAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (NEWSOM) 'Half our Future'.

1963 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER (ROBBINS) 'Higher Education'

1967 CENTRAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION (FLOWDEN) Vol.I 'Children and their Primary Schools.'

1975 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE 'Curricula differences for Boys and Girls.' Education Survey No. 21.


1982 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION 'Do you provide Equal Educational Opportunities?'
Chapter Three

Socialization and schooling: its effects on women
In the first part of this chapter I intend to explore the various theories which attempt to explain the acquisition of gendered behaviour by girls and boys. In the second part, I consider what is known about the effects of schooling on the attainments and expectations of girls, as opposed to boys.

The exploration of socialization starts from the position that biological differences between females and males are an inadequate basis from which to explain the differences in behaviour, both observed and predicted, under various conditions. The reasons for my rejection of biological reductionism are -

i) that the behaviour patterns of females and males (gendered behaviour) changes both in place and time; accepted and anticipated patterns are not constant even within a specific culture.

ii) that significant differences in behaviour can be observed within each sex group; intra-sex differences may be greater than inter-sex differences; considerable overlap is present on any scale of traits measured.

iii) the complexity of gendered behaviour cannot be reduced to the physiological differences that have been established and many differences, with the exception of reproductive capacity, are still open to debate.

Thus the emphasis of this section will be on the external environmental influences which affect the acquisition of gender identity and behaviour of young children.

Before looking at the various theoretical positions and the evidence available to support them, it is important to expose the problematic nature of the basic concepts used. To prevent constant repetition and confusion, I propose to use the terms "sex-role" or "sex stereotype" instead of the more accurate terms "gender role" and "gender stereotype", unless a specific source uses the word gender themselves. Many sources use the terms socialization, sex role and sex stereotype.
as if there were clearly accepted definitions which are unproblematic — indeed the titles of many works on the subject use several combinations of the terms e.g. "sex role stereotyping"; "sex role socialization" or, even more definitive, "the sex role system".

These approaches presume —

i) that sex role (singular) is a specific known identity which is both defined and acquired;

ii) socialization is the process by which it is acquired;

iii) sex role and stereotyping are indivisible — the role is, ipso facto, stereotyped;

iv) that some "system" exists whereby socialization occurs, leading to the acquisition of this sex role stereotype.

Thus this simplified explanation seems to suggest that it is inevitable that all infants aspire towards a clearly recognisable pattern that is either feminine or masculine, and that this relates to their assigned sex. While not assuming that all infants acquire this stereotypical pattern totally, nevertheless such patterns are defined and idealised. By acquiring an assigned sex role, accompanied by more or less idealized stereotypical behaviour, socialization is complete.

The concept of socialization is frequently used in a general sense, which obscures contesting theoretical positions. It is incorrect to present it as a mechanism whereby certain acceptable social behaviour patterns are 'learned', since some psychoanalytical and cognitive developmental theorists would contest this. Nor can the term 'acquired' be used indiscriminately, since maturational or inherent characteristics are considered by some to be more significant than external conditions. The term socialization sometimes assumes that there is a consensus within society as to what behaviour is social — in this case what gendered behaviour — which leans heavily on the other two concepts of sex-role and sex stereotyping.

One of the clearest challenges to the indiscriminate use of the term
"sex-role" comes from Angrist (1969). She points out that there have been at least three different meanings of the term within three different disciplines. In anthropology, it is essentially positional; in psychological analysis, it refers to behaviour; in sociology, its emphasis is relational. Thus to talk of sex-role, or even sex-roles, is to confuse the complexity of behaviour, expectations and locations which are not only multiple - i.e. women and men "take on" many different roles in a variety of circumstances, - but also are not constant over time. Leaving aside the disciplinary labels, the term is frequently used to cover positional behaviour and relational components without definition or analysis. As Angrist goes on to argue, women, in particular, face many options and contingencies that involve ambivalent choices, both conscious and unconscious, which make the simplistic idea of a single sex-role misleading. In using the term we need to question which role is intended, and what particular behaviour is presumed to accompany that role, in any particular context.

The frequent use of "sex-role" in conjunction with "sex stereotyping" adds to the confusion. Stereotype is a powerful if ill-defined term, implying acceptance of content though not necessarily desirability, of a pervasive and influential idea. Many sex stereotypes are slow to change, based on traditional conceptions of role or behaviour. As with roles, stereotype must be pluralised to fit a variety of contexts and a range of complexity.

The main areas where stereotypes of female and male ideals are most pervasive concern appearance, employment and family role. Temperamental or other psychological attributes are highly suspect and often conflicting. For example, the image of a passive, decorous woman bears little correlation with the demands of ideal motherhood. Yet there is considerable evidence to suggest that sex stereotyping is used academically and in common parlance as a single, clearly identifiable cluster of traits and behaviour, which can be labelled "feminine" or "masculine" without qualification. The origin of this may lie in the dualistic notion of complete 'opposites' which is frequently applied to the two sexes. Bi-polar attributes suggest that if all women possess one characteristic, then, by definition, all men must possess the opposite. From studies of stereotypes by Bardwick and
Figure 3.1  Stereotypical characteristics and bi-polarities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bardwick and Douvan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independence</td>
<td>dependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggression</td>
<td>passivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competitiveness</td>
<td>fraility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>low pain tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>task orientation</td>
<td>non-aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outward orientation</td>
<td>non-competitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assertiveness</td>
<td>inner orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innovation</td>
<td>interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-discipline</td>
<td>empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stoicism</td>
<td>sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity</td>
<td>nurturance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objectivity</td>
<td>subjectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analytical</td>
<td>intuitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>courage</td>
<td>yieldingness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unsentimentality</td>
<td>receptivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rationality</td>
<td>inability to risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confidence</td>
<td>supportiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional control</td>
<td>emotional liability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiation</td>
<td>conservatism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impersonal</td>
<td>personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unpredictable</td>
<td>constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inconsistent</td>
<td>consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allocentric</td>
<td>autocentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external</td>
<td>inner space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agency</td>
<td>communion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual</td>
<td>part of whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field independent</td>
<td>field dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boverman et al</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competency</td>
<td>warmth and expressiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent</td>
<td>gentle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objective</td>
<td>sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active</td>
<td>tactful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competitive</td>
<td>religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>logical</td>
<td>neat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skilled in business</td>
<td>quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wordly</td>
<td>interested in art and literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambitious</td>
<td>able to express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adventurous</td>
<td>tender feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self confident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership</td>
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(Sources as given in text)
Douvan (1971), Boverman (1972) and Block (1973) among others, it is possible to compile an extensive list of "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics which are most frequently associated with women and men. (Fig 3.1)

The danger of such bi-polarity is that it is based on negligible evidence; those differences between women and men that have been established cannot justify the oppositional use of such a range of traits. As Chafetz (1978) argues, the use of the term "opposite sex" suggests two separate categories with all the emphasis on difference and any overlapping is ignored. Difference in degree thus becomes difference in kind. Any research into sex difference which produces negative findings is not reported and few set out to investigate the similarity between women and men.

Chafetz shows that the "curve of normal distribution" applies to many characteristics and demonstrates large overlaps (e.g. in height or weight of females and males) These are frequently ignored and men are described as taller, stronger, or heavier than women. This is shown clearly by Bartels (1982), who reviews all the known biological differences between the sexes. If such biological differences can be mis-represented, and averages used as absolutes, the more speculative psychological differences are based on very dubious evidence. Yet, as we have seen, the work on traits and stereotypes uses lengthy lists of exclusive opposites. Chafetz (1978) points out, deviance from the norm is considered more serious for males, especially young boys. Girls may exhibit male characteristics in childhood; tomboys are acceptable; but boys must not be sissy, weak, or emotional. Whether, as she suggests, this reflects the value placed by society on all the "masculine" traits, or whether it reflects a fear that boys will grow up as homosexuals, is not clear.

Stereotyping takes up this labelling with exaggerated emphasis on difference (cf Archer 1978) and this provides a basis for ideas about the oppositional nature of the two sexes and the mutual exclusion of traits.

Although I take issue with the simplistic representation of a "sex-role system" as portrayed by Chetwynd and Hartnett (1978), they do show how stereotypical traits can be used to justify the different
sex-roles in society and the associated division of labour. Undoubtedly there are links between common beliefs about sex difference, which then influence socialization processes, the anticipation of sex-roles and the idealization of sex stereotypes. But to imply that these are part of a 'system' ignores the discontinuity and conflict that exists and leaves no room for explanations of the changes and modifications that are occurring. Rather than an overall unified system that seeks to fit together biological difference (real or assumed), socialization patterns, sex-roles and stereotypes, we need to examine the conflicting 'messages' that confront both girls and boys as they acquire patterns of behaviour both before and during their school experiences.

This is not to deny that such stereotypes do exist or that they have pervasive and influential effect; nor to suggest that they can easily be challenged or changed. It is not to ignore the suggestion that such stereotypes can be potentially harmful (Boverman et al 1972) or that movement towards androgyny might make individuals more effective (Bem 1975). Boverman et al show quite clearly that sex-role characteristics can be clearly defined and easily classified as "feminine" or "masculine". Even more significant, given that there is agreement over characteristics, was their finding that masculine characteristics are more highly valued and equated with "normality" whilst feminine characteristics were labelled "unhealthy" in terms of adult maturity.

The presentation of the processes as problematic is to alert us to their complexity and to the lack of consensus in understanding them. But with these reservations in mind, I intend to look at the various conditions that affect the young child and the influence of them according to the major theorists of socialization.

Influences upon socialization.

Given that the process of socialization is complex and the precise mechanics of it unclear, is it possible to analyse and identify the various agencies that affect a child during its formative years? The analysis needs to be done with some care and at two levels - at the level of the individual girl or boy and the immediate and specific conditions in which they live; and at the level of wider society and
the perceptions of girls and boys, exemplified in both stereotypical expectations and actual situations. It is both between and within these two levels that disjunction can occur.

Undoubtedly the primary influence on any infant must be the immediate family or group that cares for that infant in the first years of life. Since children in our culture remain dependent on adults for a considerable period, the process of socialization is prolonged and pervasive.

Bellotti (1975) gives a graphic description of the different ways that girls and boys are treated, starting even before birth with the "myths" which surround pregnancy. Even allowing for a difference in Italian culture, familiar echoes are evident. However, generalisations about the differential treatment of girls and boys are inconclusive. Inevitably every infant is assigned as female or male at birth, on the basis of external genitals, and differential gender treatment begins then, with labelling (pink or blue wristbands in hospital) and naming.

The attitude of the immediate family to the birth of a girl or boy will depend on various factors and the general claim that boys are preferred cannot be accepted without qualification. It depends on the preferences of both parents, even grandparents, and on the number and sex of other siblings.

However, given that there are individual variations, there are also fairly clear differences in the way that girl and boy infants are treated. Of the various "Baby X" type experiments, where the reactions to babies whose sex is identified by name or clothing, the British study by Smith and Lloyd (1978) is the most recent. In this, mothers' responses to six month old babies (not their own) of both sexes were observed, where the baby was labelled as a girl or a boy. Perceived sex did not always correspond with actual sex, though no mothers explored under the clothing to check. As in other such experiments, perceived 'boys' were handled more physically, given 'boys' toys from the selection available; 'girls' were talked to more, given 'girls' playthings - regardless of the actual sex of the baby. This would suggest that the difference in handling stems from the perception of the adult and not from any differences in the behaviour of the child.
It can be argued that single interaction in a controlled setting may not be representative of real mother-child interaction. Other observations made in various settings provide inconclusive evidence. Goldberg and Lewis (1972) found some indication of differences in behaviour of infants and in mother's response, based on sex, at the age of one year. In an experiment involving mothers and their babies in a laboratory setting, girls stayed closer, cried more and were less active and adventurous than boys - and mothers responded to re-inforce sex appropriate behaviour. However, there is no clear evidence as to whether these differences were initiated as a result of this reinforcement by the mother. No allowance was made for the different maturational rates of girls and boys, which at age one would mean that the girls were ahead as dependency varies considerably with age in the early years.

The importance of the very early interactive experiences between mother and child were explored by Moss (1972) where infants' behaviour, with their mothers in the home, were recorded at three weeks and three months. He concludes that interaction is initiated and determined by the infant's crying and the mother's response. Early patterns, once established, form the basis for later interaction. Boys generally were thought to be more restless than girls at three months, because girls may have "learned" a social response more quickly.

One variable that does not seem to have been explored in these experiments is the mother's own attitudes to sex differences. If the mother's attitude and response is more significant than any innate difference, then their perception of sex appropriate behaviour must be considered. Bell and Carver (1980) observed expectant mothers playing with infants and found that most of them reacted to the behaviour of the baby, regardless of the sex label. Those who used most sex appropriate toys were the ones who believed in distinctive sex differences and who held more traditional views about sex appropriate behaviour.

Apart from these experiments with infants, there are few observations of pre-school children and those that do exist are American studies and somewhat dated. Joýfe (1974) records a study of the behaviour of 4-5 year olds in a non-sexist nursery school, where role exchange was tolerated and stereotypes were deliberately not reinforced.
Nevertheless she found that some sex stereotyped influence was inevitable, if only because all the staff and helpers were female. Unconscious reinforcement of sex appropriate behaviour occurred e.g girls' appearances were commented upon but only when they wore dresses; physical prowess in boys was commended. And it was obvious that gender identity was being used by the children in friendship groups and disputes.

Looking at the same age range, Pitcher (1974) found clear differences in interests and attitudes of girls and boys, reflected in their games, stories and drawings. Girls are described as more person orientated (50% of their drawings included people; 15% of the boys) and more fanciful; boys as more concerned with objects and concrete reality. This she attributes to the fact that girls spend more time with their mothers, encouraged to develop a more personal identity that is essentially feminine; boys identify less with their fathers, who are absent for long periods and have, in the pre-school period, little contact with other men.

Finally Serbin (1973) records a detailed study of teachers' responses to girls and boys in a pre-school situation. Having observed 15 classes of children, age 3-5 years, she shows how girls receive very different responses to boys. Boys get far more attention than girls, partly because of their disruptive behaviour; whilst girls are given praise and attention only when they are close to the teacher. She suggests that boys are encouraged to go on being disruptive to gain attention but girls become more dependent. Teachers realised that they needed to raise their voices more to boys but were unaware of any other difference. These pre-school differences quite clearly lay the foundation for future classroom expectations.

Whilst common sense expectations would expect these differences in behaviour and interest, there are many children at this age who do exhibit cross-sex characteristics and enjoy cross-sex activities. Conformity to stereotype is by no means absolute.

To extend this account of empirical work and to discover more of how young children acquire these behaviour patterns, theoretical perspectives on socialization need to be pursued. Having considered the various explanation of how gender identity and appropriate
Figure 3.2 Theories of Gender Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freudian</strong></td>
<td>own awareness → fantasy → identification → GENDER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analytical</strong></td>
<td>identification → GENDER ROLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(implicit GENDER IDENTITY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>others → differential awareness → identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
<td>reinforcement → GENDER ROLE IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive</strong></td>
<td>others → labelling → GENDER IDENTITY → GENDER → identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developmental</strong></td>
<td>awareness → GENDER IDENTITY ROLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kessler and McKenna (1982)
behaviour patterns are acquired, it will then be possible to identify the individuals and agencies which are most influential during the process.

Theories of socialization.

Most authors exploring the theories of socialization and the ways in which young children acquire their gender identity, draw on three main sources:

i) social learning theory - particularly the paper by Mischel (1967) with emphasis on conditioning, imitation and identification;

ii) cognitive developmental theory, particularly the early work of Kohlberg (1967);

iii) Freudian psychoanalytical theory and subsequent developments of it.

In this chapter only the first two of these approaches will be discussed. The implications of psychoanalytical theory for an understanding of the acquisition of gender is still a complex and unresolved debate. An excellent diagramatic summary of these positions is found in Kessler and MacKenna (1982) and reproduced as Fig 3.2.

i) Social learning theory.

The paper by Mischel in Maccoby (1967) is usually taken as the starting point, though later refinements and criticisms have been added to it. The most useful summaries are in O'Leary (1977) and Frieze (1978) but first I intend to review Mischel's own position.

In his paper he discusses the acquisition of sex typed behaviour - "behaviour which elicits different rewards for each sex" - through the processes of imitation and reinforcement. Observational learning occurs in childhood, particularly from models who have a relationship
with the child or are perceived as powerful. This may apply to both same sex and to cross sex observation. While children can observe a wide range of behaviour in both sexes, they tend to perform and practice only that which appears appropriate to their own sex. This may or may not be due to reinforcement; it may equally be due to opportunity. For example, just as women may know how to change an electric plug, it may usually be done by a man; so girls may know how to play with construction sets, but they may not have the actual opportunity to do so.

Reinforcement of appropriate or inappropriate behaviour may not involve actual reward or punishment but pleasure or displeasure may be inferred. The use of emotive positive or negative "labels" can be just as effective. (e.g. "pretty girl"; "sissy boy" etc.)

Mischel makes quite clear that social learning theory does not deny the existence of mediating cognitive processes but sees antecedent events, leading to predicted responses, as the focus of the theory. Sex differences in response are not universal or exclusive and variation occurs; individuals select responses as self-reinforcement on the basis of previous outcomes.

Mischel remains sceptical of the generalised assumptions on sex typed behaviour and argues that the stereotyped acceptance of stable and general traits can be questioned. Social learning theory concentrates on context specific responses which may or may not be replicated.

One useful extension of social learning theory is that it can be applied to any age - many adolescents and adults continue to modify their responses to various stimuli in ways which seem sex appropriate at that time. For example, overt "flirting", possibly acceptable among single people may not be appropriate in a married woman but tolerated in a married man.

To explain the influence and persistence of stereotypes, social learning theory would suggest that "canalisation" towards a generalised form of sex typed behaviour may occur, whereby any response which fits the current stereotypical ideal is reinforced as desirable. Thus a certain conformity to sex specific appearance and behaviour can be seen at particular periods e.g. in adolescence. But
selectivity from a range of stereotypes for both women and men, would suggest a deliberate selection of response to fit any desired pattern which may be currently fashionable.

The major criticism of social learning theory is that, while it can explain how sex typed behaviour is learned, it cannot account for the acquisition of gender identity. Reinforcement and imitation can shape behaviour and can assist in the learning of appropriate sex roles but it cannot adequately explain how and when children acquire their identity as either girls or boys. This acquisition of gender identity is the starting point, not the end result, in cognitive developmental theory.

ii) Cognitive developmental theory.

In his influential paper in Maccoby (1967), Kohlberg starts from the premise that the acquisition of gender identity, and therefore sex appropriate behaviour, is only one part, albeit a most important part, of a child’s world. Developmental progression follows clear cognitive stages, based on Piagetian analysis, which can be stimulated or retarded by socializing agents but depend ultimately on the child’s developing schemata. From experimental work, Kohlberg and his associates suggest that gender labelling of self begins around three years of age. It then extends to the labelling of adults but sexual constancy (i.e. that self as girl/boy will grow into woman/man,) is not acquired until around five or six years, when a sense of "conservation" develops.

Perception of gender is not likely to be based on genitals, as suggested by Freud, but on visible characteristics and perceived roles.

Kohlberg also argues that once self labelling occurs, there is a tendency to see the same sex as "good" and "desirable", and therefore appropriate toys, behaviour and company are preferred. Young children exhibit extreme stereotyping, usually along conventional lines which are "morally" rigid. This helps to explain the heated arguments amongst pre-school children as to what girls and boys, or women and men, can or cannot do.
A good illustration of this occurs in Cordua et al (1979), where children after seeing films of a doctor and a nurse, always identified the nurse as female, even when played by a man, and frequently, though not always, identified the doctor as male even when played by a woman. However older children also showed how experience can modify stereotypes when the only children to correctly identify the male nurse as a man were from one school that had shortly before been visited by a male nurse.

There is evidence to support this position in a paper by Haugh et al (1980). Having been shown videos of infants of both sexes, children of ages 3 to 5 exhibited rigid stereotypical selection of toys for the baby, depending on the sex portrayed. They also appeared to value more, infants portrayed as the same sex as themselves.

A recent study by Smithers and Smithers (1984) of children aged 6-7 and their parents found that the children had more rigid, sex specific views of the possible roles and tasks of each sex than their parents. Males also had more rigid views than females of the the corresponding age.

Cognitive developmental theory accepts an element of imitation once gender identity is established but suggests that cluster or personality imitation is more influential than just specific acts. There seems to be no conclusive evidence to suggest how much emotive involvement is needed in this identification or whether same-sex and cross-sex imitation can occur.

In summarizing the evidence both for and against both theoretical positions, Freize et al (1978) argue for a combination of both, since gender role acquisition reflects the complex interaction of many variables and processes. Imitation undoubtedly occurs and can be easily observed in most children; reinforcement for sex appropriate behaviour also occurs and must affect the acquisition of sex-roles and stereotypical patterns. But close emotional relationships within the family in the early years also affects development and may account for the variety of behaviour patterns that can occur and the discrepancy between the individual and the conventional norm. Finally, since any
### Figure 3.3

Determinants of Behavior

- Culture
- Behavior Pattern of Individuals in Child's Environment
- Reactions of Parents and Others to the Child's Behavior in Similar Situations
- Child's Cognitive Maturity
- Child's Past Behaviors—Including Behaviors Influenced by Biological Predispositions
- Child's Perception of the Reactions and Behaviors of Others
- Child's Perception of Situational Demands
- Child's Behavior

### Figure 3.4

Loevinger's Milestones of Ego Development and Extrapolations to Sex Role Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loevinger's milestones of ego development</th>
<th>Impulse control</th>
<th>Interpersonal style</th>
<th>Conscious concerns</th>
<th>Conceptions of sex role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presocial/symbiotic</td>
<td>Impulse ridden, fear of retaliation</td>
<td>Autistic, symbiotic</td>
<td>Self versus nonself</td>
<td>Development of gender identity, self-assertion, self-expression, self-interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulse ridden</td>
<td>Impulse ridden, fear of retaliation</td>
<td>Exploitive, dependent</td>
<td>Sexual and aggressive bodily feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-protective (formerly opportunistic)</td>
<td>Expedient, fear of being caught</td>
<td>Exploitive, manipulative, wary</td>
<td>Advantage, control, protection of self</td>
<td>Extension of self, self-extension, self-enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>Conformity to external rule</td>
<td>Reciprocal, superficial</td>
<td>Things, appearance, reputation, self-acceptance</td>
<td>Conformity to external role, development of sex role stereotypes, bifurcation of sex roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>Internalized rules, guilt</td>
<td>Intensive, responsive</td>
<td>Differentiated inner feelings, motives, self-respect</td>
<td>Examination of self as sex role exemplar vis-a-vis internalized values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>Coping with conflict, toleration of differences</td>
<td>Intensive concern for autonomy</td>
<td>Differentiated inner feelings, role concepts, self-fulfillment</td>
<td>Differentiation of sex role, coping with conflicting masculine-feminine aspects of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Reconciling inner conflicts, renunciation of unattainable</td>
<td>Cherishing of individuality</td>
<td>All of the above plus identity</td>
<td>Achievement of individually defined sex role, integration of both masculine and feminine aspects of self, androgynous sex role definition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Frieze (1978)

**Source:** Block (1973)
simple behaviourist view of the child as a passive recipient of influences is rejected, cognitive mediation must occur and the development stage can affect the relative influence of models or reinforcements. Some possible interactive variations are illustrated in the diagram reproduced from Frieze et al. (Fig 3.3)

This investigation of the two main psychological approaches to the acquisition of gender role and behaviour raise further questions about the influence of individuals and agencies in the child's environment on the socialization process. It is the effects of some of these influences that are now considered, with particular reference to the work of Block (1973).

This paper by Block seems to be particularly relevant because -

i) it draws on both ego and cognitive developmental aspects but also addresses external socialization agencies;

ii) it uses but modifies strict sex-typed oppositional characteristics;

iii) it implies a long-term progression of "stages" starting, most importantly in infancy, but continuing through adolescence and into adulthood. The concept of "maturity" is introduced in terms of a balanced, androgynous personality;

iv) it accepts that cultural constraints are changeable and that individual environments may differ;

v) it provides an analytical matrix for deconstructing sex-role acquisition.

As Fig 3.4 clearly shows, Block uses Loevinger's seven "milestones" of ego development as a basis for sex-role development, moving from the initial awareness of gender identity, through external conflict, then conformity, to perceive sex-appropriate behaviour. In the final three stages, values become internalised and behaviour moderated through internal conflict between what are perceived as masculine and feminine
aspects of self, leading to the achievement of an individual integrated role that accepts an androgynous identity. Each stage should be seen essentially as an attempt to cope with development and not as a successful solution.

Block’s definition of sex-role as a

"constellation of qualities an individual understands to characterize males and females in his culture"

allows for a variation in that understanding. As she argues, the ultimate goal is not necessarily the attainment of masculinity or femininity in its extreme or stereotypical pattern, but a gender identity secure enough to permit the individual to integrate cross-sex characteristics. This will depend upon a mediation of biological and external forces by the ego and cognitive functioning. Socialization in the culture and, particularly, through the agency of the family, will not only affect gender identity but also the dialectic conflict until some conformity is obtained. Subsequent internalization and integration in adolescence and adulthood will depend upon the outcome of the earlier conflictual period.

Block suggests that most girls and boys experience different constraints as well as idealized images — boys being encouraged to control or repress emotion and affection; girls to control aggression. Extreme constraints and rigid socialization combined with oppositional and clearly defined sex-appropriate values, as reflected in family and wider culture, will lead to variants in outcome.

In conclusion, Block suggests that not only is a trend towards androgyny a sign of mature integration, but also that rigid sex-role stereotyping can impair mature ego functioning. Using Balkan’s concepts of "agency" and "communion" as examples, she suggests that a viable balance of agency and communion is desirable with men tending towards agency, women towards communion. Contemporary society calls for an extension of individual options for both women and men, a suggestion reinforced by Bem’s work on androgyny. As Block concludes —

"The heritage and functional requiredness of sex-typing in early or marginal cultures seems clear. The question for our times, however,
is to what extent past socialization requirements must or should control current socialization emphases in our complex, technological, affluent society, where for example, physical strength is no longer especially important and where procreation is under some control."

Agents of socialization: an analysis of influences on children.

From the two theoretical approaches which attempt to explain socialization and from the further amplification by Block, it is possible to identify the various agencies that may be influential at various stages in the development of gender identity. In all theoretical positions, the early years of life are of paramount importance, although influences in adolescence and adulthood can be identified. It follows, therefore, that the family must be considered a primary influence on the pre-school child, since encounters with other agencies are limited and are controlled by parents, specifically the mother.

Here we must acknowledge that considerable varieties of stereotypically appropriate behaviour are acceptable in different families depending on age, social class and racial origin, as well as parental view on child rearing. Rigid authoritarian parents may constrain or encourage behaviour that might be tolerated or discouraged in more liberal families; parents with strong views against sex-stereotyping may well encourage behaviour which is the exact opposite to that thought appropriate in more traditional families.

Despite the pervasive influence of the the family and the realization of its importance, very little is actually known of the specific influence of each parent and the absences or presence of either. In line with most work on child development, however, most of the empirical evidence relates to the mother.

In the case of the father, the actual affect of his absence on daughters and sons is contradictory and not clearly known because it is difficult to disentangle the other variables associated with single parent status e.g. poverty, emotional distress etc.
In the case of the influence of the mother, there are considerable variations of which the debate on "maternal deprivation" is the most notorious. A more recent area that may be significant is the mother's resolution of the potential conflict between work outside the home and domestic responsibilities. This may influence the expectations of daughters as well as the attitudes of sons. There have been numerous studies that take maternal employment as a variable but approach the subject from one of two distinctive ways -

i) those that look at children's perceptions of sex-roles, with the mother's present employment as a variable;

ii) those that look at young women who exhibit non-typical patterns of behaviour (e.g. successful careers), and link back to their mother's attitudes to work etc.

The problem with the first approach is that the child's perception of stereotypical behaviour changes over time. Looking back presents other complications because it is impossible to identify all the variables. Circumstances and societal attitudes towards working mothers may be modified. A mother who worked in the 1950s might have been unusual; in the 1980s she could be in the majority.

However, with these reservations, we can review some of the findings.

Type i) studies.

Miller (1975), with kindergarten age girls in the United States, found those with working mothers had less traditional conceptions of roles, wider and less stereotypical interests, a tendency to be more aggressive and less passive and less restrained but had no significant difference in self esteem.

Marantz and Mansfield (1977), also in the United States but with older girls from 5-11, agreed that there were less stereotypical views among those with working mothers but that more rigid stereotypical views decreased for all girls with increasing age. The career of the mother seemed to have some influence on the girls' own career aspirations but not to the extent of imitating actual jobs. Again older girls were
less constrained in their choice of possible careers.

Cordua et al (1979), with 5-6 year olds in the United States, whose work with films of doctors and nurses was mentioned earlier, found those with working mothers were less rigid in their expectations.

Finally, in Britain, Raven and Robb (1981) looked at the sex-role perception of both girls and boys age 8-9, but also made a crucial distinction between those whose mother worked full-time, part-time or not at all. They presented to each group job cards of both occupational and domestic roles, asking if they could be performed by men, women or both, in each case. Although there was some difference in perception of roles outside the home, this did not reach significance, but perceptions of roles within the home showed a marked difference between those who had full-time working mothers and the two other groups. This, they suggest, may be based on the actual division of labour within the home for full-time workers. Part-time mothers may work only during school hours and fit in all the traditional female domestic jobs as well. So actual experience may be more significant than generalised outside influences.

Type ii) studies.

Rappoport and Rappoport (1971) in studies of graduate married women suggest that the mother's career, or attitude to career, is one significant factor in married women's career success. The timing of this British study, however, suggests that it would be exceptional for a woman's mother to have had a career or even a positive attitude to having a career, so that the sample is highly unusual.

Bem (1972) and her colleagues in a study of students, report that sex-stereotyping is less in young women and young men who have working mothers. In particular, daughters of mothers who work perceive women generally as more competent and less negative. However, these tests were on college students whose mothers were working at that time and no mention was made of earlier childhood experience or if the mother had always worked.

A full discussion of the differences in girls and boys achievement and
affiliative characteristics, together with childhood experiences is found in Hoffman (1972). She suggests that the mother's encouragement of independence in daughters relates to later achievement motivation.

Mothers who are less "smothering" in attitude to their daughters encourage independent achievement and less affiliative need. Both in the availability of time and in other interests, working mothers may be less likely to "smother" their children and to encourage independence. Stewart and Winter (1974) in their study of career orientated women describe them as "self defining", as opposed to "social defining" women who plan primarily to marry. They found that for self-defining women with career aspirations, having a father in an autonomous occupation, a working mother and no older brother were all significant variables.

Conclusions.

From the evidence reviewed above it appears that whilst perceptions of domestic roles may be based on experience, ideas on appropriate occupations probably come from a range of sources. Although acceptance of possibly contradictory roles can also be affected by reality (e.g. the male nurse), most children show traditional stereotypical expectations. Having a working mother can lead to less rigid responses in terms of appropriate occupations. Evidence also suggests that having a working mother may have a significant affect on the development of the daughter. Hoffman goes as far as to suggest that not only does the reality of a working mother demonstrate that women can have interests and activities outside the home, but that the attitude of the mother is also important. Greater independence can be fostered intentionally in a daughter and she can be given more freedom, even if the mother is not actually in paid employment.

Social learning theory suggests that a mother who is happy and fulfilled in employment, and who sets an example of competence outside the home, may provide a model for the daughter to imitate. Both daughters and sons may accept more readily that women can and do fill more than one role. But more subtle influences in the relationship between a mother and daughter may influence her achievement motivation and her career aspiration than the simple variable of whether she has a paid job or not.
To anyone familiar with young children, it is obvious that social learning theory can be verified. Children are punished and rewarded for undesirable behaviour by both extrinsic and intrinsic methods. Children exhibit imitation of both the language and behaviour of adults close to them (e.g., their parents), and of those more remote (e.g., their teachers and media persons). Much, but not all, of this imitation is same-sex but some cross-sex behaviour is evident and responses to it vary. As empirical work has shown, girls are permitted more cross-sex freedom than boys; fathers generally tend to be more stereotyped in their expectations than mothers. Again, as Moss (1972) has shown, individual mothers and fathers vary in the extent to which they tolerate or encourage cross-sex tendencies. But even when parents intentionally discourage sex-stereotyping and provide androgynous examples themselves, there is evidence to suggest that children learn sex-appropriate responses from other sources, although the experience can be conflictual.

What cannot be established is the extent to which such learning contributes to a child's acquisition of gender identity and how much of that acquisition is mediated by cognitive developmental processes. As Frieze (1978) argues, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, the complexity of the socialization process and the wide range of behaviour that can be exhibited by both sexes under certain conditions, suggests that several processes are at work, taking precedence at certain stages. For example, the young child's rigidity of the "girls can't—boys can" variety that is common in primary school, may appear similar to the rigid identification with specific stereotypes during adolescence, but the processes that lead to this identification may be different. Developmental theories may expain the earlier rigid classification as "concrete" thinking but peer group identification may explain the latter conformity. Changing styles and fashions of adolescents suggest the stereotyping may not be so rigid as it seems but its influence is no less pervasive.

It may seem that undue emphasis has been placed upon the role of the mother in the early socialization of children but this is deliberate. Even with changing patterns of child rearing, it is still mothers who are the primary caretakers for at least the first three years, and
even when children make their first contact with peers in a nursery or play group, it is still the mother who retains overall responsibility for the child until the age of five. There is little evidence to show that even with changing patterns of work and unemployment, fathers are taking a major role in child care.

Other early influences may come from the extended family, from mother's friends and their children, and from the media, notably from picture books and television. In all these spheres the mother retains the ultimate control. Only a minority of children, in full time nursery or with childminders, will be in the care of another adult for any length of time, and always another woman. Other encounters will be limited to visits to shops and parks, where adult roles can be observed. By the age of five, children not only have a clear view of their own gender identity but also a very accurate appreciation of what roles and what behaviour is gender appropriate. Unless their experience has been very unusual, it will confirm all the stereotypes. Since the majority of women do not work while they have pre-school children, women will be seen mainly in the domestic sphere or in child care, in the clinic, playgroup and subsequently, infant school. Other women will be encountered in shops, as nurses, as teachers or as other mothers. Men will be identified in specific occupations, either from real encounters or in the media – as tradesmen, soldiers, policemen, firemen etc.

Jacklin (1983) provides a useful summary of the biological and psychological differences between girls and boys entering school. She admits that we do not know how different models actually influence the pre-school child but she argues that young children entering school are actually more alike than they are different. They should be treated as individuals and not classified by sex, so that they are free to maximize their own potentials without the constraints of rigid oppositional stereotyping.

It is from this position that we move on into the primary school to see if, and to what extent, the stereotyping continues.
SEX AND GENDER IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

The study of the effects of sex and gender in the primary years of schooling has its roots in two directions. On the one hand studies of the effects of variables such as social class and ethnic origin on children's school performance occasionally included sex as a further variable. On the other hand, studies at secondary level, which concentrated on the different performances of girls and boys, led to a variety of suggestions for this difference. It became apparent that the roots of difference often lay in the primary experience. From these two influences, specific studies focusing on sex and gender at primary level have emerged.

There are three possible reasons why gender differences were not seen, in British work on primary education, to be of significance until recently:

i) In developmental psychological terms, these were seen as the 'latent' years when less visible changes occurred and girls and boys consolidated the development of the pre-school period and had not yet reached the major upheaval of adolescence.

ii) There was always less obvious sexism in the primary school. Most primary schools are mixed; there are no subject 'choices' which show clear divisions between girls and boys; and the move towards so-called 'progressive' methods gave individuals the scope to develop as they wished. If 'child-centered' education allows individual development, it should not matter if the child is female or male.

iii) It was common knowledge that girls, on average, did better than boys at primary school. Their levels of achievement in most subjects were higher and, in the days of selection at 11+ allowance had to be made for this or a greater number of girls would have secured grammar school places. (Yates and Pidgeon 1957) So, it was thought, there was no problem of sexism in the primary years; clearly, if girls failed later to maintain their advantage, the reason lay in secondary education.

Studies of sex and gender in secondary schools uncovered a number of influences which might possibly be detectable at the primary stage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1676</td>
<td>99.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infants</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3155</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3058</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>24277</td>
<td>98.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior and Infants</td>
<td>7618</td>
<td>3356</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>4215</td>
<td>3671</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>20297</td>
<td>60815</td>
<td>74.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>2482</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1179</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>10415</td>
<td>20213</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Primary</td>
<td>11847</td>
<td>9881</td>
<td>45.4</td>
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<td>11146</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>37587</td>
<td>133691</td>
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<td>Middle</td>
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<td>27.5</td>
<td>5479</td>
<td>6711</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
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<td>4516</td>
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<td>All Secondary</td>
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<td>15.9</td>
<td>5451</td>
<td>2220</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>126958</td>
<td>107598</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DES Education Statistics 1986
Awareness of the effects of the 'hidden curriculum' led to an examination of organization, interaction and attitudes, as well as materials and subject content. This has led to similar investigations at primary level.

Studies of primary education tend to focus on one of the following four areas:

i) The differences between girls and boys at this age and stage of development.

ii) Ethnographic studies of inter-action and behaviour in primary classrooms.

iii) Examinations of books and materials used in primary schools for their sexist content.

iv) Studies of attainment by girls and boys during the primary years.

In this chapter I shall be examining all of the above but first of all it is essential to look briefly at the statistics of primary education.

The statistics of primary education.

The majority of children in Britain between the ages of five and eleven are educated in mixed sex, all-through infant and junior schools. Almost all children, at least in the public sector schools, are likely to be taught by a woman teacher for most of those primary years; if they do have a man teacher it is most likely to be for one year only and probably in their third or fourth year in junior school. These experiences are reflected in Table 3.1.

The majority of children will have a headmaster, not headmistress, during their junior years and many will have a man as deputy head too. If they do experience a woman in a position of authority, it is most likely to be as head of the nursery or infant department.
It is no coincidence that women teachers predominate in primary schools where they receive less pay and less status than their secondary colleagues and where a far lower proportion are likely to be graduates. With the increasing tendency to combine infant and junior departments within one school, far fewer head and deputy posts are now held by women. 70% of all junior/infant head and deputy posts are held by men; 80% of all junior heads are men. But 98% of remaining infant heads are women. There are, however, approximately 3,000 separate infant and junior schools; 11,000 junior/infant combined. Yet overall, only 22% of all primary staff are male.

Most children passing through their primary years are not likely to be consciously aware of this or to comment on their experiences. The prevailing female guided environment of their early schooling may well seem a natural progression from their predominantly female pre-school experiences at home or with a childminder, in nursery or play group.

Most parents are certainly not likely to question this arrangement either. Indeed, they are more likely to raise doubts if the reception class is taken by a man. Yet in the third and fourth year junior classes, they may express preference for a male teacher especially if discipline is seen to be a problem.

The statistics of primary education reflect a pattern that is evident in wider society where women generally care for the young, whilst men generally hold the senior positions, both in pay and prestige. It is somewhat ironic that the one profession that was always considered ideal for a woman, even for a married woman, should no longer offer so many openings for advancement for women and where men have now become firmly in control.

Primary schools: the "official" view.

From the official statistics of primary education, we turn to the official comments and views as exemplified in Government and quasi-government publications.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the DES Survey number 21 (1975)
deals explicitly with curricular differences for girls and boys, with a separate section on primary schools. Based on the 1973 Inspectors survey, they found that the timetable and other structural organizational matters were not differentiated by sex at nursery and infant levels, but that there was some difference at junior level, notably in crafts and games. They were aware that wider sex roles were reflected in primary school, through staffing and other activities. For example, they noted that science was usually taught by a man and could be seen as a 'masculine' subject, whilst music was usually taken by a woman. They felt that the difference in crafts was not justified and appeared aware of the possibly different spatial experiences of girls and boys. However their final conclusion is contradictory, combining awareness of its importance with an apparent unwillingness to do anything about it.

"All in all the different treatment of boys and girls in primary school is a subtle process, in step with the social attitudes of the time, and more likely to be modified by changes in those than by any other means. The subtlety of the process does not diminish its power and attitudes learned early often persist."

Dated at the same time as the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA), the DES report could not reflect the influence of legislation. Some idea of the limited influence of that legislation can be detected in Weiner (1978). Although not an 'official' publication, her paper is important in that it was one of the first attempts to review the effect of the SDA on education. As far as primary schools are concerned, she detects very little effect since the legal implications are confined to possible exclusion from activities on the basis of sex. For example, it is illegal to take all boys on an outing without offering places to girls; or to provide one activity for boys eg. science, whilst girls do cooking or needlework.

Weiner then lists the various attitudes and practices common in primary schools that, whilst not illegal, can contribute to different experiences and development of girls and boys. These include the organizational ways of listing or separating by sex; expectations of specific attainment or interests of girls as opposed to boys; the
significance of different craft activities; and the status and resources often accompanying boys' sport.

More recently the effect of sexism in the primary school has been taken up by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) (1983). In the relevant section of this publication they again single out the mechanical and spatial experiences of boys which should, they argue, be extended to girls. Compensatory activities may be needed here, just as the verbal deficiency of boys should be compensated for by more language based experiences. In their 'guidelines' they cover teaching materials and play activities, curriculum provision, reading schemes and books, with suggestions for positive action.

To those who are concerned about the effects of sexism in schools this EOC publication is heartening. It identifies quite clearly the potential 'problem' areas and offers clear and practical advice at all levels. All the suggestions are reasonable and possible to implement but such a publication, like the earlier DES report, only serves to highlight the main problem. Legislation exists - it is unlawful to discriminate - and yet the majority of the suggestions concern attitudes and practices that are not, and in most cases cannot, be covered by law. The problem thus reflects the attitudes and assumptions of society as a whole, so that legislation becomes not only ineffective but actually undesirable. The best example of this concerns the distribution by sex and position of the teaching staff in primary schools as reviewed earlier. Although it is possible to make overt discrimination in interviews and appointments illegal, it is not possible legislate to appoint equal numbers of female and male staff at all levels or insist that more young men train to teach infants. Although you can legislate to ensure that all pupils do science, woodwork, music and cookery, no law can change the attitudes of parents, children or teachers who feel that boys are 'better' at science or that cooking is 'sissy' for a boy.

To gauge the extent of the legal discrimination that exists within the 'hidden' curriculum, it is useful to look at the ethnographic studies that have been carried out in primary schools and which provide evidence that very clear guidelines are still necessary.
The relative attainments of girls and boys

Before examining the ethnographic studies of primary schools, it is important to summarise the findings of the various studies that have investigated the differences in attainment between girls and boys.

To bridge the gap between the official documents and independent surveys, I look first of all at the Plowden Report (1967). The National Child Development Study (NCDS) data on over 10,000 pupils (further amplified by Davie 1972) forms the basis of the Report and their findings are summarised in Volume Two, appendix 10.

By the age of seven, girls scored higher than boys in reading tests, boys marginally higher than girls in problem arithmetic tests. On teacher ratings, girls scored higher for oral ability and creativity; boys scored higher for "awareness of the world". Boys were found to be less enthusiastic about school, more reluctant to attend and generally more difficult at home. Twice as many boys as girls were labelled "maladjusted" as assessed in school and more girls than boys were labelled "stable".

Here we have a reinforcement of the widely held view that girls are better linguistically and boys are better at problem solving. Davie (1972) links this to girls greater maturity and superiority in passive verbal tasks. Since language is not so relevant in maths, boys can record higher scores. He also suggests that boys are beginning to take the "outside" role of the male.

Results from the longitudinal study carried out by Douglas et al on the 5000 children born in 1946 have provided useful data at various stages. In 1964 he reported on the primary school and eleven plus attainments of these children. The most notable finding in this book was the influence of social class on attainment and attitude to school, and there are social class variations in the sex differences he noted. Social class was crucial to eleven plus selection.

His findings suggested that girls did better than boys at primary school, resulting in 20% of the girls, 18% of the boys in his sample being selected for grammar school. Teachers generally tended to favour
girls and rated them higher and more deserving of grammar school places. Parents too expressed as much interest and concern for their daughters and wanted them to attend grammar school.

Most writing about this time tended to agree on the higher general attainment of girls at the primary stage and there are well documented examples of LEAs having to weight grammar school allocation against girls to prevent a sex imbalance in the number of places. (Yates and Pidgeon 1957) This was justified by the argument that, since girls superior performance was due to their maturity and more advanced development, boys would "catch up" in time. Therefore it would be unfair to penalise boys at this stage by awarding fewer places to them, even though more girls scored higher marks in the selective tests.

Yates and Pidgeon (1957) in discussing the difference in attainment between girls and boys say -

"There is evidence to suggest that boys and girls differ in their average levels of attainment in certain of the basic skills that are examined at the end of the primary school course ... These differences, when they occur, create problems for the authority concerned, problems which maybe aggravated by the disparity between the numbers of grammar school places available for the two sexes. In such circumstances an authority may have to decide between maintaining the same standard of entry to its grammar schools for both boys and girls and therefore admitting a greater proportion of girls than boys, or adopting different standards and thus incurring the risk of being accused of acting unjustly. If the latter expedient is adopted, it is possible ... that a brother and a sister may score the same marks in the authorities examination and for one to be awarded a grammar school place and for the other to be refused admission."

"We have also shown that in one sample of children we examined there was a tendency for heads to place a disproportionate number of older girls near the top of their orders of merit when asked to assess the suitability of pupils for a grammar school course. There is little doubt that the superior performance of girls at this age is associated with their faster rate of maturation and it is reasonable
to suppose that boys subsequently reach the same level.

In view of the fact that differences exist at the age of eleven and that there is considerable uncertainty as to when and to what extent they eventually disappear, the most satisfactory plan for an authority to adopt would seem to be to treat boys and girls separately for the purpose of allocation to secondary school courses."

It is possible that some of the women in my sample were affected by decisions such as this.

It can also be argued that the formal teaching methods that accompanied the preparation for the selective examinations and the great emphasis on improving the 'three Rs' provided a primary school environment in which girls seemed to flourish. One recent large scale survey of junior school pupils presents findings which give less credit to the girls and thus questions the advantage of maturity.

In 1976-7 the ORACLE project studied 464 girls and boys, aged 8+ to 10+ in 58 classes in 19 schools. The report (Galton and Simon 1980) was part of a larger study on school transfer but offered useful data, not only on attainment in tests and teacher assessment but also on classroom interaction, pupil and teacher attitudes and behaviour. On attainment, they report a slight superiority by girls in language and by boys in maths, but stress that there was very little difference overall. Certainly from their work there is no clear suggestion that girls do better than boys at the primary stage. One reason for this conclusion may be that the ORACLE team devised a range of attainment tests which they felt were needed to cover the non-traditional methods now prevalent in many primary schools. For this reason their results cannot be compared with those obtained from traditional selective examinations. Given that some new primary methods (project work, group work, problem solving etc.) demand different skills to just basic reading and writing tests, it may not be surprising that the attainments of girls and boys show little difference. It could be that the traditional teaching methods and assessment favoured the girls rather than the boys. Cooperation, conformity, passivity and industrious motivation in formal tasks,
which has been offered as an explanation for girls' superior performance may no longer be the most advantageous skills in a modern primary school. Adventurous initiative, investigative ideas and challenging assignments may appeal more to boys than girls.

Other findings of the survey support this. They found in class interaction that boys received slightly more attention that girls; more girls than boys admitted being contented and trying to please in school; more girls than boys admitted being anxious about other pupils.

Boys also seem to work better in group situations (Tann 1981). From the same study, she found that boys' groups worked with enthusiasm and flexibility, less able boys benefitting particularly from small, orally functioning groups. Girls tended to be more considerate to each other's suggestions but offered less ideas than the boys and were often dominated by the brightest girl in a very 'bossy' way. One clear finding which emerged from this study of group work and which may have significance for boys, was that no self-selected group was of mixed sex and that teacher selected mixed sex groups were grudgingly tolerated at best, or totally non-functioning at worst. It should however be noted that many of the classes studied were not used to the experience of group work; pupils may not have been able to maximise its potential for learning.

With the end of formal testing and eleven plus selection, it is difficult to find widescale, present day surveys of the attainments of primary school children. To present the 'official' findings, I look briefly at the relevant publications of the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU), focusing on language, mathematics and science.

Survey Report No.10 (1980) on language summarises their findings thus:

"Initial findings in the attitude scales reveal that significantly more girls than boys enjoyed independent, extended reading and preferred reading as a leisure activity. Significantly more boys than girls preferred factual reading."
They report that girls recorded higher scores on reading tests; that girls scored higher than boys on all aspects of the writing tests.

Two surveys (1980, 1981) report on both attitudes and attainment in mathematics. More boys than girls expect to be "Good at maths", whereas girls expect to have difficulties and are "surprised" at success.

"It appears that at eleven years old, boys already indicate greater self-confidence than girls in maths."

But the scores of girls equal those of boys in their enjoyment of maths and in perception of its "usefulness".

In attainment tests, boys scored higher than girls in 10 out of 13 categories but the results were significantly better in 5 of the 13. In practical tests, girls were more accurate than boys, especially in money calculations; boys were better than girls generally, especially in spatial and construction tests. A later report (1983) showed similar findings on confidence and in attainment, boys scored significantly higher in 7 of the 13 categories. This report suggests that its findings foreshadow later ones at secondary level and summarise their work to date thus:

"In all three surveys, boys obtained higher mean scores than girls in the majority of the sub-categories."

In "Science at age 11" (1980/81) the APU report that boys are marginally better at scientific concepts, whilst girls presentation is better than boys. They summarise their findings thus:

"The survey suggested that at this age differences in performance between the sexes were not marked and did not follow a clear pattern. Girls were slightly ahead in using graphs, tables and charts and in making observations of similarities and differences. They were also better at planning investigations and recording descriptions of events during investigations. This can be related to girls greater fluency in written language at this stage. Boys, on the other hand, were ahead in using measuring instruments, in applying physical science concepts to problems and in recording
quantitative results in investigations.

These APU surveys suggest that the traditionally accepted differences may not have been removed, despite the different teaching methods now found widely in primary schools.

In the light of all these attainment studies, I now turn to ethnographic studies of primary school classrooms and of other test situations which give wider data about the differences that can be observed between girls and boys at the primary stage.

Two early studies.

A very comprehensive survey of primary school children was reported by Barker Lunn in 1972. Although conceived and produced by educational psychologists, it offers data that is relevant to this chapter and is one of the first reports to consider sex and social class as primary variables. In all, 2,000 third and fourth year children in 28 schools were given a battery of tests on school related topics and personal and social relationships. Three divisions of achievement were identified - above average, average and below average - and three social class divisions, based on father's occupation - middle class, upper working class and lower working class. Attitude tests concerned such school related items as attitude to school and to doing well at school, interest in school work and attitude to the class; personality characteristics and social relationships items such as conformity, self-image, teacher relationship, anxiety and social adjustment.

Results showed that in school related items girls were significantly more favourable to school than boys but in personal characteristics boys scored higher than girls. Girls, however, scored higher in relationships with the teacher. These findings were reinforced by teachers' assessments which suggested that girls had a more positive attitude to school than boys. Not surprisingly, above average pupils of both sexes showed a more positive attitude to school, with middle class children scoring higher than the others. But girls generally showed less social class significance than boys; a lower correlation between social class and achievement or positive attitude for girls. Even above average working class boys showed negative attitudes to school.
Thus from the Barker Lunn study it would appear that the girls in her sample were generally more positive, more conforming and had a better relationship with the teacher than boys, regardless of social class or ability. It would not then be surprising if girls used these positive attitudes to do better in school than equally able boys and thus tended to be favoured by their teachers.

In looking at the teachers' perceptions rather than at the pupils, Ingleby and Cooper (1974) offer an interesting paper which describes a study concerning first year primary school pupils. 29 teachers each nominated six girls and six boys in their class at the beginning and at the end of their first year in school, on scales covering their character, brightness, work, sociability, home and language. (Although the study was concerned with both sex and ethnic differences, only those results related to sex will be discussed here.)

In both tests, at the beginning and ending of the year, girls scored more favourably than boys except on sociability; during the year all the differences between girls and boys were reduced, except for work where it increased. Although the pupils were very new to school at the first testing (two months after starting), impressions received then by the teachers were slow to change. Either teachers expect girls to do better or girls do actually adapt to school more quickly than boys. Girls are more favourably scored by teachers in primary school right from the beginning.

Rather different conclusions were drawn by Clarricoates (1978,1980). She found that in various different types of school and with pupils of very different social backgrounds, that teachers generally favoured the boys and gave them more attention and encouragement. Although boys may be seen as "behind" the girls they, therefore, need more help. The conformity of girls was not valued and boys were rated as more interesting and rewarding to teach.

The overall premise of her work is that the 'hidden curriculum' of all schools works to the advantage of boys over girls and serves to reinforce the concepts on masculinity and feminity. Although some teachers acknowledge that both sexes should be treated equally, problems of discipline and control and of retaining motivation lead
them to concentrate on the boys and to cater for their interests. And so the project is more likely to be on dinosaurs than daffodils.

Teachers, Clarricoates argues, recognise that girls usually do better than boys but she suggests that girls still lose out.

"But what is most tragic of all is that girls' real ability is attributed to conformity to institutional expectations and that the academic achievement of girls in schools is explained in terms of the feminine stereotype. The girls' conscientiousness and diligence makes them "less bothersome" and "less interesting" to the teachers who consequently turn all their energies and skills to the boys."

Clarricoates claims that her findings contradict earlier studies of teachers' attitudes to girls and boys because of her methodology - interviewing and recording conversations with teachers at length and observing and recording classroom interaction - as opposed to the attitude tests and scaled ratings used in other studies. The obverse of this is, of course, that her "evidence" is selected and presented within the theoretical position she adopts.

She argues that the criteria affecting the status of pupils vary according to the school's catchment area. For example, sporting achievements among non-academic boys may be valued in one school; "ladylike" behaviour by middle-class girls may be valued in another. She argues that "troublesome" girls present the biggest problem of all and tend to be totally neglected.

What Clarricoates does show is that the expectations of teachers regarding girls and boys reflected their perceptions of femininity and masculinity and their explanations for stereotypical behaviour. This varies according to the composition of the school in social class terms, the expectations of the parents and the overall ethos of the school concerned. In her chapter in Deem (1980), Clarricoates shows how four schools in the same county exhibit diverse expectations for each sex and reactions to their behaviour which all discriminate between girls and boys, though on widely different criteria.

"The two main points of this chapter are: that "femininity" varies, and does so according to the area in which the school is situated;
and that, despite such variations, the subordination of women is always maintained."

The detailed evidence she produces, whilst it raises many relevant and interesting issues about the positions of girls and boys in school, hardly leads conclusively to the oppression of women in a patriarchal society.

The next collection of papers that need to be reviewed here I call for convenience the "Devon" studies since they all concern schools in that county. They include Hartley (1978a, 1978b, 1980) and King (1978). Hartley's studies of two primary schools in contrasting areas, reported in all three of his papers, reach conclusions very different to Clarricoates. Since each of his papers raises different issues, each will be covered in turn.

In Hartley (1978a) he describes the results of a study in a large infant school of differences in behaviour on the basis of both sex and social class. Based on teachers definitions of girls' and boys' characteristics, he produces five scales rating concentration, maturity, tidiness, roughness, noisiness. Teachers and pupils then rate or nominate individuals to these scales and this is supplemented by observation in the classroom. The results show a clear difference on the basis of both sex and social class. Boys generally are rougher, noisier, more untidy and less able to concentrate than girls. Middle class girls score more favourably than middle class boys; working class girls are reported as more gentle and quiet than any boys; middle class girls are the most favoured; working class boys the least. Given that the criteria are all gender biased anyway and oppositional in form (eg. gentle - rough; quiet - noisy) this finding does not seem very surprising. By using opposite rating scales it suggests that what one sex are the other cannot be. To ask for nominations for the "tidiest" person in the class would anticipate a stereotypical reply since girls are expected to be tidier than boys. What the study does do is confirm, on a sex basis that girls are generally perceived by both teachers and other pupils to conform to more acceptable behaviour in class and this is confirmed further by classroom observation.
Hartley (1978b) extends his study to two schools of very different social class composition - one largely working class on a pre-war estate; the other largely middle class with a majority of owner occupied houses and parents in non-manual occupations. Using a similar method to that above but using only teachers' ratings, he extends the study to include their explanations for any sex and class differences they perceive. In both schools girls are rated more favourably than boys on the same five scales. In the working class school this was attributed to social factors - to different pre-school experiences; to degrees of freedom and control; to poor discipline in the home. In the middle class school the patterns of girls' behaviour were attributed to socialization but the boys' behaviour was explained in psychological, innate terms. "Bad" behaviour could not in this case be attributed to home conditions which were thought to be "good".

Once again girls emerge as behaving in the more appropriate way, due to an upbringing that prepares them suitably for school. Boys, on the contrary, present a problem because they are less willing to conform to expected standards.

"I think girls come to school a lot more mature than boys - they're much more prepared to settle down and accept school routine more easily."

In Hartley (1980) he extends his analysis of teachers' explanations even further to account for specific differences in ability between girls and boys. Yet again the boys appear more unfavourably, although their superior maths ability is noted by some teachers. (Note that this study is at infant level.)

By identifying preferred behaviour in school it does not necessarily imply that those pupils exhibiting the behaviour are always favoured. Though girls may be highly rated, boys may or may not be liked. Hartley does quote some teachers as saying that they prefer teaching boys - more interesting; more "spark"; more fun. Equally others prefer girls and the preference seems to be an individual one.

In his book King (1978) uses data from the same schools as Hartley to present a more lengthy study of 3 primary schools. From the book as a
whole I have selected those findings that are relevant only to differences between girls and boys.

In the schools, organizational methods which differentiated between girls and boys were not questioned and separate interests were assumed. Girls were rated higher than boys, both academically and in behaviour, middle class girls being the best and working class boys being the worst. Less able girls were described as "slow" but less able boys as both "slow" and "troublesome" and more often placed in remedial groups. King found no significant differences in attitudes or expectations between female and male teachers or between three very different schools. He makes the interesting point that while social class differences are expected, in preparation for school for example, sex differences are more visible and more significant.

Yet, as Hartley confirms, until specifically questioned, most teachers discuss social class differences quite frequently but rarely mention sex differences. The "taken for granted" nature of those differences, reflected in organisation and attitude, is not seen as of educational or social importance.

Although the influence of the Women's Movement has raised awareness of sex and gender issues in school and more studies are explicitly including sex as a variable, there have been very few attempts to explore teachers' perceptions of stereotypical sex role behaviour except in very general discussions of the behaviour of girls and boys.

One recent Australian study by Evans (1982) concentrated upon the perception of teachers and their classification of pupils' gendered behaviour. From an in-depth investigation of the views of both female and male teachers about the position of women in society, Evans shows the incongruency between their expressed views and their own self-concepts. Male teachers, although recognising the changes affecting women over the previous few years, still implied that women's domestic role was all important; female teachers, themselves married and with children, exhibited an ambiguity that they had not resolved. In describing pupils as most typically female or male, they used traditional concepts of feminity and masculinity, except for the younger teachers who were able to accommodate a "modern" girl in their identifications. This leads Evans to a general pessimistic view of any attempt to decrease sexism in schools, despite legislation and
positive action at administrative level. It would be useful to have evidence from a similar British study but as yet there is none available at this depth of either primary or secondary teachers.

One further area in which empirical evidence is available concerns the specific attitude and attainment aspect of creativity. Hargreaves (1979) and Evans (1979) have both considered sex roles and creativity. These studies, which draw mainly on the tests of "divergent" thinking, are important for two reasons -

i) Previous tests of 'ability' measurement with girls and boys have concentrated largely on the traditional academic areas of verbal and mathematical attainment, although many primary school pupils experience a wide variety of methods, subjects and activities that cannot be assessed in the traditional way. Galton and his colleagues on the "Oracle" project is the only other exception.

ii) Very little is known about the different capacities of girls and boys in 'creative' areas, despite the fact that in wider society men dominate in all areas of the creative arts and the media. Recent feminist arts groups have attempted to redress the balance by claiming the this does not reflect innate superiority but control of resources by men and lack of recognition for the artistic skills of women.

Since all primary school pupils have more creative experiences and opportunities than those at secondary level and younger pupils generally tend to be less inhibited than older ones, such explorations of creativity are important.

Hargreaves describes studies of ten and eleven year olds using "circles" tests and the expected differences emerged. Girls produced more "domestic" drawings; boys more "mechanical-scientific". But when younger children were invited to switch sex roles (ie if a girl, to draw as if a boy and vice versa), both girls and boys showed a remarkable ability to comply, as well as clearly identifying sex stereotypical items. Hargreaves links his findings with work by Bem (1975) on androgyny and went on to administer a masculinity-feminity inventory to the pupils. This led to the classification of four
groups: masculine boys and feminine boys; masculine girls and feminine girls. As expected, there seemed to be a link between creativity and androgyny, with androgynous girls out-performing all other groups. This seems to correlate with the general belief that girls at primary age are less sex-typed than boys. To take this one step further, Hargreaves created a toys and play test, in which 4-5 year olds were given free play sessions with a choice of toys. When offered opposite sex or neutral toys only, significantly more girls played with opposite sex toys; boys kept strictly to the neutral ones. Again this could reflect peer group and adult censure of 'sissy' boys but tolerance towards 'tomboy' girls - or it could be that young children find girls' toys more boring.

Evans (1979) study involved not creativity as measured by tests but as a socially constructed category recognised by teachers. In pre-school and primary school classes, four teachers were asked to nominate their three most, and three least, creative pupils, who were then observed in the classroom situation. Of the 36 nominated, 24 were boys and 12 girls. Of the least creative 18, 14 were boys and 4 were girls; of the most creative, 10 boys and 8 girls. From observation of the least creative, it appeared that the lack of creativity in boys correlated with socially unacceptable behaviour. In terms of teacher-pupil interaction, creative boys far outweighed all the others in frequency and length of attention time. Whilst creative girls received little attention and just got on unaided, creative boys dominated the class. If a teacher's recognition of creativity is so sex-typed in its response, it seems hardly surprising that boys so selected should increase their individuality and participation at the expense of girls. Since one criteria of creativity used by teachers appeared to be participation in class discussion, it is easy to predict that boys so selected will have their behaviour re-inforced and will continue to participate and to contribute ideas, throughout their educational experiences.

One further study suggests that boys participation in classroom interaction can be deliberately manipulated to make sure that they obtain attention, even if their ideas are not appropriate or creative. French and French (1984) analyse verbatim recordings of class lessons of 10-11 year olds and suggest that a small core of boys were able to monopolise attention, often encouraged by the teacher. Because their
contributions were newsworthy or even outrageously exaggerated, the teacher was forced to enter into extended dialogue with them. Unsolicited interjections could be accepted and pursued by the teacher. This, they suggest, is not a deliberate ploy by the teacher to involve the boys but simply to retain control of the potentially disruptive pupils. As Spender (1982) has shown, even deliberate attempts to equalise the interaction between girls and boys are difficult to achieve and boys, particularly, get resentful and claim the girls are monopolising attention even when they are not, so great is the accustomed practice of boys in gaining attention.

Detailed analysis of interaction between teacher and pupils, both in frequency and in content, is indicating quite extensive differences in the classroom experiences of girls and boys. Serbin (1973) in her analysis involving very young children, shows how boys' disruptive behaviour leads to more attention than girls' predominantly dependent behaviour. Even though the content of the interaction with boys may be negative, correctional and related to behaviour rather than work, they benefit more from it than girls do from the less frequent, though often encouraging, comment. It has also been suggested that girls' learning is reinforced when they hear material or instructions repeated twice or more, for the benefit of inattentive boys who missed it the first time.

However, a very challenging paper by Licht and Dwerk (1983) suggests that the compliance of girls in the primary school may lead to their eventual failure, particularly in certain subjects. The implications of their study will be examined later.

General discussion on the primary school

The very appearance of equality in the modern primary school may obscure greater differences than the old streamed and segregated system. The so-called progressive methods, with integrated days and unstructured, project based activities presumes that either all pupils are motivated to utilize their abilities to the full or that a very aware teacher is unobtrusively guiding and prompting as necessary. It would seem that such an approach still does not remove or even reduce the divisions of sex, class or race that pre-exist the primary school.
existence.

Byrne (1978) suggests, the emphasis on following pupils' "interests" rather than "needs", may perpetuate sexist assumptions about those interests. Material examined in the historical chapter of this thesis shows how emphasis on what is perceived to be the interests of girls actually limits their experience. If, as seems most likely, later gendered differences in attainment are more the result of differentiated training than innate predisposition, schools need to positively discriminate and teach certain skills to those who are hindered by lack of experience. The same intention which underlies the need for extra language experience for those who enter with less expertise in verbal communication, and remedial reading classes for those, usually boys, who are slow to acquire the skill, should be extended to extra spatial experiences for girls. To construct extra assignments based on Lego or Meccano for girls would seem as logical as extra reading sessions for boys. Free choice sessions where boys monopolise certain activities reinforce the gendered labelling as well as restricting the actual practice. Lobban (1978) summarises concisely the various aspects of the 'hidden curriculum' which reinforce sex stereotypes and Whyte (1983) offers a full coverage of the extent of sexist practice in the primary school, as well as many practical suggestions to combat it. Walden and Walkerdine (1982) show that interventions to improve girls' mathematical performance are possible, even though the reasons for their poorer performance are not really understood.

One aspect that has become increasingly visible over the last few years is the sex imbalance within the staff hierarchy. To find successful women in schools to act as role models for girls is becoming increasingly difficult, as the statistics discussed earlier in this chapter show very clearly. Primary school appears as a 'natural' extension of pre-school experience, with the daily care of young children being the responsibility of women whilst the distant but ultimate control lies in the hands of men. The male head, who resides in his high status office, assisted by a female secretary, reinforces his position of authority in settings like assembly and referrals for punishment. Even lower status tasks are performed by women, the kitchen staff and dinner ladies, whilst the male and often elderly caretaker does the physical tasks like stoking fires and
shifting furniture. As Chafetz (1978) says

"Women work in an educational system that is run by men".

Sex roles and segregation are reinforced constantly in books and materials — two areas that will be explored in the section which follows.

Even more concealed and difficult to illustrate is the imbalance in teacher-pupil interaction. All the studies that have looked at this (Sears and Feldman 1974; Clarricoates 1978,1980; Hartley 1978a/b,1980; French and French 1984) show quite clearly that boys receive more frequent and longer periods of interaction. Sears and Feldman (1974) who originally wrote in 1966, very early even by American standards, showed how boys in elementary schools received more correction, more disapproval and more praise than girls; participated more in class and showed generally more reaction to all events. Girls received more correction for lack of knowledge, though others have found that girls receive generally more supportive remarks. Not surprisingly, boys are seen as more creative in being able to contribute ideas, as Evans (1979) has shown. It is often the case that boys are given more credit for the ideas even when girls actually produced them, by shouting out what a girl had said quietly. The different effects of female or male teachers are not known; both respond more and use louder and harsher voices to boys but this is simply to keep control of the class. Given that there are relatively few male teachers in primary schools, the effects of different sexed teachers would be slight. What is apparent is that even one or two male teachers can have a disproportionate effect within the school. Boys' sport flourishes, taking time, space and resources and carrying high status. Men teachers hold proportionally more scaled posts, with responsibility for maths, science and computing.

Another subtle way in which teachers reinforce sex divisions and stereotyping is inherent in the organization within the school — registers, cloakrooms, lining up and leading out. Comparisons and competition between girls and boys are reinforced in quizzes and tests and as a means of controlling behaviour. Even ridicule and teasing, allocating a boy to sit with girls for example, reinforces the
differences. It is not surprising that most teachers report the unwillingness of girls and boys to sit together, to work together or to form mixed sex groups. (cf Tann 1981)

The clothes that pupils are allowed to wear reflect unrealised attitudes towards girls and boys. Although school uniforms are rarely enforced at the primary level, rules about no trousers for girls are not uncommon. Skirts restrict the freedom of girls and subject them to the embarrassment of "showing their knickers".

Finally, the expectations of gendered behaviour are reinforced by the different ways girls and boys are treated by teachers, the responsibilities and tasks that demand strength being allocated to boys, those calling for responsibility and caring being allocated to girls.

Frazier and Sadker (1973) show quite clearly how influences from outside school are reflected within it and how these may have unforeseen implications. Serbin (1973,1978,1983) has shown at length how teacher expectations have long term effects on the learning potential of girls and boys and Licht and Dweck (1983) have emphasised the importance of this for both the level of attainment in girls and for their later subject preferences. Conformity, dependency, neatness and accuracy, while useful in routine performance, are not the basic requirements for levels of learning which demand independent thought or creative ideas.

Clearly differences in race, class and religion will be reflected in the ways that girls are perceived and treated in primary school but, as Deem (1978) argues, vast differentials separate pupils, even though education is freely available to all. The choices that are offered are structured by these categories and pupils who are successful will be those who can utilize their ability and interests to conform to the expectations of the school, without losing their individuality to stereotypical expectations. Parents who provide for and encourage both daughters and sons in ways that they know are educationally beneficial can compensate for some of the sexism within the system. Although school is a major influence, other activities and opportunities do exist. It will be the children of middle class parents who are more likely to be offered a wider and more educationally appropriate
experience and middle class girls in particular may benefit from this.

Since all that happens within school cannot be divorced from the world outside, the next section looks at the development of children during these years, both in and out of school and draws particularly on the work of the Newsoms in Nottingham.

Primary stage: other factors.

The two volumes of the Newsons study (Newson et al 1976, 1977) provide us with some data on the behaviour and activities of seven year old children, both in and out of school. Looking at the schooling of the sample, they record the expected finding that girls generally do better than boys, especially in verbal reasoning, but that other variables are more significant at this stage, notably social class. Smaller families and attitude to the child, however, are more important than father's job or income level. Girls, on the whole, like school more than boys, get on better with their teachers and are better readers. The mothers interviewed were ambitious for their children to do well at school and many stressed overtly the equal importance for girls. Many working-class mothers were anxious for their daughters to do well, possibly to make up for their own lost opportunities. But others echoed the traditional view that it was more important for a boy to do well. In identifying actual jobs for their children, though somewhat unrealistic at the age of seven, working-class mothers mentioned two white-collar professions as most suitable for girls - teaching and nursing. Thus they appeared even more ambitious for their girls, since few projected their boys into professions but expected good skilled manual trades for them.

Out of school, the Newsons looked generally at relationships within the family. The presence of female role figures available to girls, notably mothers and teachers, were reflected in their play. Although the Newsoms argue that play preferences may reflect genetic differences, they have shown throughout that individual differences and idiosyncrasies are tolerated.

Looking at parent/child relationships, both same sex and cross sex, they detect a general split in parental roles where mothers fill the
close nurturing role whilst fathers take the interest-based one, with considerable social class differences in both same and cross-sex relationships, in disciplinary methods and in sex appropriate activities. Mothers of all social class acknowledge the need for affection in boys, but this is not to be demonstrated in public. By seven both sexes have a very clear idea of what kinds of behaviour are considered sex appropriate.

Freedom within the family for idiosyncratic behaviour is also noted at the eleven plus stage (Newson et al 1978) and a wide range of hobbies are allowed. Once again the 'tomboy' is tolerated, whilst the 'sissy' is not. Boys generally have more freedom than girls, who are frequently chaperoned - an explicit acknowledgement of the possible danger of sexual assault. This reflects findings by Hart (1979), reported by Delamont (1980), where the actual "territories" of girls and boys were explored and boys were found to have larger permitted territories and to "break bounds" more frequently than girls.

At this stage, same sex interest sharing becomes more marked; same sex peers and best friends are the norm. Whilst both sexes are reported to have to help in the home, chores become sex specific in preparation for adult roles. Unless the parents are specifically aiming to reduce gender stereotyping, the picture that emerges is that of a home environment slightly less rigid than that of school but with very clear guidelines as to what sort of behaviour is appropriate. This combination of home and school is reflected in the influence of peer groups and outside socializing agencies.

Other differences in the experiences of girls and boys have been explored, both in and out of school. These include the choice of toys and types of play and the messages from books, comics and the media.

No thorough examination of toys has been made in this country to match the study by Goodman et al (1974) in the United States. Various authors report surveys of catalogues (Chafetz 1978, Delamont 1980) and their findings show a clear demarcation between the sexes. In terms of advertising and selling, toys are clearly gendered, with far less variety and choice for girls. Boys' toys are more active, imaginative, interesting and offer a greater choice of potential roles. Girls' toys are more passive and restrictive, with only one or two roles offered,
notably mother and nurse. In buying toys parents do allow for individual preferences but choice is limited. Boys tend to have more money spent on them; their toys are more expensive and girls receive more clothes instead of toys for major presents.

Watching children at play exhibits marked sex differentiation. Boys, again, have more space and resources; boys monopolize a large area for football whilst girls skip on the sidelines. It is regrettable that very little systematic observation has been done of girls and boys at play, even in readily available school playgrounds. Roberts (1978) gives a brief glimpse of Scottish children at play but only Lever (1976) offers a detailed examination of children's play habits in the United States. She observed and interviewed 181 children in three schools, questioned them about their play and asked them to keep a "diary" of play activities. Six major differences emerged:

i) Boys play outdoors with more freedom and greater independence; girls play indoors, restricted in both sound and movement.

ii) Boys tend to play in larger groups where more participants are needed.

iii) Between ages 8 to 12, children play in age bands generally but boys mix ages more than girls. This may be to make up numbers required for a specific game. In mixed ages, girls tend to play down to the youngest, boys to play up.

iv) Girls are allowed to join boys' games more than boys join with girls. Again this may be to make up numbers. Boys tend to "tease" and play up if allowed to join in with girls.

v) Boys play more competitive games than girls. Even if team sports are not included, boys make games competitive, girls tend to play cooperatively.

vi) Boys games last much longer than girls and have a higher skill "ceiling". Boys are better at resolving disputes, enjoy the dispute and continue with the game. Girls play more "turn taking" games which are abandoned if dispute occurs.
If play is, as psychologists suggest, an important activity for learning social skills and developing maturity, then the different experiences of girls and boys reported by Lever only confirm the widening gap between them at this stage. She concludes that their respective experiences help to make the girls more private, emotional, inventive but restricted; boys more structured, independent, competitive and motivated to succeed.

Books and other media.

One major area of influence during the primary school years that has been examined in some detail is that of the books available to girls and boys of this age. Surveys include analyses of school reading books, (Lobban 1974, Whiting 1981); of picture books, (Children’s Rights Workshop 1976); of fiction (Nightingale 1974, Dixon 1977), as well as more descriptive coverage of comics and popular magazines in Sharpe (1976). The most recent overall coverage can be found in Stones (1983).

There is no clear indication of the extent to which books, comics, and television influence the development of children, although the amount of exposure to the various media has been shown to correlate with certain personality characteristics. However, the analysis of books and comics particularly, has shown clearly that the stereotypical images of girls and boys and of women and men are far more rigid than those encountered in real life. The protest over school reading schemes has been particularly strong since, it is argued, such schemes are not only the child’s first encounter with reading but carry the ‘authority’ of school books and may, therefore, be more influential than books and comics looked at in the home. If stereotypical images of race and class are declared unacceptable, then sexist assumptions should also be challenged. Lobban’s (1974,1975) definitive work on popular reading schemes shows quite clearly that they contain representations of women and men in very traditional roles and offer far more role models to boys than to girls.

Even in fantasy stories, boys have far more characters with which to identify. In her survey, alongside the 33 occupations depicted for...
men, only 8 were for women and those included mother, grandma and teacher. Whiting (1981) follows up Lobban's earlier survey of Ladybird books and reports that, even in the updated versions, stereotypes still exist.

In the world of children's fiction, Nightingale (1974) and Dixon (1977) show that stereotyping clearly exists. Many stories for this age group set their activities in single sex environments, (e.g. in ballet schools for girls); in mixed group adventures, the boys always take the lead, the girls are weak and soppy or are 'imitation' boys. Nightingale suggests that one of the reasons why boarding school stories are so popular with girls is that they give girls a chance to "rebel" against authority or to become the heroines who "save" the school. A survey of more recent fiction suggests that some of the newer, exciting authors are more aware of sex stereotyping and have made deliberate attempts to offer a variety of characters who break both sex and race stereotypes, though such books are still rare and have to be looked for. Simple guidelines like those in the McGraw Hill list (Children's Rights Workshop 1976) would go a long way to reducing and even compensating for, the rigid divisions widely available.

The irony of the issue is that if girls are more advanced and more prolific readers at this stage, they have to be reared on a diet of books that puts them firmly into their traditional roles. To have to plod through a lengthy series of readers where not one woman appears, for example, to be driving a car, has to be reconciled with the reality of their mother driving them daily to school. School experiences which are claimed to widen horizons, release potential and allow for individual development are therefore, in terms of sex differences, more likely to restrict vision, close options and hold up an example of conformity.

As Byrne (1978) argues, sex differences will increase with age if they are encouraged and not contradicted. Books, toys, play and school all seem intent on encouraging and reinforcing the differences between girls and boys instead of making very any attempt to reduce or eliminate them.
Conclusion.

Between the ages of five and eleven, children grow from dependent infants to semi-autonomous beings, on the threshold of puberty. The majority move on to secondary school with considerable skills in basic literacy and numeracy and with a wide but fragmented knowledge of the world outside of their own experience. In terms of attainment, all the evidence suggests that girls have every reason to feel as good as, if not better than boys; they should have enjoyed their primary years and have positive rather than negative feelings towards school. Social class differences will have made their mark but undoubtedly the biggest difference will be between the two sexes. All of them will have a very clear idea of sex appropriate behaviour, though perhaps less rigid in its application than in their earlier years. Whilst girls may be allowed greater flexibility at this stage, boys will be severely censored if they exhibit 'feminine' traits. But for all this tolerance, girls will be more constrained and less confident. This both reflects and anticipates the sex roles and stereotypical behaviour of adults in society. Chodorow (1971) summarises the implications of this thus:

"The narrowness and severity of this training for boys is far greater than comparable training for femininity in girls. Girls can be tomboys, wear jeans and other men's clothing, fight, climb trees, play sports, ride bikes. Their mothers may be somewhat anxious about them but this behaviour will not be cause for great alarm, nor will it be forbidden nor cruelly ridiculed. Similarly, they will be considered "strange" or "unfeminine" if they continue to be active, to succeed academically or professionally; however many women do nonetheless, without feeling a fundamental challenge to their identity.

The training and subsequent behaviour of boys is not so flexible. It would be unheard of for boys to wear dresses; if they want to cook or play with dolls, do not like sports or are afraid to fight, this is cause for panic by parents, educators and psychologists. And, in fact, boys do conform closely to the male goals and behaviour required of them. They learn early not to exhibit feminine personality traits - to hide emotions and to pretend to themselves that they do not have them; to be independent participants in
Table 3.2

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Source: DES Educational Statistics (1986)
## Table 3.3

Females as a percentage of CSE (Grade 11 GCSE 'O' and 'A' level passes, selected subjects (summer examinations), England and Wales, 1970-83.

### a. CSE

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### b. GCE 'O' level

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<td>29.1</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Studies</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic subjects</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All subjects                  | 40.4 | 43.1 | 42.8 | 43.8 | 45.9 | 47.0 |

**Source:** EOC (1981)
activities rather than personally involved with friends. Later, as men, they are careful never to choose women's careers unless they are prepared to bear enormous stigma."

Overall the balance may even appear weighted in favour of the girls at this stage, despite the constraints described. So what happens to these girls in secondary school? Do primary schools prepare girls for eventually failure in ways that have yet to be fully explored?

SEX AND GENDER IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL.

We saw in the previous section how girls generally have tended to do better than boys in the primary sector of our education system. Although the evidence is not conclusive, girls seem to reach a higher standard in formal work, particularly in language based activities. On transferring to secondary school, usually around the age of 11-12, one would expect this slight overall superiority to be maintained, if it is mainly due to their more cooperative behaviour in school. If, however, it is due to girls' earlier maturation, at least they should end up generally equal with boys once the boys have "caught up". Indeed, once the changes of puberty are over and the different rates of development adjusted, one would anticipate a spread of attainment roughly equal for girls and boys when other factors are held constant.

However, the figures available show that their respective attainments are rather different. Girls attain more recognised qualifications up to and including two GCE 'A' levels. More boys attain better scores for three or more 'A' levels and this is reflected in their rates of admission to higher education. (Table 3.2) In addition to this vertical discrepancy, there is a marked horizontal distribution in the subjects taken. Overall, more girls attain passes at all levels in English, arts and languages; boys attain more passes in maths and physical sciences. (Table 3.3) It may be remembered that this same discrepancy was noted in the 1923 Report on the Curriculum.

After leaving school, the destinations and courses followed by girls and boys show different patterns. More girls than boys continue in
### Table 3.4
Educational and economic activities of 16 year olds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1975/76</th>
<th>1982/83</th>
<th>1983/84</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of 16 year olds who were</strong>:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In full time education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In employment (outside YTS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With part-time day study</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On YTS/YOP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 16 year olds (% 100%) (thousands)</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>834</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The activities in January each year of those who had attained the statutory school-leaving age (16 years) by the previous 31 August.
2 In addition to the activities shown, some 10 per cent of 16 year olds attend evening classes.
3 Full-time and sandwich including higher education but excluding private education outside school.
4 Includes part-time day study only; 4 per cent undertook private sector part-time study in 1983/84.
5 Includes those in further education establishments attending Youth Training Scheme and Youth Opportunities Programme courses.
6 Registered unemployed in 1975/76 and claimant unemployed from 1982/83. (These are Department of Education and Science estimates.)

Source: Department of Education and Science

### Table 3.5
Intended destination of school leavers: by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>percentage of all school leavers by type of course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HND/HNC</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OND/ONC</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTEC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCE &quot;A&quot; level</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCE &quot;O&quot; level</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other full-time</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total leavers intending to enter full-time further or higher education as a percentage of all school leavers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(percentages) (thousands)</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavers available for employment (percentages) (thousands)</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>121.8</td>
<td>126.5</td>
<td>127.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total school leavers (% 100%) (thousands)</td>
<td>315.3</td>
<td>363.9</td>
<td>396.9</td>
<td>413.1</td>
<td>404.3</td>
<td>398.1</td>
<td>343.6</td>
<td>381.0</td>
<td>397.9</td>
<td>392.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Social Trends 16 (1986)
### Table 3.6

**Higher education—full-time students: by origin, sex, and age**

*United Kingdom*

#### Thousands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-time students by origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the United Kingdom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities—undergraduate</td>
<td>128.3</td>
<td>130.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—post-graduate</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector higher education</td>
<td>102.0</td>
<td>109.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total full-time UK students</td>
<td>254.2</td>
<td>262.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From abroad</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total full-time students</td>
<td>274.2</td>
<td>301.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-time students by age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 or under</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>104.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>104.6</td>
<td>108.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or over</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. In 1980 measurement by age changed from 31 December to 31 August.

*Source: Social Trends 16 (1986)*

### Table 3.7

**Further education—all non-advanced courses: by type of course and sex**

*United Kingdom*

#### Thousands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student enrolments in major establishments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By type of course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time and sandwich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the United Kingdom</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From abroad</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day release</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time day</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening only</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By age—18 or under</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-19 or over</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total student enrolments</td>
<td>1,007</td>
<td>930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enrolments on courses in local authority adult education centres*</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enrolments on other courses of adult education*</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Previously known as Evening Institutes.

*Source: Department of Education and Science; Scottish Education Department; Welsh Office; Northern Ireland Department of Education*

*Source: Social Trends 16 (1986)*
full-time education, either at school or in colleges of Further Education, although more boys than girls get day-release opportunities. More boys than girls are on government schemes (YTS etc) and more boys than girls are registered as unemployed. Tables 3.4. to 3.7 show the latest figures for school leavers and for higher and further education.

In addition to this, there is a marked difference in the attainments of girls and boys of different social class. Middle class girls gain better results academically than either working class boys or girls; working class girls attain least of all in the education system - they leave earlier and gain less qualifications than working class boys.

So how can these gender and class differences be explained? Explanations are possible at three interrelated levels - in the aspirations and abilities of the girls themselves; in the expectations and encouragement of the schools; or in the standards and stereotypes of wider society. Obviously there must be interaction between the three levels - girls of different abilities and interests attend schools of widely different standards and ideals within a society which exerts contradictory constraints on both the girls and the schools. For the purposes of this section, I intend to focus mainly on the level of the school, but some reference must be made to both individual psychology and to the changing influences of society as a whole. Although individual girls vary in ability and personality, certain strong patterns emerge which indicate clearly how constraints and opportunities vary for different groups of girls. Although society offers conflicting models and opportunities to all girls reaching the end of compulsory schooling, the most influential factors are those of school, family and peer group. During adolescence the peer group becomes a very important influence on the behaviour of many girls but the specific peer group available to girls also depends on the type of school attended and on the family background.

In the rest of this chapter, I propose first to examine briefly the psychological aspects of adolescence which form a backcloth to the years of secondary schooling. Then I intend to examine those aspects of secondary schools which have been explored in some detail and which appear to influence the differing attainments of girls. I then consider briefly the influence of peer groups and of the expectations
of wider society, particularly as it affects the future aspirations and career choices of girls. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of the issues raised by gender and education at the secondary level for this research project.

Psychological aspects of adolescence.

The material discussed in this section centres on the girls themselves - their physiological and psychological development during adolescence. It should be made clear at the outset, however, that this does not suggest that the "blame" for any lack of attainment, for unwise choice or for differentiation on the basis of sex, can be placed on the girls themselves. Each individual is the result of complex interactions between the self and the environment, resulting in certain predispositions and traits that result in certain attitudes and decisions.

The purpose of this section is to focus on selected areas that have been identified as relevant to the overall topic. In no way is it intended as a full account of the adolescent development of girls. I propose to discuss the influence of contemporary sex stereotyping and role ambivalence; the work on anxiety and the "motive to avoid success"; and finally, the exploration of androgyny. These topics are covered only in relation to the education of girls and their possible influence on future choices and not in their full complexity. As with all psychological discussions certain generalizations are inevitable; the main emphasis is on detecting overall patterns and their suggested explanations.

Newson et al (1978) in their ongoing Nottingham study, suggest that sex stereotypes play a major role during adolescence in providing a guide to acceptable behaviour, especially behaviour in relation to the other sex. Their survey indicated little change in both stereotypes or future role models. Boys focused mainly on jobs and career; they showed no conception of a future husband/father role, even though marriage was accepted as a probability. Girls, of all social classes and ability, focused more on their eventual wife/mother role, even if a career was considered prior to marriage. Weinreich (1978) and O'Leary (1977) both suggest that some role conflict is inevitable for
girls but that the extent of this depends on variables like class, ability and parental, especially maternal, attitudes. Weinreich argues that puberty presents a discontinuity to girls, a conflict between general socialization and sex-specific attitudes. Messages about traditional feminity have to be balanced against newer attitudes towards women - towards achievement, independence, aspirations etc. These contradictions were perceived and discussed as long ago as 1946 in a perceptive article by Komarovsky.

"The problems set forth in this article will persist .... until the adult sex roles of women are re-defined in greater harmony with the socioeconomic and ideological character of modern society. Until then, neither the formal education nor the unverbalized sex roles of the adolescent woman can be cleared of intrinsic contradictions."

The ambivalence engendered by these contradictions form the subject of a paper by Bardwick and Douvan (1972). Girls who, throughout childhood, have been encouraged to be passive and dependent, now have to balance their affiliative needs against the need to achieve - to do well at school, to be competitive and to gain academic success. Traditional masculine values and roles receive greater acclaim in society; the feminine options are fewer and less valued. One way of resolving this affiliative/achievement conflict is to re-define affiliation as achievement - to be successful in inter-personal relationships; to perceive and experience self-esteem as being valued by others. But the resolution may be temporary and the ambivalence remain. Enjoyment of femininity and the feminine role may be experienced as less satisfying and less meaningful. If a career is persuaded, the balance between the affiliative "success" (marriage) and the achievement attained (career) must be carefully maintained, hence the stress of performing this "dual role". Sacrificing either can be a painful experience; unrealised potential can be as equally damaging to self-esteem as a failure to aspire to the feminine ideal. How far these dilemmas are perceived by the adolescent girl remains unclear but the ambivalence of conflicting demands can directly affect academic performance.

Sutherland (1983) puts great emphasis on the effect of anxiety on girls at this stage of their schooling. By this she means an anxiety trait which perceives a "danger" in taking certain options - the
danger of failure; the tendency to feel that certain situations may prove too much to cope with; the fear of looking foolish in certain circumstances; the risk of a reduction in self-esteem. The key variable seems to be the "coping style" since most individual girls face such contradictions at some time. Indeed, a certain level of anxiety, she suggests, may actually enhance performance.

One major factor which may affect the ability to resolve anxiety is that based on prior experience. When anxiety producing circumstances have been encountered and overcome successfully, new challenges can be met with increased confidence. This, she suggests, is more the experience of boys during childhood and earlier education. However, one "coping style" frequently employed by girls is to opt out or avoid anxiety-provoking circumstances whenever possible.

During secondary education opportunities for avoidance do exist - in lowered aspirations or in selecting subjects found previously to be easier. Variables affecting this depend upon high or low ability, as well as high or low anxiety traits. Society actually encourages girls to lower aspirations and opt out, preferring other socially acceptable alternatives to high academic attainment and challenging careers. Hence the ambivalence, especially for girls with high ability, for whom high attainment is possible but uncertain.

Licht and Dweck (1983) take up a similar theme. They look in detail at sex differences in achievement orientation - in levels of confidence and achievement-related beliefs; in causal attributes for success and failure. They show how causal attributes have an effect on self-prophecy, affecting expectations and attainments. Boys, generally, attribute success more to their ability; girls generally attribute success mainly to luck. But girls are more likely than boys to attribute failure to their lack of ability. Thus if success depends more on luck than on ability, then future expectations are unpredictable. Success based on ability leads to increased confidence for new tasks.

The reasons for this difference, Licht and Dweck suggest, may lie in earlier socialization patterns, hence the fact that some girls are confident. These patterns are well established and reinforced at primary school. Teacher expectations and behaviour control affect it
further, even though girls generally do better at this stage. It is suggested that negative feedback, more common for boys than girls, may have more influence on girls; for example, since they are corrected less frequently, the impact of correction is greater. On the other hand, positive feedback which is less frequent for boys, may reinforce their perception of their ability. Whether feedback is for academic work or behaviour is immaterial; certainly most studies show that boys receive far more interaction with the teacher, even though much of it is negative. Girls' negative responses and boys' positive responses are most likely to be for work.

The implications of these studies are most serious for girls at the secondary stage. Licht and Dweck go on to suggest that not only does achievement orientation affect confidence and levels of attainment overall, but that there may be a differential effect in certain subjects. Maths, for example, continually presents a series of new concepts to be mastered, with visible criteria for success and failure - at this stage answers are usually either right or wrong. Visible success reinforces the confidence of boys in this subject and the lack of interpersonal evaluation is also more acceptable to them. It does not matter if the teacher likes you or not, the correct answer gets a tick. However, language based subjects such as English have less rigid criteria and a variety of levels for evaluation. Work can be commended for neatness, for ideas, for grammar etc. Feedback therefore can be more subjective and personal but less threatening, since there is no absolute right or wrong for most English tasks at secondary level.

Thus attainment levels and subject choices could be affected, even for the more able girls, if success and failure are attributed to luck and ability respectively. Since success is unpredictable, it becomes more important to avoid potential failure. For boys, greater confidence in predicting success and in attaining it, plus their acceptance of reprimand, reinforces their views of their ability and their achievement orientations.

These ideas presented in this paper by Licht and Dweck and the earlier discussion on ambivalence, link directly with the work initiated by Horner (1972a/b). The "motive to avoid success" (MAS) identified by her has subsequently been explored extensively in numerous studies,
with both sexes and with various ages and races. In outline, she proposes that for young women the conflict between femininity and achievement, plus a fear of competition, especially with the men, leads some women to lower their aspirations and to deliberately avoid success. This, she stresses, is not the same as having a "will to fail".

The fear of negative social consequences if a girl is seen to be successful is greater than the desire to achieve and this leads to a denial of ability and a fear of competition. Thus the "motive to avoid success" is a barrier to achievement for many women, especially at the stage when competition is most intense but social acceptance becomes a major priority. Thus MAS can only be present in more able women or those who know that they could achieve.

MAS appears to increase during adolescence, with the attitude of peers being the most important variable. Single sex groupings are less likely to encourage MAS, particularly if the setting is one where academic attainment is recognised and rewarded. It is, then, the social environment as well as the socially constructed expectations, that determine the extent of MAS.

Ward (1979) shows up some of the weaknesses of MAS studies generally. She suggests that the relationship between motive and performance is not a simple one and that the realism of the expected result is not significant. Summarising Horners early work and subsequent developments of it, Ward concludes

"The conflict between success and femininity and a decline in achievement orientated behaviour is most apparent in competition with men in specifically masculine endeavours. There is also a tendency for the motive to avoid success to emerge in puberty and increase with heightened sex role awareness. In short, sex role learning adversely affects achievement motivation in women."

Clearly, not all young women exhibit MAS and some do attain, even in traditional masculine areas. The reasons why girls and women differ in their attitudes to achievement and in their attainment levels is complex and a number of variables, other than ability, have been explored. Of these, the socializing agents within the family and the
affects of peer group influence during adolescence take precedence.

Stewart and Winter (1974) in studying college women's aspirations for the future, came up with the same variables as some of the studies covered in the earlier chapter on socialization and primary education. Using TAT and self/social definitions they compared the personality and background of those young women who planned a career, as opposed to those who expected marriage with no career. Variables correlated with career orientation were - position in the family (oldest or only child but no older brother); mother working and/or attitude to working; father in "autonomous" job. In addition, self-defining career orientated women tended to have more masculine interests, to be politically active and to have a fear of inferiority or failure. Stewart and Winter suggest that attitudes to careers are related to more general personality styles and that differences between women need to be studied, far more than differences between the sexes. This suggests that such differences are socially constructed.

Differences between women, and between men, are the focus of the next area that appears significant in understanding girls' progress through the secondary school. Bem (1975) has conducted extensive research into sex roles and has identified a variety of groups showing own sex and cross sex characteristics to varying degrees. Using her own "Sex Role Inventory" (SRI) to assess degrees of "masculinity" and "femininity" in both males and females, she suggests at least five classifications:

- high masculine men; high feminine women; (sex stereotyped);
- high masculine women; high feminine men; (cross sex or reversals);
- those men and women with both masculine and feminine components;
- (androgynous).

It is with this concept of androgyny that this section concludes.

Bem's main argument (1975) is that traditional concepts of masculine men and feminine women as healthy, adjusted individuals can be questioned. Persons able to perform a variety of tasks, both traditionally masculine and feminine, are most able to cope successfully with the complexities of living in society today. Too rigid stereotyping may be inhibiting for both men and women. That
while reversals are not acceptable, androgyny, though less common, can be considered ideal. That such androgynous individuals exist is not in doubt —

"But it is clear that whatever psychological barriers may turn out to be responsible for the behaviour rigidities of the sex typed and sex reversal subjects, the current set of studies nevertheless provides the first empirical demonstration that there exists a distinct class of people who can appropriately be termed androgynous, whose sex role adaptability enables them to engage in situationally effective behaviour without regard for its stereotype as masculine or feminine."

Williams (1979) takes up the theme of androgyny and relates it to mental health. In her study of patients at a health centre, high androgynous women showed less signs of psychiatric symptoms —

"The possession of high levels of both masculinity and femininity in the high androgynous group lead to effectiveness in both expressive and instrumental domains and is reflected in the low life stress reported in this group."

High masculine women were less vulnerable than high feminine women, again suggesting that individuals with extreme stereotypical femininity may find it difficult to cope with the stress of real life even if they appear to be fulfilling an ideal.

Viane (1979) takes ideas from attribution theory as discussed above and links them with androgyny, to explore differences between boys and girls in terms of expectations of success and failure. In two studies carried out with 15 - 18 year olds in four Dutch schools, she shows clear sex differences in expectations. Although differences between schools remain unexplained, in general girls again attribute their success to luck; boys to ability. However, as Viane argues, boys and girls may have different rules by which they evaluate the success and failure. Even then, androgynous and masculine individuals showed
similar responses in attributing success to ability and lack of success to external circumstances. This is particularly important since the task, solving anagrams, was not typically masculine although the "challenge" was presented in a way that might cause anxiety to girls.

Finally, I want to consider briefly a paper by Lomax (1977). This is one of the few British studies which set out to examine the self-concepts of girls in a disadvantaged environment. The sample was taken from a girls' secondary modern school in an Educational Priority Area of London. Girls were scored for disadvantage on four dimensions—social background; ethnicity; intellectual; stream assigned by the school. Girls also provided sociometric data on popularity and deviance and their teachers gave an assessment of behaviour and work. Measurement of self-concept came from a sentence completion test. The findings were that the most disadvantaged girls had the most positive self-images; the less disadvantaged (in this sample) seemed more aware of relative disadvantage; the least disadvantaged received most support from the school; white pupils felt most negative; 'A' stream pupils were most aware of their position in a school of low academic repute.

This brief survey of some of the psychological aspects of adolescence and studies of their attributes might contribute some understanding to the differential success of boys and girls in secondary school. Three important factors emerge—

i) that some conflict, ambivalence or discontinuity does exist for many girls at this stage in terms of their academic achievement orientation, their femininity and future role expectations; ii) that the way in which the conflict is resolved by individual girls depends on a number of complex variables both within the personality of the girl and in her social environment; iii) that the ideas of femininity and masculinity are socially constructed and that ideal goals for women and men are socially determined.

It is the social environments of secondary schools themselves that the next section considers.
The influence of the school.

All schools are very complex institutions; secondary schools particularly so. They are organizations with formal hierarchies and relationships that are officially and unofficially prescribed. They are concerned overtly and covertly with the transmission of messages; quantifiable factual knowledge as well as objective criteria; subjective norms and values, attitudes and expectations. They are institutions where control is paramount, where patterns of behaviour are prescribed. These may be intentional patterns, regulated by rules and disciplinary procedures; or implied standards, regulated by expectations of what is considered suitable. Most schools aim to be meaningful, relevant, purposeful and even enjoyable places; in reality, some schools are boring, mindless, custodial and even violent.

From amongst the complexity of secondary education, psychologists, sociologists and educationalists attempt to discover just what does go on in schools. More recently, some have been trying to identify and explore those processes which may affect gender difference and may help to explain the differential experiences of girls and boys within the same overall establishment.

This section reviews just some of the work that has been done, mainly British and dating only from 1975. It falls under four main headings:

a) the organization of the school and the use of resources;

b) the content and structure of the formal curriculum; the subjects taught and the options offered;

c) the "hidden curriculum" transmitted daily, particularly in classroom interaction;

d) the debate - for such it has become - over the different effects of single sex or mixed groupings of pupils.
Table 3.8

Full-time graduate lecturers and teachers by type of establishment, sex and degree subject (1), 1984-85

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Medicine, technology and other professional and vocational subjects</th>
<th>Agriculture, forestry and veterinary science</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Administrative, business and social studies</th>
<th>Language, literature and area studies, music, drama and visual arts</th>
<th>Arts other than languages</th>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>All establishments</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) The subject group of degree is not necessarily the same as the subject taught.
(2) Information for non-maintained schools is not available.
(3) See paragraph 9.3 of the explanatory notes for graduate shortfall.
(4) United Kingdom universities excluding the Open University. There were 687 professors and lecturers at January 1985 at the Open University.
(5) Full-time teaching and research staff of graduate status paid wholly from general university funds.
(6) Including 670 male and 503 female teachers classified as miscellaneous, not elsewhere specified.

Source: DES Educational Statistics (1986)
a) The organization of the school and the use of resources.

The idea of free compulsory education for all, offering equal opportunities to all, has been recognised as a myth for some time. No education system has yet managed to remove the differences in social class, even though the principle of comprehensive education was introduced in the hope that inequalities could be reduced. Byrne (1975) shows quite clearly that even resource allocation discriminates between various groups of pupils - the able and less able; the urban and the rural; as well as between boys and girls. Allocation of resources, material, financial and staffing, consistently favours traditional 'boys' subjects, be it handicrafts or science in needing more specialised rooms, or extra space and transport for the school football team.

Such inequality in resource allocation is just one way that boys are favoured in secondary education but the imbalance of the sexes at all levels of organization and administration makes secondary schooling a male dominated sector. Figures given in the first section of the chapter (Table 3.1), and in Table 3.8, show how male teachers predominate in the hierarchy and in certain subject areas, especially those that have prestige and resources. Anecdotal accounts of the female 'second deputy (girls)' being little more than part-time nurses, lavatory attendants and high class tea ladies are numerous.

The role models available to girls within mixed secondary schools are often limited to the above example of 'pastoral' care, teachers of domestic subjects, plus secretaries, dinner ladies and cleaners. Although many reports have deplored the dominance of men at secondary level, legislation is practically worthless unless discrimination can be proved.

Marland (1983) documents this inequality in detail, together with suggestions for remedying it and offers three reasons why such administrative imbalance is undesirable, both for teachers and pupils. He argues that there need to be -

i) equality for professionals to advance to the levels and types of work for which they have the qualities and experience;
ii) opportunity for schools to be led, planned, managed and evaluated by both women and men for the good of the curriculum, organization and leadership;

iii) models for boys and girls to observe adults of both sexes taking a full range of positions and levels of responsibility.

In a comprehensive article Whyld (1983) shows how resources and staffing are but two of the many ways that school organization emphasises the differences between girls and boys and applies differing standards to their behaviour. Division by sex for numerous activities where sex is irrelevant but administratively convenient; differences in space available for subjects or for play, uniform and conventional clothing, tasks allocated, disciplinary standards, time tabling etc, can all reinforce rather than reduce or eliminate those differences.

"The effect of constantly dividing a group by sex is to rank biological sex above any other aspect of personality, to play down real similarities between girls and boys and to distance the sexes from one another."

Before a single lesson is taught or a test administered, secondary school differentiates quite clearly between girls and boys.

b) Subject content and choice.

One reason for the imbalance between girls and boys in the secondary school is that certain subjects are considered traditionally 'masculine' and others traditionally 'feminine'. This includes not only the more obvious ones like sports and crafts but also the academic divide between English, languages and arts on the one hand; maths, science and, more recently, computer studies, on the other. The majority of teachers in 'masculine' subjects inevitably are men and vice versa for the 'feminine' subjects. According to Blackstone (1982) it is this difference in attainment, rather than a failure to attain, that should be receiving attention if changes are to be made, for example, in women's employment opportunities.

Although subject preferences were recognised long ago and were often
regarded as 'natural', the significance of this has more recently been emphasised because of the career options that are dependent on subject choice.

Ormerod (1975) looked at boys' and girls' preferences, choices and teacher liking among fifth year GCE pupils in both mixed and single sex schools. He found close links between teacher liking and choice of subject, but distinctive male and female subjects emerged, as reflected in GCE entries. Overall, male/female polarisation was most marked in mixed schools but less rigid in single sex schools. In all-girls schools, where maths and science teachers are more usually women, there is less likelihood of subjects being labelled as gender specific - but overall preference for the 'female' choices still exists. This may partly be because fewer options are offered in some all-girls schools.

Several years later, Searle et al (1982) looked at subject choice and career choice in 200 schools which had been identified as having "good practice" in non-sexist terms. While some change had occurred in craft subjects, science and craft teachers still tend to be sex stereotyped, especially with reference to future careers. Although there has been an increase in the number of girls taking maths, for example, we still do not know why this subject split still exists and why it remains resistant to change.

As discussed in an previous section, Licht and Dweck (1983) consider that it is something to do with the way the actual content of the subjects are taught and assessed. The roots of the difference lie not in any natural affinity but in earlier learning experiences. When choices are available at secondary school, girls are more likely to choose certain subjects and to drop others. Licht and Dwerk argue that this can only be changed by altering the "challenges" presented at school and encouraging girls to take more risks.

"One possible strategy is to increase the degree of challenge children typically encounter in school. Findings ... support the notion that children do not develop stable high levels of confidence and high levels of persistence in the face of difficulty simply as a result of having experienced repeated successes. ... The treatment
strategies that seem to promote a tendency to persist in the face of difficulty instead involve experience with challenges and errors. It is not unlikely that bright girls encounter very few intellectual obstacles until the later school years; and by the time they encounter any notable difficulty or confusion, they have already developed a pattern of achievement-related beliefs that makes them poorly equipped to cope with it."

Whyld (1983) takes a far wider view of the many factors which influence pupils' choices, based on various experiences over years of schooling. She suggests that there is a distinct "image" of each subject, formed from many contributing factors, such as sex of teacher, future career options, educational tradition, emphasis on "people" or "things", portrayal in the media, and attitudes of other pupils. Thus the "free choice" of subjects allows pupils to opt out of those whose image is not acceptable to them and to concentrate on those that are. Obviously ability will affect choice, both in preference and in what is permitted by the school. Parents, too, will influence, and in some cases dictate, their daughter's choices. However, only the most determined will be able to cope with what Marland (1983) calls the "prison of the peer group". It takes a very strong-minded girl to be the only one doing physics and she needs to be sure of success. Hence those girls who do chose 'masculine' subjects usually attain very high standards in them.

There is now a vast amount of literature on sex bias in specific subjects, mainly placing emphasis on girls' apparent failure in maths (Weiner 1980; Eddowes 1983 and many others) and science (Harding 1980, 1983; Kelly 1980; Weinreich-Haste 1979 and Blackstone 1980). On a different level, Spender has produced numerous books and papers which examine the content and use of language at all levels of schooling and the sexist implications of this.

One final area of subject choice which has had grave implications for girls is in the practical subjects, especially for the older but less academic pupil. The historical legacy is strong (as shown in chapter two) and combines two basic ideas - that less academic pupils want to see the "relevance" of their schooling and that "relevance" for girls means focusing on their future domestic role. Thus for these girls, a large part of the timetable consists of domestic science, home
economics, child care, design for living, community studies and other such stereotypical occupations. As Sutherland argues (1981) this assumption gives girls an easy option, an escape from other subjects and ill-prepares them for careers of any kind. Even the domestic content is often unrealistic and nearly always neglects any consideration of boys' future familial role.

There is a danger that while more academic girls are being persuaded to take non-traditional courses, the less-able girls will continue en route for domesticity, with perhaps obsolete typing as the only alternative. The practical subjects offered to such girls have little vocational use. The curriculum fails to emphasise a range of options, leading to a variety of courses or occupations but leads instead to a stop-gap job, if any, prior to marriage and motherhood.

(c) Classroom interaction and other hidden messages.

If the organization of the school and the choice and structure of the curriculum contain certain messages about the future roles of girls and boys, then the actual teacher-pupil interface in the classroom reinforces this message continuously. Classroom interaction, between teacher and pupil and between pupils themselves, has become one of the areas subject to detailed research in recent years. Many of the findings previously discussed at primary level are also applicable in secondary schools, but sex differentiation during adolescence tends to be even further enhanced.

Several areas and age groups have been explored. Early work from the USA showed how boys received far more attention in class, both positive and negative in content. Good (1973) showed how able boys received the most favourable treatment; least able boys the least favourable - but all girls received less than both groups of boys. Although female and male teachers varied in the style and content of their interaction, no real differences were recorded in the amount - both gave more to boys. Spender (1980) argues that just as men speak more than women in mixed groups, so boys expect to dominate in school. Girls who persist in talking too much in class are labelled bossy or
considered masculine, so that most passively withdraw and let the boys get on with it. This not only reinforces their own perception of themselves as passive and subordinate, it also inhibits learning, since talking is an important means of acquiring information and understanding it. The importance of such interaction and the teachers' response to it, not only reinforces the self-image of the girls but contributes to others expectations and images of them (Wolpe 1977; Stanworth 1981; Mahony 1983). Stanworth shows how teachers' perceptions and pupils' expectations may not coincide and how girls become marginalised in the class, forming a negative reference group for the boys.

The very conformity that made girls successful at primary school tends, at secondary level, to inhibit their progress. Mahony shows how boys monopolise physical space, linguistic space and teachers' attention, adding further to the marginalisation of girls. Elliott (1974) gives a graphic account of the problems involved in deliberately trying to encourage non-participant girls to contribute to discussion.

Attempts to generalise as to whether men or women teachers 'prefer' girls or boys are inconclusive and somewhat futile, since few teachers actually behave in the classroom as they claim. However one method, apart from direct observation, that gives information about teachers' perceptions of girls and boys, is described by Bernard (1979). In a complex marking exercise, teachers of both sexes were asked to grade work in English and physics by "John" and "Jane" (identical work) and were also given a description of their personalities. These descriptions were in some cases stereotypically masculine or feminine; in others of cross-sex characteristics. Bias in marking physics went to those students with masculine characteristics, regardless of the sex stated; but in English, more credit went to those with feminine characteristics. Male and female teachers appeared to have different expectations of the ability of students, not just according to sex but also to personality. However if grades are awarded on known sex only, stereotypes apply and examiners generally favoured boys for masculine subjects, girls for feminine ones.

One further aspect of interaction which has become more significant in
secondary schools only recently, is the tendency to do more work in groups. Webb (1984) looked at sex differences in interaction and achievement in small groups and found that measured achievement at the end of the group work in maths favoured the boys. Only in numerically equal groups (2 males; 2 females) was interaction equal. All-male groups interacted together more and got questions answered; groups with a majority of boys ignored the girls and talked only to the other boys. As group methods have become common at secondary level, the boys still seem to gain but other group studies show that variables like ability and personality are also significant. Once again, however, it is possible to suggest that girls may have done better in the more formal traditional teaching styles and assessment methods. High ability academic girls have not suffered as their improved GCE qualifications show, but the less academic girls may have their attainment levels depressed in favour of boys where more 'progressive' teaching occurs.

(d) Mixed or single sex schools?

My previous discussion of secondary school administration and organization, of subject choice and classroom interaction, have all implicitly had significance for this final section. Of necessity, the staff hierarchy, the masculine connotation of subjects and the boys control of interaction must be absent or at least reduced, in an all-girls school. Feminists have quickly latched on to this and criticism and condemnation of mixed schools now abound.

The assumption, partly based on the work of Dale (1969-74), that mixed schools were more desireable, more realistic and more progressive than traditional single-sex institutions, plus the move to comprehensive schooling, has led to the amalgamation of many single-sex schools. Within the state system, only a few selective or religious schools remain single-sexed. The original conception of comprehensives as being better educationally and socially for adolescents has been challenged by Shaw (1976,1980); Lavigneur (1980) and Arnot (1983) amongst others. If mixed schools are meant to be more realistically like mixed society - which is largely sexist - then it is not surprising that sexism should be more evident in mixed schools. The social advantages of coeducation appear to be primarily advantages for males - boy pupils as well as men teachers. And mixed schools do not
appear to offer educational advantages to girls either, although here the evidence is not clear. The overall results of girls in single-sex schools do appear to be better but the majority of all-girl schools are, or were, selective grammar and high schools. Insufficient single-sex schools now exist for an accurate comparison to be made.

The argument that mixed schools would offer a wider range of subjects and facilities to both sexes is also unfounded. Some all-girls schools did have inadequate science teaching and laboratories; others had excellent resources and highly qualified female science teachers. Even when provision is made for all pupils to choose from all subjects, the actual results are still sex stereotyped.

Shaw (1976) and Arnot (1983) argue that the educational experiences of boys and girls have always been different, according to the traditional concept of "separate needs". Thus it should not be surprising the coeducation has not meant identical provision or equality of experience, especially for working-class girls who were and still are, more directly influenced towards their future domestic role.

Some feminists argue that a return to all-girls schooling is desirable and necessary; others accept that such a return is unlikely, even if it could be shown to be desirable. The alternative may be to introduce some form of single-sex grouping for certain subjects within mixed schools. Separate maths and physics groups have been tried but clear results have yet to emerge. Smith (1984) showed that an all-girl maths set made better progress over two years than girls in a mixed set and even slightly better than boys in a mixed set. Unfortunately the experiment could not be continued and the initial progress appears to have been lost. Smith also makes the point that single sex sets for maths are particularly important since most maths teaching consists of individual pupils getting the attention of the teacher, which is less likely for girls in a mixed set. Other papers in Deem (1984) show that the debate is still firmly to the fore and that some alternative arrangements have been and are being tried.

However one major problem remains. Whatever internal organizational changes are made in response to the inequality perceived in the school, the influences on girls of this age comes also from family and
friends. In the next section of this chapter, I look at some of the studies which have tried to identify the influence of peer groups and at what is known about the expectations and aspirations of adolescent girls, both in and out of school.

Adolescent girls

(a) The influence of the peer group.

Interaction between pupils, both within school and in their out of school activities have been well documented over a number of years, but most of the studies have concentrated exclusively on boys. As Llewellyn (1980) has argued, this has led to the invisibility of girls, but an invisibility that is quite hard to expose because of the private and exclusive groupings of girls at this age. The problems of observing girls behaviour, both in and out of school, are different to those of studying boys. What McRobbie and Garber (1976) term the "culture of the bedroom" tends to be inaccessible to those outside of it. Unless girls are members of a youth club or recogniseable sub-cultural group, much of their behaviour goes unobserved since it tends to consist of "just chatting".

Studies of girls groupings at school have shown that other girlfriends are perceived as of the greatest importance (Lomax 1978) and that the group prescribes certain ways of behaving as acceptable or not (Lambart 1976; Meyenn 1980; Davies 1983). The group with which a girl identifies or attempts to join depends on such factors as social class and family background, previous school, ability and attainment within school, degree of conformity (or otherwise) to school standards and development of femininity (eg physical development, clothes, interests etc.) Groupings may be flexible, as in Lambart's (1976) "Sisterhood" or more rigid and prescribed, as those described by Meyenn (1980). A girl's school career depends to a certain extent on the group to which she belongs - thus his "science lab." group and "PE girls" are favoured and successful, identified by teachers as cooperative and conforming.
Girls in and out of school are also labelled by boys in ways that may influence their behaviour. Cowie and Lees (1981), in their discussions with working-class girls, explore the meaning and significance of such terms as "slags" and "drags". For the girls themselves, however, the conventions of romance and the perceived reality of marriage have to be reconciled in their current relationships with boys and their plans for the future.

So while school may appear boring and meaningless for many girls whose prospects and options are limited, it does provide for most a personal milieu that offers support, identity and ways of learning acceptable behaviour.

(b) Future expectations.

With regard to future expectations, the girls studied by Cowie and Lees (1981) appeared to have a realistic view of their options. Ideally a few years "fun" before marriage - but marriage eventually, despite its perceived problems, simply to avoid "being on the shelf". The openings for single working-class girls are much fewer than for their more educated middle-class contemporaries; the space available for working-class girls before marriage is more limited and likely to be confined to home.

There have been few studies which attempted to explore the future aspirations of both young people and their parents except in terms of "wanting to do well" or "wanting a good job". Kelly (1982) looked at the educational and occupational aspirations of 116 first year boys and girls in a comprehensive school and their parents, with particular reference to their perception of gender roles. She suggests that there is usually an unexplored assumption that home and school transmit similar messages about gender socialization, although teachers often complain about conflicting parental attitudes. In this study she found that both middle-class and working-class parents had high aspirations for both sons and daughters, although there was slight support for the notion that that education is more important for a boy than for a girl. Sex typing of subjects emerged, with middle-class parents rating academic subjects with the customary sex bias, whereas working-class parents rated craft subjects as more rigidly sex typed. In comparison with school subjects, where relatively little sex bias was shown,
occupational aspirations were more polarised. However non-traditional choices would be considered acceptable if chosen by their own child.

Tests on theoretical sex roles showed working-class parents as more traditional than middle-class, though middle-class parents may not wish to be considered sexist. Mothers in employment were less traditional than full-time housewives; fathers were most traditional of all. Parents with daughters only tended to be less stereotyped. Finally the aspirations and sex role views were compared with the actual sexual division of labour within the household. Here traditional sex stereotyped roles were evident; parents divided tasks on traditional lines and boys and girls were treated very differently.

This study has been recounted in depth because it shows graphically the ambivalence facing pupils in terms of educational aspirations, occupations and future sex roles. Theoretical commitment to equality of educational opportunity for girls and boys was not supported by occupational equality or expectations of sex roles. Everyday practice within the family serves to reinforce sex roles, even when mothers are working and regardless of social class. The relationship between home and school in terms of gender socialization is complex and attitudes alone do not explain the different attainments, either of girls and boys or of working- and middle-class pupils.

Returning to girls who have to make choices, both educational and occupational, during their years at secondary school, Gaskell (1983) suggests that the factors governing such choices are the result of both individual difference and the constraints of society. The 17-18 year old school leavers in this Canadian study, show both realism and ambivalence towards their future roles. Although girls perceive the "boring" aspects of the domestic role, they expect to fulfil it and see it as their responsibility. Whilst they may also work, they know they will put their family first. Since no adequate child care facilities exist, they see that they have little option. Boys see the future differently, both for themselves and for their future partners. Traditional sex roles are assumed, both because they are inevitable and desireable. A few liberal boys perceive that there may be a problem but it is of no real importance. British studies suggest that traditional expectations are even more entrenched than those Gaskell describes, although some social class variations are concealed. Sharpe
(1976) suggests that even though girls perceive problems with personal relationships in their own families, there is always the hope that their future relationships will be happy and satisfying.

If the future aspirations of girls includes a realistic anticipation of their domestic role, this must have implications for their choice of both subjects and careers. Although Davies and Meighan (1975) suggest that girls vaguely expect to return to work after their childcare responsibilities are complete, their plans go no further than the wedding. Hunt and Rauta (1975) suggest that the picture may be more complex than that. In a large study of 1957 Fifth year girls, dated 1972, they investigated both ability and educational aspirations, giving relative grouping of high/average/low aspirations with reference to the norm for their ability. Variables which influenced their level of aspiration were home background (social class and education of parents); type of school (grammar or secondary modern); and different interests and aims (traditional family role, boys, wanting to make money etc.). Regardless of school and ability, high aspirations were linked to social class and education of parents. Grammar school low ability girls aimed higher than high ability secondary modern girls; contrary to some expectations, being at the top of the modern school did not raise aspirations relative to ability. Staying on at school was more common for those from middle-class and educated parents and many able girls were giving up education completely. Although the decision to leave or not was usually credited to the girl herself, parents and teachers were influential. Both high and low aspiration "exceptional" girls were found, showing that some made different decisions, despite the prevailing expectations.

Careers help appeared to be limited, especially for grammar school girls and most planned to enter the usual range of female jobs - teaching, welfare, nursing or office work. All the girls seemed to be interested in their future jobs and made plans accordingly. Security, training and promotion were seen as important in choosing a job. The vast majority of girls in the sample expressed the intention to marry (97%) and have children (93%) and most accepted that they would give up work whilst their children were small. Again, the majority expected to return to work eventually. Vocational ambition bore little relationship to type of school or ability. There is no indication how
future expectations affect the actual decisions that girls make about educational qualifications and preparing for or choosing a career.

A detailed study of what actually happens to girls after leaving school is documented by Sharp and Roberts (1983). As in other areas, this is one of the few studies that focuses exclusively on girls. For those in work, getting a job was a matter of taking what was there and keeping it. Others experienced YOPS or unemployment and a few were not working because of pregnancy. Of those who stayed on at school, the successful (i.e. passing some CSE/GCEs), seemed satisfied with the decision, although the less successful stayers-on appeared bored and discouraged. The majority of those going on to further education were pleased with their choice, even though the range of courses available was limited. Future aspirations, even in the imagination, were vague and unplanned with no conception of choice of career as a progression.

The mechanics of choosing a career or finding a job have been explored from the point of view of both employer and school leaver (Ashton and Maguire 1980; Keil and Newton 1980; Avent 1982; Kant and Brown 1982). Despite the Equal Opportunities Commission's publication on careers (1980), girls still do not seem able to plan and prepare for more than the first phase of their working life and that usually means being confined to the traditional choices. Bennett and Carter (1982) show what happened to the more adventurous.

As the title of Deem's book (1980) suggests, schooling is still mainly for "women's work" but the type of schooling and the range of options are not identical for every girl. However, one component of women's work is universal - the domestic sphere is still anticipated and experienced by most. The gender socialization of adolescence still prepares most young women for a dual role, although the timing and the balance of the two components varies with circumstances.

The irony for many girls is that the secondary and post-school experiences appear to offer a range of choices - of subjects, courses, colleges, careers and futures. Yet the limits of those choices are confined by constraints so rigid, even if unperceived, that virtually no choice is actually offered, except to the most privileged. So young women are still finding themselves a few or many years later on paths that they regret, that they wish they had not "chosen" and from which
they wish to escape. Educational opportunities in adulthood are just one of the possible solutions that women have discovered as a way of extending their options and re-orientating their future directions.

GENDER AND EDUCATION: GENERAL SUMMARY.

In this final section I intend to look at the general work on women and education and the theoretical perspectives and research trends that have emerged. In this I shall concentrate on British sources, although the influence of ideas from the USA cannot be ignored. In looking at education it is also important to acknowledge the influence of other work that was, and is, going on in feminist theory generally and in studies of the various aspects of women's position in society - economically, politically and socially.

Apart from developments in the USA, the influence on gender and education in this country came from two sources. On the one hand, studies of inequality in education during the 1960s had concentrated on discrepancies associated with social class and, more recently, with race. To these were added the further dimension of sex. On the other hand, the increase in the proportion of women, especially married women, in the workforce, gave rise to a number of studies on the vertical and horizontal distribution of women at work. With the growing influence of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in Britain and discussion of legislation prior to the Sex Discrimination Act, it is not surprising that attention then focussed on gender differences in education.

Rather surprisingly, one of the earliest papers to pose the different educational experiences of girls as problematic came not from feminist sources but from a man. King (1971) in a definitive article examined the inter-relationship of the two variables - sex and class - in terms of access to education. He points out that, although social class does not figure in most educational statistics, its influence has been studied fairly extensively. On the other hand, sex differences which show clearly in most statistics, had largely been ignored. He summarises four theoretical approaches which have been used to explain social class differences in educational attainment - differential
Figure 3.5 King's symbolic and functional matrix

SYMBOLIC VALUE

High

Middle Class Girls               Middle Class Boys

Low

Working Class Girls               Working Class Boys

High FUNCTIONAL VALUE

Low

Source: King (1971)
ability; access; educational provision; and cultural discontinuity. These he then applies to sex differences in access to education. He comes to no real conclusion, except that somehow blame seems to lie with the girls themselves, because of their stronger orientation towards marriage. On a social class/sex four fold matrix, he proposes a symbolic/functional divide as shown in Fig 3.5.

In his diagram, symbolic value refers to education as a indicator of social status; functional value refers to education as a means of entering a desired occupation.

Although King recognises several significant differences in educational access and attainment between girls and boys, he does not pursue the relevance of these. For example, he notes that teachers, especially at primary level are mainly women; that girls adapt better to education than boys but achieve less; that subject specialization for girls and boys varies with the type of school. Finally, he makes no connection between the fact that sex differences have been ignored and that the majority of educational sociologists have been male.

King's paper was influential, not so much because of its content or theoretical position, but in that it brought out into the open the difference in access of the sexes and made a distinction based also on social class. This theme re-occurs in all the subsequent work on education and gender, although its significance is not always explored and occasionally ignored.

Wolpe (1974) shows up a further complexity in the education of girls. In her detailed survey of the "official ideology" of education for girls as reflected in government reports, she illustrates the contradiction between, on the one hand, education that offers equal opportunities to both girls and boys as individuals and, on the other, thinking in education that presume distinctive attitudes and interests for girls and boys. Her argument is that secondary schools institutionalize the "dominant female gender code". Despite the facts known about the percentage of working women and the reality of the "dual role" of most women, the official ideology recognizes only the domestic arena. The "special interests" of girls were primarily presumed to be marriage and motherhood. Summarising what she sees as the main emphasis of Norwood, Newsom and Crowther, she writes -
"In conclusion it can be said that none of the three reports considered the reality of the situation which applies to such a large proportion of women, viz as workers outside the home. Their focus on women and marriage provides them with means of extricating themselves from this situation. The stated overriding concern of girls with their future marriages provides them with the means of legitimisation for this omission. Having established this dichotomy between the world of work and marriage, all three reports are able to provide an ideological basis for the perpetuation of an education system which does not open up new vistas or possibilities to the majority of girls."

Also in 1974, the first collection of writings from the British Women's Liberation Movement was published, including a paper by Loftus. She summarised one of the main theoretical positions on women and education then emerging. In this she argues that the main differences between males and females in education can only be understood when related to economic change and that the stereotyping she describes was based on economic and political foundations. Her paper reflects the contradictions in all those who attribute the position of women to the economic base, since any change in women's position can only be possible with change in the economic structure. Therefore any action which challenges the discrimination against women, in or out of education, is doomed to fail. Identifying possible areas for change or articulating specific demands must be seen as short term "cosmetics". And yet she, and others, argue -

"In the last analysis the changes in education demand the important social reforms which will only accompany economic change. In the meantime we can work towards creating a situation where such change is possible."

It is not clear from this whether we should be working towards economic change or a change in education, presumably the former since, in her analysis, the economic determines the educational.

Following this, the first ethnographic accounts of girls in school began to appear (Davies and Meighan 1975; Sharpe 1976). The Davies and Meighan paper appeared in an edition of Educational Review (vol 27/3)
which was devoted to coverage of sexual differences in education and carried papers by Byrne on resources, Rendel on higher education and Lobban on reading schemes. Rejecting psychological explanations for ability and attitude difference, Davies and Meighan focus on various aspects of secondary schools which need to be examined if these differences are to be understood. Emphasising the socialization towards gender identity which takes place in both primary and secondary schools, they list a number of areas for investigation - materials and resources; subject choice and options; expectations; language; and staffing and administration. Their case study of two schools begins to explore these and other issues - the girls' concepts of themselves; teachers' perceptions; careers guidance etc. Their conclusion recognises the limitations of school influence but emphasises the part it plays in confirming or changing role perception.

Sharpe's book (1976) was the first lengthy study of a sample of adolescent girls, reflected against their school perspective and the influence of wider society. Sharpe follows the line of Loftus in making direct links between the sex stereotyping in education, the division of labour, the domestic role of women and the influence of the economic structure.

"The sex segregating process of schooling and the division of labour in the work force outside interact and reinforce each other in a circular process."

"Women's position at home and at work is also bound up with the demands of capitalism for different sorts of labour."

Sharpe does not make explicit exactly how capitalism articulates its demands but does identify the contradictions in girls' actual school experience. What she does show is that girls have generally come to recognise these contradictions and begun to prepare for them. She describes at length the social construction of gender differences and the complexities of the process, the different experiences of girls of different social class and their acceptance of their future roles.

"As many girls have realised, the present situation demands their work both inside and outside the home. Consideration of jobs and
careers forms an important part of girls' later school years. Yet they are still individually responsible for looking after homes and children when they are married ... at first it will seem less of a struggle to conform to the role that capitalism makes most acceptable and whose basic principles have been made explicit throughout childhood and indeed history."

In the same year a book edited by Mitchell and Oakley (1976) was published which contained a much quoted paper by Blackstone on the education of girls. This paper represents what has come to be another distinctive theoretical approach in the literature concerning gender and education. In the paper Blackstone reviews the achievements of girls educationally and lists those areas - curriculum; teaching; structure of schools - where research is needed if the reasons for the differences are to be identified. She does not suggest that education alone holds the key to the inequality of women and recognises that other changes need to be made in wider society.

"It is clear that changes in the wider society are necessary before complete equality of treatment in schools is possible, including changes in the structure of the family, in the role playing within it, and especially in the arrangements made for socialization of children. Further opening up of jobs traditionally monopolized by men is necessary too."

To Blackstone the problem is not just in improving educational achievement but in making more use of that achievement and her explanation points to the socialization of girls, both in and out of school. The key seems to be in expanding opportunities - and in changing attitudes so that these new opportunities can be taken.

This approach recognises that a problem exists and that inequality is undesirable. It implies that an examination of the processes of schooling and other relevant areas outside education must be made, to illustrate both how inequality is perpetuated and how, therefore, it can be reduced. Byrne (1978), Delamont (1980) and Sutherland (1981) are the other major contributors to this strategy. Byrne (1978) quotes from a 1967 United Nations Resolution to support her claim -

"All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to girls and
women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in education at all levels and in particular—
(a) equal conditions of access to, and study in, educational institutions of all types, including universities and vocational, technical and professional schools;
(b) the same choice of curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with the same qualifications of the same standard, and school premises of the same quality, whether the institutions are coeducational or not;
(c) equal opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;
(d) equal opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult literacy programmes;
(e) access to educational information to help in ensuring the health and well-being of families." (UN Resolution No. 2263, adopted by the General Assembly 7.11.1967: quoted in Byrne (1978)

Byrne, then, starts from the premise that educational opportunities should be identical for both girls and boys and that objectives that are desirable, acceptable, necessary and attainable can be defined. These objectives should provide opportunities for personal fulfillment and individual excellence, preparation for the best job or career possible and full participation in society, in leisure and parenthood—for both sexes, all social classes, all abilities and all areas. Implicit in this approach, and explored more fully by Blackstone (1976), is the acceptance that the educational system is a "good thing" and needs only to be modified to reduce inequality. Both assume that attitudes can be changed if only the injustice of certain practices is exposed. Byrne's policies all seem reasonable and possible and, indeed, some have been widely discussed and even implemented. But the problem that she does not seem to perceive is that identical provision does not mean identical opportunities because the experiences of girls and boys within the same provision may be very different. Legally, most provision must now be identical, but if, for example, girls are less able to cope with one kind of assessment method than another (eg. multiple choice as opposed to an essay,) equal access to the assessment will still discriminate against girls.

Delamont (1980) focuses her attention more directly than Byrne on what actually happens in schools and classrooms, but her approach and
justification are generally similar.

"I believe there are inequalities between men and women which should be remedied, so that both sexes are freer to choose their own way of life."

The theory underlying her book is aligned to that of Blackstone. Sexism is seen as stereotyping into a socially created gender role. Schools reflect the society in which they are embedded and act as agents of socialization, exaggerating the negative aspects of sex roles and -

"... enforcing a set of sex and gender roles which are more rigid than those current in wider society."

This produces unhappiness, inequality and wasted talent. Drawing extensively on her own classroom observations and recordings, she documents with penetrating insight the overt and hidden aspects of schooling at all levels, which create and reinforce the gender role, critically defining behaviour and attitudes, aspirations, expectations and decisions. Her way forward, as with Byrne, is to call for further research and for strategies to reduce those areas that have been shown to generate gender difference.

The problem with this approach is that if the factors which contribute to inequality can be identified and if certain related organizational areas and content can be changed, there is still no guarantee that inequality between girls and boys will be greatly reduced, let alone eliminated. Most writers within this approach recognise this and stress the complexity of the problem. Others, such as Sutherland (1981) seem over optimistic -

The principle to be observed is to educate not according to membership of a sex group but according to the abilities and interests of the individual."

Thus the cultivation of the individual will lead to the elimination of sex bias. Presumably too, other inequalities can be reduced by the same method - but social class and social disadvantage seem remarkably persistent and one suspects that, despite the changes proposed, gender differentiation may well persist too.
But this approach to the study of gender and education, which seeks to explore the mechanisms whereby sex specific stereotypes are created and maintained has been criticised as a form of liberal reformism which ignores the "real" cause of women's oppression.

Acker (1984) provides a useful schemata for classifying sociological work in this area. In this she differentiates between "fundamental" approaches which ask "why?" and "implementary" approaches which ask "how?".

The implementary approach focusses on the process of socialization into future gender role, which results in discrimination; liberals in this tradition tend to discuss discrimination and inequality not oppression and subordination. The construction of gender is examined and discrepancies between girls and boys in both experiences and attitudes are exposed. But, Acker argues, the "sex role ideology" becomes both cause and effect. Nevertheless, such an approach shows how discrimination is supported and promises an optimistic hope for change.

Those who subscribe to Acker's other category - the fundamental approach - have less cause for optimism or hope for change. If the cause of women's inequality is founded in the social structure - in capitalism or in patriarchy - or is otherwise 'functional' for existing society, then change presupposes a change in that structure.

In considering fundamental approaches which focus on structure, Acker identifies three groups -

i) the functionalist
ii) the Marxist feminist
iii) the Radical feminist.

Most studies of women and education have been located in either patriarchal theory (as with Radical feminists) or in Marxist theory, or in some attempt to combine the two. Discussions at the extreme end of either category are now rare. Spender (1982) is the main exponent of the "patriarchal" school, arguing that women's subordination to men is the key. Although she recognises class variations, she does not
explore them.

"All women are required to survive in a man's world and on men's terms in our society."

Spender dismisses the sex stereotyping approach as ineffective -

"I do not believe that an end to sex stereotyping would necessarily bring with it an end to oppression."

Nor is she only concerned with the "waste" caused by women's oppressed position -

"Of course I am concerned at the wastefulness and the destructiveness of this division but I am also concerned with its convenience. It puts men in the privileged position of continuing to create knowledge of our society, of continuing to appropriate "superiority" for themselves to perpetuate patriarchy and to reinforce oppression."

Schools are just one site of women's subordination - a position which reflects and reinforces women's inferiority throughout society.

"Currently education and schools play a significant role in constructing male supremacy and in perpetuating male dominance and control. That is why it is necessary to start with a description of that domination and control."

But how to remove that "domination and control" is another problem and her constant reassurances that women are perceiving it and challenging it are not convincing. This is not to dispute the awareness that her approach has aroused, both amongst women and amongst men. But awareness of a problem is not the same as solving it and creating alternatives - separate schools, courses and subjects for women and girls - are unlikely to be more than fringe developments. If men are the cause of women's oppression, then only "overthrowing" them will remove it. Piecemeal reforms of the implementary approach may, however, prove more effective overall than crusading zeal and polemic tracts.
The alternative "fundamental" approach described by Acker - the Marxist Feminist approach - also has few pure adherents. Following the trend in feminist theory generally, there has been a tendency to explain the education of girls as influenced by both the needs of capitalism and the attitudes of a patriarchal society; to see schooling as a vehicle for reproducing both class relations and gender relations.

Deem (1981) represents the main exponents of this position. In discussing the changes in social policy and in the education of women, she writes -

"... these changes have been closely linked to the needs of the economy and to prevailing ideologies about women's role in society. Ideologies about women are important because they have usually facilitated the masking of not only capitalist social relations but also patriarchal relations of male dominance."

This reservation accompanies her position -

"... although we must not fall into the trap of seeing a simple connection between what happens in the schooling of women and what happens to women thereafter, it is clear .. that the reproduction in schooling of gender categories, of class, of the sexual division of labour, of the relations of patriarchy, plays a significant part in the maintenance of the subordinate position of women in our society, whether in paid work, public life or the family. Equally, it is evident that this situation cannot be radically altered without a significant change taking place in the mode of production, in class relationships, in the structure of male-female dominance relations, as well as in schooling itself." (Deem 1980)

This passage says everything and nothing. Schooling, it is claimed, whilst it does not exactly correspond with the other aspects of the position of women, does reproduce gender and class relations, which cannot be changed unless these relations are changed in both capitalism and patriarchy. So until both structures are "significantly" changed,
the connection, and thus presumably, the position of women, cannot be "radically" altered. But how significant or radical a change is possible, how partial or complete does change have to be? And where does this leave the "implementary" approach? Is it worthwhile to make changes in the short term but ineffective in the long run? The same can be asked of Wolpe (1978) with reference to the "relative autonomy" of education; how relative determines how much room for manoeuvre or change is possible.

Macdonald (1980) is much more optimistic. Although placing her approach firmly in the "political economy" perspective, she argues that there is no straight correspondence between schooling and women's work roles, either domestic or in paid employment. The 'contradictions' differ for middle-class and working-class girls but both end up perceiving their domestic role as the primary one, even though they may spend considerable periods in paid work.

However, Macdonald (1980) argues that patriarchal relations, whilst an integral element of capitalist social formation, is not an essential ingredient. To Macdonald the role of schooling is clear -

"... schooling constructs, modifies and transmits specific definitions of gender and gender relations to each new generation, within and across class boundaries."

Exponents of the "implementary" position who look for the ways in which the gender code is transmitted would not agree with this. Even if education is only one of the agencies or contexts where gender difference is reproduced, some change becomes possible, unless such codes are determined by the needs of the economic structure or by the interests of patriarchy.

Acker (1984) argues that it should be possible to integrate both approaches and since "global theories tend to be presented as unnegotiable statements of faith" an examination of processes and strategies for change can help to provide -

"... an explanation of how the survival of capitalism or patriarchy, or society itself is accomplished by everyday events."
One final approach to the study of education as an agency for reproducing sexual divisions of labour is found in the work of David (1980, 1984). She argues that the "family-education couple" is used to sustain or reproduce the social and economic status quo. She justifies this by exploring the influence of the State on the family and the influence of the family on education.

Although her overall position is close to functionalism -

"The State uses the family and education couple to maintain and reinforce both class and sexual divisions and that these divisions are necessary for the reproduction of the conditions of the capitalist economy." (1980)

- she does explore fully the changes in both education and the family and the relationship between them. The complexity and contradictions in this relationship are clear and in particular, she emphasises the problematic role of motherhood in this relationship (1984).

This suggests that here, too, is a point of intervention since the mothering role is a social construction capable of change. The influence, for example, of the play school movement, instigated and controlled by mothers, albeit articulate middle-class mothers, has had implications for mothers' involvement in primary education.

This, however, can lead to reinforcement of the sexual division of labour since "mothering" involves responsibilities that are not associated with "fathering". The implications of involving mothers with their children's education further removes fathers from any direct responsibility. As David concludes, mothers' involvement in education reinforces the women's caring role and girls learn that motherhood is their destiny.

Theoretical work on gender and education can have two possible effects. Firstly, it exposes the processes in schooling by which gender is constructed. This, at least, leads to an awareness and, possibly, to an examination of both attitudes and practices. Secondly, where such attitudes or practices can be changed, there is a need for strategies to be evolved and policies to be implemented. Many of the more recent books on gender and schooling have a section at the end.
specifically detailing ideas that can be implemented and material that
can be introduced (Marland 1983; Whyld 1983; Acker 1984 and the
various publications of the Schools Council).

In this chapter I have tried to examine the acquisition of gendered
behaviour through pre-school socialization and the ways in which
schooling, at both primary and secondary level, may differentiate
between girls and boys. I have looked briefly at the experiences of
adolescent girls and particularly at the influence of peer groups.
Finally, I have summarised the continuing debates about gender and
schooling.

All the women in my sample were socialized and schooled mainly in the
British system, most of them before the debates and discussions
summarised here had started. It is reasonable to suppose that their
experiences were as gendered, if not more gendered, than those of
girls today. This would, in turn, affect their attainments and their
expectations. But, from the questionnaires and from the interviews, it
was not gender that emerged as major influence. Far more made
reference to social class and to the influence of their families.
Family of origin and current familial circumstances were frequently
mentioned. The next chapter considers the influence of social class
and of family on the life histories of women.
Chapter Four

Two significant issues: social class and the family
Table 4.1  Social Class and University Entrance

Father's occupational group and percentage accepted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father's Occupation</th>
<th>Accepted for University</th>
<th>Census: percent of all males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, technical, artists</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and managers</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4.2  Candidates applying and accepted for University by Social Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Candidates 1977 %</th>
<th>Candidates 1981 %</th>
<th>Accepted 1977 %</th>
<th>Accepted 1981 %</th>
<th>Percentage change 1977-81 cand. acc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>+3.7 +3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>+7.1 +7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III non-M</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>-5.3 -5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III M</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>-4.2 -4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>-1.0 -1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-0.3 -0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UCCA Statistical Report 1980-1
Table 4.3

Students attending university or college: by socio-economic group of father, 1981–1982

**Great Britain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-economic group of father</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers and managers</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate and junior non-manual</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled manual and own account non-professional</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled manual and personal service</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students aged 18–24</th>
<th>All persons aged 18–24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Full-time and sandwich course students aged 18–24, studying at universities, polytechnics, or colleges of further education (including colleges of education in Scotland and Northern Ireland).

2 See Appendix, Part 11, General Household Survey. People whose fathers were members of the armed forces, full-time students, or had never worked are excluded from the sample.

Source: General Household Survey, combined data for 1981 and 1982

SOCIAL CLASS, WOMEN AND EDUCATION.

In the chapter on the history of women's education, it was made clear that the educational opportunities available to girls and boys varied, not just because of gender but also because of social class. As noted in this previous chapter, one of the first papers to re-introduce the issue, (King 1971), discussed the inter-relationship of sex and class, in terms of access to education.

The problem of social class and educational access and attainment was recognised much earlier this century. After the massive re-structuring of the school system following the 1944 Education Act, it was hoped - by some if not all - that education according to ability would enable the brighter pupils of both sexes and all social classes to fulfil their potential. By 1954, official documents were already registering their discovery that this was not happening (Early Leaving 1954). Subsequently, both official reports and academic studies addressed themselves to this problem.

In this section, I want to explore four separate but related areas that concern social class and education, with specific reference to women. As I have noted elsewhere, in the course of my empirical study it became apparent that, in addition to gender, social class was a major variable that could not be ignored. No satisfactory explanation of the position of women in society can afford to neglect either gender or social class, but any simple combination of theories that address these variables is unsatisfactory.

The four areas therefore, that seem relevant to this study and which I propose to cover, are -

i) the problem of including women in any discussion of social class;

ii) the importance of social mobility, with reference a) to women and b) to education;

iii) the relationship between social class and education;

iv) the possible combination of class, women and education for understanding the educational opportunities available to girls.
whole topic of social class, and even of social class and education, has received massive interest in recent years and been approached from diverse and often contradictory positions. I do not intend to enter the debate here. I find the simplistic Marxist class analysis inappropriate for my purposes and since most writing on social class and education uses occupational groupings of some kind, I shall adhere to that stratification system. Thus I shall use a simple non-manual/manual or middle/working class divide, unless the study under discussion is specifically based on an alternative classification.

Having said that, I reject totally the assumption underlying the work of many writers on social class and education, that an easily identifiable division based on occupation implies easily identifiable characteristics in either the pupils or their families. It is totally unjustifiable to suggest, let alone assume, that all middle-class mothers talk to their infants in "extended" codes or that all working-class fathers are totally uninterested in the educational progress of their children.

There is, however, clear evidence that the social class of the family does have implications for the educational attainments of the child. (Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3)

(i) Social class and women.

Most of the sources referred to in this chapter describe the social class of the child with reference to the father's occupation. This immediately highlights the main problem of the classification of women in terms of class. For pupils this presumes that -

a) their fathers are part of the family - and many are not;

b) their fathers have a current occupation - and many do not;

c) their mother's occupation, even if she has one, is of no consequence - and often it is of considerable significance.
For the women themselves, thus "unclassified", the problem is greater. The invisibility and marginality of women in social statistics and in explorations of, or explanations of social class has recently been documented (Eichler 1980; Roberts 1981; Allin and Hunt 1982) and debated (Goldthorpe 1983; Stanworth 1984; Heath and Britten 1984). In an SSRC review of social stratification research, Newby (1982) writes -

"The conventional solution to the problems posed by gender inequality to social stratification is to argue that ways must be found to incorporate the peculiar character of gender into existing theories (eg. the domestic labour debate illustrates this tendency). What needs to be recognised however is that it is the way of posing the issue which represents part of the problem. It is not a matter of tinkering or theoretical fine-tuning but a willingness to redefine the terms of the analysis."

As Eichler argues, in reality this means that women are either ignored, related to men and/or treated as a variation from men as norm.

So how can the social class of women be incorporated into studies of stratification and mobility without marginalising or ignoring their importance?

Payne et al (1983) propose a compromise that relates women to their family of origin, in terms of their father's occupation and to their present family, in terms of their own occupation if single; their own occupation, plus their husband's occupation, if presently employed; their previous occupation and husband's occupation if presently unemployed. Obviously this does have disadvantages which cannot be overcome. For example, their "previous" employment may be many years previous and if looking for a job today, a very different occupation would be sought. This is, of course, of crucial significance for those women who take their 'time out' to obtain both educational and vocational qualifications. It does have the merit, however, in looking at school pupils, for example, of recognising that their mother's economic activity and associated level of education, may be relevant to their progress. This also recognises the known fact that the
Table 4.4 Working mothers aged 16-59 by age of youngest child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of mothers who:</th>
<th>Work FT</th>
<th>Work PT</th>
<th>Are economically active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 4 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 9 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 10 years</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all dependent children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no dependent children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EOC Statistics from GHS 1982
Figure 4.1

Map of the class structure
Source: Child Health and Education Study

Source: Britten and Heath (1983)
majority of mothers of school-age children do re-enter paid work at some point after the children start school. (Table 4.4)

A further problem arises in the actual classification of women's occupations. Because the segregation of women occurs both vertically and horizontally (Hakim 1979), the distribution of women in certain occupational categories, and within the hierarchy of any specific category, is uneven. The highest percentages of women for example, are found in the following occupations - clerical, retail, cleaning, nursing, teaching and canteen work. When classified into social class these jobs 'cluster' in the non-manual white-collar (IIIN); non-manual intermediate professional (II) and semi-and un-skilled manual (IV and V). Women are under-represented in social class I and IIIM. (OPCS 1981 Classification of Occupations.) The only predominantly female occupations in the skilled-manual grade are hairdressers and nursery nurses.

Thus the categories on which most social stratification and mobility studies are based are constructed essentially around the classification of men's occupations and the inclusion of women presents a 'distorted' pattern because no account has been taken of the distinctive distribution of women in occupations. Again, this has significance for any discussion of social class and education, even when the women's occupations are taken into consideration.

One study that does attempt to take account of both husband's and wife's occupation is that by Britten and Heath (1983). In a detailed analysis of findings from two surveys - the Child Health and Education Study 1980 and the British Election Study 1979 - they are able to produce a 'map' of class structure which includes both partners present occupational group. (Fig. 4.1) This shows that there are two major "cross-class" categories that can be identified (a) 1,2/3N and (b) M/3N, as well as two groups where the wife's present role as houseworker makes the specific classification of the couple impossible. Bearing in mind the extent of the 3N female category, considerable variations can be concealed within the two cross-class sections and even larger variations could be covered within the sections where women's housework role is listed.

The main value of this map is that it exposes graphically the massive
complexity of social class that is concealed within the traditional male-only classification of couples. Britten and Heath go on to explore some of the possible implications of their categories in terms of educational qualifications, earnings and voting patterns. The full implications of this schema do not need to be explored at this point but its relevance to education and particularly to my own study, can again be noted. For example, many mature women re-entrants can be identified as coming from sector (c) 1,2/H (Fig.4.1) where only 69% of the wives had qualifications as opposed to 83% of the husbands.

In terms of social class and the educational attainment of children, the families in the category M/3N, (where 64% husbands; 57% wives had a qualification), might offer different educational experiences and expectations to those in category M/M (where 46% husbands; 25% wives had qualifications. In traditional classifications, these two sectors would be undifferentiated as "skilled-manual", if social class was based on the father's occupation alone.

The authors argue that their schema exposes categories which are of major significance to the contemporary class structure. I would argue that they also expose categories that are of major significance to women and to education. Only the "houseworker" dilemma remains unresolved, although the knowledge of educational qualifications would be significant for certain purposes.

(ii) Social class, social mobility and women.

From the foregoing discussion, it will be apparent that, if classification is problematic, then movement or mobility of women within or between categories is even more distorted or concealed. By and large, mobility studies have either ignored women totally or classified them under their husband's occupation.

In terms of education, this poses further problems and two separate but related issues arise –

(a) how can women's mobility be defined and explored?

(b) if education is a factor in mobility, how does the specific educational attainment of girls, as opposed to boys, affect their
Table 4.5  Marital mobility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father-in-law (ie wife's origin)</th>
<th>Respondents class (men)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class I</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class II</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class III</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class IV</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class V</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VI</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VII</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% in sample

|                  | 14.7| 11.3| 8.3 | 10.3| 12.2| 21.1| 22.1|

Source: Heath 1981
future mobility pattern – even presuming that the pattern can be identified?

The first issue has scarcely been recognised or documented, except as a problem – which is then ignored. Only Heath (1981) and Payne et al (1983) explore the issue in any detail. Payne recognises the problems that recent changes in the position of women have posed –

"Mobility analysis is a good example of a paradigm which worked quite well in a world where women did not work. When women moved out of the domestic world into public life, mobility research, and in particular that branch of it which defines its focus as class mobility .... was faced with a dilemma which it has so far largely ignored."

Heath (1981) devotes a complete chapter of his book on Social Mobility to the mobility of women (ch.4) He starts by exposing the neglect of the topic and poses three basic questions –

(a) how does women's mobility compare to men's?

(b) how great are the inequalities among women themselves?

(c) what is the significance of women's mobility for class action and formation?

Of these, (a) and (b) are particularly relevant here. In tackling these however, the significance of mobility through marriage has to be explored, even though it immediately reinforces the notion of a woman's position being dependent upon that of her husband. It can also be argued that a man's mobility through marriage should be explored and the "marital mobility" as such should be a factor to consider in any mobility study.

Heath compares figures from the Oxford Social Mobility Group, which show only the mobility of males, together with marital mobility for the same sample (Table 4.5) (Note that Heath here has to reproduce the same categories as those used in the Study.) From these figures, he argues that there is no large scale tendency for women to 'marry up'; a few high origin women do stay single rather than 'marry down'; and
that 'marrying up' is usually balanced by 'marrying down', so that there is no large surplus at either end. However, movement by women in both directions is more marked than for men i.e. a high origin girl is likely to end up lower than her brother; a low origin girl to end up higher than her brother. Marriage, therefore, offers more mobility to those women at either end of the scale but there is opportunity for movement for a considerable number of women. There is more mobility for women through marriage than for men through the labour market.

In relation to the cross-class groupings of Britten and Heath (1983), whilst over 50% of women stay in the same class, 16.6% of his class I origin end up in VI or VII; 15.6% of his origin class VII end up in I or II. In terms of re-entry to education, women who originated in lower classes but who through marital mobility reached the top of the scale, might well utilize their new position to gain entry to education, and be encouraged to do so by their better qualified family and friends. In terms of children's educational progress, those whose mothers originate from class I and II and who married into class VI or VII, may themselves have different educational experiences and aspirations than those whose mothers originated from classes at the lower end of the scale.

Heath then goes on to discuss the other three questions raised at the start of his chapter. A true comparison of women’s and men’s occupational mobility is problematic because of the uneven job opportunities. The number of women who cross the manual/non-manual divide is greater than the number of men who do so, but this is directly related to the number of openings available in each category. For example, the expansion in clerical and retail non-manual work for women and of skilled manual work for men illustrate this. The difference is also distorted by the difference between the patterns of single and married women and by the number of married women moving out of paid work or into part-time work. Single women do 'better' in mobility terms than men, especially those entering the intermediate professions (eg. nursing and teaching) which have provided upward mobility opportunities for a considerable number of women.

The 'clustering' of women's occupations also affects the relative mobility of women among themselves. High origin women find it difficult to maintain their position, since category I jobs for women
are rare. However, for origin II and III women, opportunities are better and the majority will hold their occupational position. But women originating in category VII are most likely to stay there. Correspondingly, less openings are available for women in skilled manual work, where most employment opportunities for men exist, so little downward mobility is likely for women in occupational terms, as they would be less likely to take a manual job than a "white collar" one.

The class identity problem for women remains unresolved simply because so little is known about women's class attitudes or the difference between cross-class and same-class couples. Here, as with attitudes to education, speculation is rife, generalisations abound and will continue to do so until these newly identified categories are explored.

Payne et al (1983) take up the same theme as Heath and expose further some of the problems of women in mobility studies. They relate the position of women to changes in the occupational structure over time (eg. the explosion of non-manual female jobs) and suggest that, as such openings began to decrease in 1960-70, so mobility rates for women began to decrease too. They also point to the different and complex relationship between education and job opportunities for men and women. Increasing standards of educational attainment do not relate to increased job openings in the same way. The final question which remains unanswered is why certain occupations become predominantly 'female' and distort the manual/non-manual divide. Again, the problems are exposed but little evidence is available.

There are two other variables that have to be considered. We need to note that any discussion of occupational classification and mobility must relate to the background of changing job opportunity and employment structure, which has, and does, vary for males and females.
Table 4.6

Women workers in major occupational groups, 1911–1971

Female workers as a percentage of all workers in each of the major occupational groups identified by Bain and Price

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational groups</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers and proprietors</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar workers</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) managers and administrators</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) higher professionals</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) lower professionals and technicians</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) foremen and inspectors</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) clerks</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) salesmen and shop assistants</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All manual workers</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) skilled</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) semi-skilled</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) unskilled</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total occupied population</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under- and over-representation of women in major occupational groups 1911–1971

Degree of under- or over-representation in each group in relation to the female proportion of the total labour force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational groups</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers and managers</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-collar workers</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) managers and administrators</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) higher professionals</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) lower professionals and technicians</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) foremen and inspectors</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) clerks</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All manual workers</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) skilled</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) semi-skilled</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) unskilled</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hakim (1979)
Table 4.7

Current occupation of working women by life cycle stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current occupational group</th>
<th>Life cycle stage</th>
<th>Women with youngest child aged:</th>
<th>Women with all children aged 16 and over aged:</th>
<th>All women except full time students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>30 or over</td>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing, medical and social</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other intermediate non-manual</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total non-manual</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled manual</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled factory</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled domestic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other semi-skilled</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total manual</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Martin and Roberts (1984)

Table 4.8

Summary of occupational mobility between last job before first birth, first job since first birth and most recent job since first birth, by movement between full and part time work since first birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction of occupational mobility between:</th>
<th>Most recent job was full time</th>
<th>Most recent job was part time</th>
<th>All who have worked before and since first birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Last job before first birth and first job since | First return since first birth was: | First return since first birth was: | |%
| Down                                      | Down                          | Down                          | |%
| Same                                      | 8                             | 8                             | 4                          | 4 |
| Higher                                    | 3                             | 5                             | 12                         | 14 |
| Lower                                    | 2                             | 8                             | 30                         | 19 |
| Up                                        | Down                          | Down                          | |%
| Same                                      | 6                             | 27                            | 8                          | 8 |
| Higher                                    | 23                            | 30                            | 33                         | 33 |
| Lower                                    | 9                             | 13                            | 3                          | 8 |
| Up                                        | Down                          | Down                          | |%
| Same                                      | 1                             | 7                             | 2                          | 2 |
| Higher                                    | 2                             | 10                            | 1                          | 1 |
| Lower                                    | 2                             | 4                             | 6                          | 6 |
| Unskilled                                 | Level                         | Level                         | |%
| Same                                      | 11                            | 5                             | 4                          | 9 |
| Higher                                    | 2                             | 1                             | 1                          | 1 |
| Lower                                    | 100                           | 100                           | 100                        | 100 |

Source: Martin and Roberts (1984)
Many studies in the past have failed to recognise this, so that most
general or theoretical discussions on social class and mobility have
not been applicable to women. The changing patterns that best reflect
the position of women in the occupation structure are reproduced in
Hakim (1979) (Table 4.6)

The second major difference between the work patterns of women and men
is that the 'interrupted' pattern followed by many women does not
apply to most men. The tendency referred to earlier, for women to take
'time out' of paid work affects their job choice, their promotion
prospects and their mobility.

A large amount of useful data on the position of women in paid work
was published by the Department of Employment (Martin and Roberts
1984). From their sample of 5,588 women, extensive details of their
working lives have been recorded. They, too, are concerned about the
problem of the classification of women's work according to men's
occupational criteria, but are able to offer some information on
women's mobility in relation to their life cycle. Table 4.7 gives the
occupation of 60% of the women in the sample who were currently
working. However, using a retrospective work history for each woman,
they were able to trace the mobility of various groups before and
after their childrearing break, in comparison with those who were
childless or worked continuously. (Table 4.8) This table contains
useful and previously unknown data on women's mobility and the effect
of the break. The most crucial factor to emerge is that mobility for
full-time workers who 'break' is only marginally less favourable than
for continuous workers. However, a period of part-time work, chosen by
many women on returning to work, has a marked effect on mobility. Thus
it is not the break as such which affects women's work career but the
necessity of working part-time. Since 80% of the 'domestic returners'
in the sample who were looking for a job wanted part-time work, the
break is likely to continue to have a downwardly mobile effect.
No study of mobility would be complete without further reference to the relationship between education and mobility. This is an area of statistical probability, balanced only by individual case studies and small samples. Most of the children in the large scale longitudinal surveys are only now reaching adulthood and it is too soon for inter- and intra-generational mobility to be measured. It is to be hoped that in their future analyses, the women in the sample are not ignored.

Meanwhile, the social class/education/mobility equation, even for males, is complex and confused. To illustrate this, we can look again at Heath (1981). Using Duncan’s model, he illustrates the relative effects of education and other factors on the mobility of the 1972 Oxford sample. Although educational attainment has a relationship to both first job and present job, 'unknown factors' far outweigh the influence of social class or education.

However, he also shows graphically the relationship between lack of educational qualification in fathers and sons and lowest social class, but argues forcibly against any 'cycle of deprivation' theory that perpetuates a lowest class, for whom education provides no opportunities. In any case, most educational qualifications are attained by a minority only, so categorisation using that as a variable is suspect. At the other end of the scale, however, he does suggest that a 'cycle of privilege' may operate, although the size of the self-perpetuating elite is small. Parental social class, education and occupation do show more correlation here.

Heath goes on to look for any changing pattern of education and mobility using pre- and post- 1944 education as the divide. In the post-1944 group education can be shown to have increased relevance to destination, replacing somewhat the earlier influence of father’s occupation. Nevertheless, social class still correlates with destination and no increased mobility is evident, even though education now plays a more important part. Social class of origin, of course, has a relationship with educational attainment. However, the causes of the relationship between social class, education and mobility remains obscure. If the school is a 'selection agency', it is still selecting with some recognition of social class.
Further complexity is outlined when Heath turns again to investigate the relationship between social class, education and women. Focusing on single women, he shows how educational qualifications do not relate, for example, to income, since single women appear better qualified than single men but earn less. So Heath concludes -

"Social origin and educational attainment may influence the kinds of jobs we get and the levels of income we earn but the known influences like these that we have been able to measure are greatly outweighed by the unknown or unmeasured."

- but -

"Education has come to play an increasing role in the transmission of status (loosely defined) from father to son; the direct influence of social origins .... on occupational attainment has declined but simultaneously the indirect influence via the educational system has increased, as family background has become more closely linked to educational success and failure."

It is possible that privileged groups now use education to perpetuate privilege; certainly private education is deliberately used to that end. What we need to examine is just how the education system operates to the advantage of certain groups and how women, in particular, are affected by that process.

The most recent and fullest exploration of social class and educational opportunity comes also from the 1972 Oxford Mobility Study. (Halsey et al 1980) Despite the limitations of an all-male sample, it provides a full and detailed examination of the educational paths of 8,500 men, born between 1913 and 1952. The study gives a wide range of data on both the state and private sector and the workings of the post-1944 tripartite system. Comparing decimal cohorts gives some indication of change over time, from the First War up to 1972.

Despite considerable evidence of the persistence of social class inequality, the authors reach a balanced conclusion between extreme pessimism, of either the left or right variety, and extreme optimism, about the potential influence of education to reduce inequality. From ten chapters of highly detailed data and sophisticated statistical
technique, only the relevant findings can be discussed here.

The expansion of opportunity afforded by free universal secondary education did allow for a large number of 'first' generation grammar school boys, and the chances for educated parents to maintain "cultural capital" were somewhat reduced. Nevertheless the 11-plus selection process emerged as the key discriminator on the basis of social class. Three quarters of all the "service class" pupils went to selective schools; three quarters of all working class pupils to unselective schools. Within the schools, two thirds of all secondary modern pupils were from working-class homes — but one third of all grammar school boys were from working class origins. If they survived the inequality of selection, however, these working-class boys had a better chance. Over time, the percentage of working-class boys staying on after the school leaving age increased proportionally more than the percentage of middle-class boys. Thus within the rigidity of the tripartite system and the influence of the different types of school, the 11-plus selective mechanism emerged as crucial.

However, despite this, the social class figures for gaining qualifications and entry to university, followed the usual pattern of privilege. One in four middle-class boys reached A level standard as opposed to one in forty working class boys. Middle class boys chances of going to university were eleven times those of their working-class contemporaries. Despite the expansion in higher education and the percentage rise in the number of working-class boys, absolute gains went to the middle-class boys. At the end of the period under study, the final cohort had less chance of going on to higher education, even though they held higher qualifications than preceding cohorts.

Even though this study was confined to men, their findings seem to have some relevance to women. Their finding that the education of the mother was not significant in itself, does not preclude the possibility that for daughters the mother's educational experience is significant.

Halsey et al challenge the "sunken middle-class" thesis of Jackson and Marsden (1963) — another study of sons only — but one which did suggest that the mother's background may be relevant. Halsey's findings that social class, whilst correlated with 11-plus success and
selective schooling, has reduced influence on later decisions and attainment is interesting. A crucial decision point at entry to the sixth form now coincides with the minimum school leaving age. For working-class girls this is often the point of withdrawal from education, though A level success and entry to higher education do not follow for all those who stay on.

The expansion of higher education, which offered increased opportunities for working-class boys was not taken up to the same extent by working-class girls (UCCA figures Table 4.1) but was responsible for the considerable increase in middle-class girls going on to higher education.

Finally, the Oxford Study provides a great deal of data on education for a large sample; it would be useful to have that sort of data for women too. It is unlikely that such a large scale survey of women and mobility would be carried out, given the male based paradigm. The study by Martin and Robertson (1984) on women and work refered to earlier is a notable contribution but, unfortunately, educational data was not included.

(iii) Social class and educational attainment.

One of the major issues in any discussion of this topic is that the evidence available is either collected in small scale studies or based on gross generalisations about both education and social class. With the end of the 11-plus selective examination, the only basic criteria of educational attainment are the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination results, which leaves out the percentage of both girls and boys who do not gain any. For those who do, the statistics do not include any information on social class or the background of the candidates.

There is data on university admission and social class (UCCA statistics Table 4.1) but this applies only to the small percentage of school leavers who apply to university.

The General Household Survey (1982) contains a useful chapter on education and socio-economic background, with reference to those
Table 4.9a

Educational establishment last attended full time by sex and socio-economic group of father
Socio-economic group of father by sex and educational establishment last attended full time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons aged 25-49 not in full-time education</th>
<th>Great Britain: 1983 and 1984 combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational establishment last attended full time</td>
<td>Socio-economic group of father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytechnic, college of further education, other college*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base = 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Base = 100%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational establishment last attended full time</th>
<th>Socio-economic group of father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytechnic, college of further education, other college*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: General Household Survey 14 (1986)
## Table 4.9b

Highest qualification level attained by sex and socio-economic group of father

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest qualification level attained*</th>
<th>Socio-economic group of father</th>
<th>Great Britain: 1983 and 1984 combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Employers and managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate non-manual</td>
<td>Junior non-manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skilled manual and own account</td>
<td>Semi-skilled manual and personal service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>non-professional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree or equivalent</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education below degree level</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCE 'A' level or equivalent</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCE 'O' level or equivalent/CSE</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade I</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE other grades/commercial qualifications/apprenticeship</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign or other qualifications</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualifications</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base = 100%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>1272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>1466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>2738</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: General Household Survey 14 (1986)
currently receiving education and those currently not receiving education but economically active. A strong correlation between full-time education and father's occupation emerges, especially for the 20-24 age range, and between level of education attained and father's occupation. Differences between women and men also emerge (Tables 4.9a and 4.9b).

These current statistics confirm the general expectation that middle-class pupils do better, and receive more educationally, than working-class pupils; that middle-class boys do best and working-class girls gain least from the educational system.

After the Early Leaving Report (1954) showed that the universal, free, compulsory schooling was not resulting in equal opportunities for all social classes and for both sexes, educational sociologists and others have focussed on this 'problem'. One of the most influential studies was Douglas (1964) on "The Home and the School". His data from what began as a health study of a huge cohort born in 1946, came to be used extensively as evidence in educational debates.

Starting with the finding that 62% of the mothers wanted a grammar school place for their child, yet two-thirds of those would be disappointed, Douglas and his team tried to identify the factors that affected school performance. His definition of "middle-class background" was interesting since it included only those with one parent of middle-class origin, plus some post-school education. From this classification he found that middle-class children did better for a variety of reasons - because they were from 'better' homes; had educated or interested parents; came from smaller families; went to middle-class intake schools. It is significant that his own conclusion was that the attainment of working-class children could be improved by better teaching - but the subsequent widespread reference to his study tended to concentrate on better homes and parents.

The number of copies of this and his other books in college of education libraries illustrates their widespread influence but he cannot be blamed totally for the subsequent generalisations about the schooling of working-class children which were based on some of his findings. The assumptions that all working-class parents are uninterested in the education of their children, do not stimulate or
support them, are unambitious for their futures and therefore constitute some form of educational 'problem' are totally unfounded. It is not surprising that some sort of self-fulfilling prophecy has been detected. The very definition of middle-class to include having had some higher education, makes the working-class parent seem even more unable to educationally support their children. The emphasis moved from the need to improve the teaching to providing better pre-school experiences, as a compensation for the 'intellectual poverty' and lack of stimulation. This was as compensation for some perceived inadequacy in the home and not in the school.

That social class can be seen as a variable that correlates with educational attainment, then allows social class to be the cause of that lower attainment and many educational policies and practices are based on that premise. The stereotype was perpetuated and the homogenity of working-class families assumed. The fact that other General Household Survey figures show that 34% of all male and 25% of all female graduates had 'manual' fathers suggests that these generalisations obscure considerable variations.

The topic of equality of educational opportunity is not a new one and raises basic philosophical and political issues. For the purposes of this study, it is not important to discuss whether equality of opportunity should or could exist, but to explore the range of factors that might explain the apparent though not simplistic link between social background and educational attainment. To some extent, differences are inevitable in a society that rations educational resources. Family circumstances will favour some children in their competition for those resources. Selection by certification will favour those whose circumstances assist in the attainment of that certification. If, as Glennerster (1979) argues, the system allows certain favoured groups to make 'high-status' choices and the length of education received is relevant, then both economic affluence and an understanding of the significance of those choices will be critical. In both cases, those whose own education gave them resources and knowledge will be more likely to make the 'right' decisions for their children.

Both the 'compensatory' model and the 'labelling' theory (Flude 1974) focus on the stereotypical homogenity of certain groups and cannot
explain, or remedy, the inequality. Compensatory education, for example, if successful, ultimately increases the competition for educational rewards, unless the accessability to those rewards is also increased. This is not to suggest that pre-school provision or exposing teachers' expectations is totally ineffective or undesirable, but in isolation, it serves to divert attention from other possible factors.

The institution of a 'common core' curriculum for all pupils might be more effective than allowing unwise option choices at 13 or 14 and this applies to gender differences as well as to social class.

The facile implications of Bernstein's theory of language code have been effectively challenged by Demaine (1980) among others. The significance of the mother's education, however, might not be in the way she speaks to or controls her child. It might simply be that her educational experiences, being more successful, gives her greater confidence to approach the school and greater knowledge of the implications of certain choices. If, as David (1984) has argued, the mother's role in education is critical and complex, then certain mothers will be in a more favourable position to assist their children. The danger of most analyses of education and social class is that they perceive and attribute failure to the 'client' not the system. To suggest that certain 'failures' do not know how to use the system effectively, that certain groups make wrong decisions within the system, still lays the blame on the recipients. Giving the selective and allocative processes within the system some attention, then focuses on possible failure within that system. Of the four models discussed by Flude (1974), the 'categorization' model forces teachers and other agents within the system to examine their practice and perceptions.

Rather than see working-class attitudes to education as problematic (Roberts 1980) -

"Parental attitudes have been identified as a persistent source of working-class underachievement that, some argue, teachers stand powerless to overcome."

- the teachers' attitudes become the problem. Roberts argues that
working-class parents may well have a very realistic and pragmatic attitude to education which defines success as improvement in social position, but that what is defined as improvement and success depends on your starting position.

"We do not need to postulate any antipathy towards the principle of getting on to explain either working-class parents apparent uninterest in education, when set against middle-class levels of involvement, or their readiness to subdue fantasy hopes. The known facts can be explained simply in terms of the implementations that follow, starting from a working-class position."

The concern of middle-class and educated parents to prevent downward mobility for their children may prove a greater spur for involvement in their children's education than the upward mobility possible for a child from a working-class home. A "cost-benefit" analysis at each decision point may well operate differently for pupils from different backgrounds, not just because the knowledge of cost and benefit may be more detailed for some, but because a decision may appear more realistic for different reasons.

Tyler (1977) challenges both extreme views of education as a vehicle for social mobility. Certainly, the evidence shows clearly that the education system does not offer an equal and open opportunity to all its pupils. But neither does it pre-select rigidly to allocate position and reproduce existing class relationships, as 'correspondence theory' would suggest. We are still left with the task of discussing how to maximise opportunity, given the constraints of limited resources and existing structures. Tyler argues that inequality is multi-causal and cannot be explained by a single determinant and that this complexity must be acknowledged.

"This complexity appears to be produced by the very nature of industrial society - in the supply and demand for educated labour, in the cost and benefits of extra schooling and in the many interfaces between social background, schooling and the reward structure that lead inexorably to a large component of individual randomness."

Tyler goes on in his final chapter to draw on the work of Bowman
### Table 4.10

**Pupils leaving school by sex and highest qualification held**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavers with GCE A-level/SCE H-grade passes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more A, 3 or more H</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 A, 1 or 2 H</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavers with GCE O-level/CSE/SCE O-grades alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more A-C awards/CSE grade 1(2)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 A-C awards/CSE grade 1(2)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No higher grades(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more other grades</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>211(4)</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>(149)</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No GCE/SCE or CSE qualifications</td>
<td>)</td>
<td>)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(68)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total school leavers</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavers with GCE A-level/SCE H-grade passes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more A, 3 or more H</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 A, 1 or 2 H</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavers with GCE O-level/CSE/SCE O-grades alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more A-C awards/CSE grade 1(2)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 A-C awards/CSE grade 1(2)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No higher grades(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more other grades</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>196(4)</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>(135)</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No GCE/SCE or CSE qualifications</td>
<td>)</td>
<td>)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(31)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total school leavers</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys and Girls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavers with GCE A-level/SCE H-grade passes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more A, 3 or more H</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 A, 1 or 2 H</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavers with GCE O-level/CSE/SCE O-grades alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more A-C awards/CSE grade 1(2)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 A-C awards/CSE grade 1(2)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No higher grades(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or more other grades</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>406(4)(5)</td>
<td>406(5)</td>
<td>(284)</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No GCE/SCE or CSE qualifications</td>
<td>)</td>
<td>)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(119)</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total school leavers</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Great Britain only.
(2) See paragraphs 12.2 to 12.4 of the explanatory notes.
(3) The raising of the school leaving age in 1972-73 affected the numbers of pupils taking CSE and GCE/SCE examinations.
(4) CSE grades 2-5 in England and Wales.
(5) The numbers of pupils who left school in Great Britain with no GCE/SCE or CSE qualifications were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1975-76</th>
<th>1979-80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thousands</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DES Educational Statistics (1986)
(1975) in discussing possible strategies for reducing inequality. Details of the strategies as such are not relevant here, except to the extent that they aid our understanding of why certain groups of pupils appear to be disadvantaged within the existing system.

One critical decision faced by all pupils is whether to extend schooling beyond the minimum statutory age. Since extensions of even one year appear to bring benefit in the long run, encouragement — financial or otherwise — to extend education for at least that one year is possible. The effect of the raising of the official school leaving age in 1972-3 can be seen in the marked decrease in the numbers of those leavers with no academic qualifications (ie no CSE or GCE passes). Now it can be argued that increasing the proportion with qualifications just raises the threshold of inequality and further penalises the lowest attainers. However, it can also be argued, though this is difficult to show, that having removed the option of leaving without at least attempting qualifications, allows some of those with ability to achieve markedly more than they would have done had they left before certification. This may be particularly true for girls, many of whom used to leave before attempting any examinations (Early Leaving 1954). At the present time, fewer girls than boys leave school with no qualifications at all. The General Household figures show that those in the 16-19 age group, currently receiving full-time education included 63% of all males but 86% of all females.

This suggests that the percentage of working-class and female pupils gaining qualifications and staying in post-compulsory education has increased. The figures for 1965 in comparison to those for 1985 are shown in Table 4.10. Over this period, the percentage of pupils in full-time education beyond compulsory schooling has increased markedly; the percentage of girls being higher than the percentage of boys.

Tyler (1977) also draws on the work of Boudon (1973) to expand his discussion on educational choice. This he likens to a 'race' in which certain individuals and groups are 'handicapped'. However, the structure of the system, with choice and selection 'hurdles' does not necessarily guarantee success to the most favoured or failure to the most handicapped — any individual competitor may fall at any hurdle. The apparent randomness of this model conceals its deterministic base.
Despite the expansion in educational attainment, the pattern of social assent remains relatively stable and education does not seem to have any clear effect on social mobility.

Much of the accepted thinking about education and opportunity has been challenged in a paper by Hussein (1976). In this he exposes the assumption that educational qualifications are a 'passport' to specific occupations, and thus economic reward, and that greater equality in the standard of qualification obtained would lead to greater equality of economic return. It is not the education system that selects and distributes individuals into occupations but the needs and demands of the labour market at any given time. The division of labour within the market is hierarchical and selection and access affect remuneration levels. This is part of the social relationships of production, for which education does not set the criteria or standards. The perceived link between low educational attainment and low pay is not causal and widening educational opportunity or raising educational standards will not increase the availability of higher paid jobs. Hussain suggests that reducing discrepancies in one aspect of education (e.g. in length, by raising the leaving age,) will increase the significance of other discrepancies (e.g. subject choice; levels attained). Upward mobility through increased educational attainment is only possible if everyone else is not doing it. Incomes are attached to occupations and jobs and not to educational qualifications. This argument might apply equally well to efforts to increase the attainment level of girls.

In a brief section on the importance of the family as an agency of allocation, Hussain argues that its training function under capitalism diminished with the segregation of the production/consumption units. Whilst he accepts that the family has some influence on children's education, he argues that this is mediated through education. What he seems to ignore here is the influence of the family, direct and indirect, on the educational level attained by the children and, therefore, the accessibility to certain occupations possible as a result of the qualifications obtained. Access to vocational or professional training, which have been increasingly transferred from work place to educational institution, is also determined by the level of qualification in general education. Since some competition is inevitable, under the existing system, for professional or vocational
training places, the family may be crucial in assisting the progress of its offspring. If, as Heath (1981) suggests, education is one channel by which inter-generational social status can be maintained or increased, the attainment of educational qualifications which permit access to higher paid occupations is crucial. Whilst the family cannot ensure entry to specific occupations, it can enhance the possibility of selection. Again this would apply to daughters as well as to sons.

(iv) Women, social class, social mobility and education: some conclusions.

If sociologists, psychologists and educationalists have been trying for some years to explain the relationship between social class, social mobility and education, without success, then the introduction of gender as yet another variable adds further complication.

In another chapter I have noted the recent gender studies that refer to education, particularly the influence of the King (1971) paper. In this King proposes a sex/social class matrix as a framework for the relationship between the two variables with reference to access to education (Fig. 3.5). Although his class criteria of manual/non-manual is crude and his figures are dated (1963) his approach signalled useful ideas for some consideration of sex and class as inter-related variables.

He, at least, recognises the importance of both variables -

"Paradoxes abound when the statuses of sex and social class as independent variables in the analysis of education are compared. Social class seldom appears in the official statistics; sex frequently. Social class is the key variable in the sociological studies; sex is ignored."

In comparing the variables within access to education, King notes -

"At each level of education the sex-gap is bigger for the working-class than for the middle-class, and the class gap is bigger for girls than for boys. As the level of education rises, the sex-gap widens for both classes, but widens more for the
working-class. The class gap also widens for both sexes, but more for girls than for boys."

King divides his matrix into four broad groups - middle-class boys; middle-class girls; working-class boys; working-class girls - which conceal any intra-class variables. He suggests that all working-class girls show a low functional and a low symbolic evaluation because their orientation is towards early marriage. However he does suggest the simple matrix could be adapted to include ability and adaption variables, although it may be that its weakness also lies in the generalised grouping on the basis of class.

More recent and wider theories used to explain women's position in society have struggled to include both a dimension based on class and one based on gender. Because the approaches have chiefly been to prioritise one at the expense of the other, very few theorists have managed to include a discussion of both variables when assessing or explaining the educational performance of girls. One notable exception is the paper by Culley and Demaine (1983). They argue that quite apart from the theoretical impossibility of prioritising either capitalism or patriarchy as essentialisms, this constant re-affirmation of essentialism leads to non-effectives in theory and action. Studies and policies need to explore the inter-play of external forces upon internal struggles in given arenas, around specific objectives. This may allow the explanation and the solution to inequalities of both social class and gender to be unravelled at various levels and in various contexts.

In the education field both Byrne (1975) and Delamont (1980) have identified various possible areas for intervention. Whilst Byrne focusses on the distribution of resources as a major variable in creating and maintaining several types of inequality, social class and sex included, Delamont looks specifically at interaction within the school and the subsequent stereotypes and sex role ideology which frames expectations for both class and gender divisions. Delamont also warns against the possibility of improving the chances of one group at the expense of another; indeed there is evidence to suggest that the expansion of higher education has favoured middle-class girls rather than working-class boys.
Table 4.11

Educational establishment last attended full-time: by sex and usual gross weekly earnings, 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than £20</td>
<td>£20-£40</td>
<td>£40-£80</td>
<td>£80-£120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>4682</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>3253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytechnics, colleges and nursing schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Earnings of people aged 20-64 currently in full-time or part-time employment but not in full-time or part-time education**

Colleges of further education (including colleges of education in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and outside the United Kingdom as well as former colleges of education in England and Wales) and other colleges

**Source:** Social Trends 13 (1983)
### Table 4.12
Usual gross weekly earnings by sex and highest qualification level attained cumulative percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usual gross weekly earnings*</th>
<th>Highest qualification level attained**</th>
<th>Great Britain: 1984</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Degree or equivalent</td>
<td>Below degree higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.01 or more</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.01 or more</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.01 or more</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.01 or more</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.01 or more</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120.01 or more</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140.01 or more</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160.01 or more</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180.01 or more</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200.01 or more</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base = 100%</strong></td>
<td>452</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.01 or more</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.01 or more</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.01 or more</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.01 or more</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.01 or more</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.01 or more</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120.01 or more</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140.01 or more</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160.01 or more</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180.01 or more</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base = 100%</strong></td>
<td>149</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** General Household Survey 14 (1986)

### Table 4.13
Usual gross weekly earnings, hours worked, and age by highest qualification level attained and sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person aged 20-69 in full-time employment*</th>
<th>Highest qualification level attained**</th>
<th>Great Britain: 1984</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earnings</td>
<td>Degree or equivalent</td>
<td>Below degree higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usual gross weekly earnings</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(index number, total = 100)</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td>159</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td>242</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median weekly earnings (£)</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings of women relative to those of men</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>Mean hours worked per week</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of women relative to those of men</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Mean age (years)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** General Household Survey 14 (1986)
It is possible that intervention at the point of option choice, or at the decision point on continuing or completing education, could be effective for both social class and gender groupings, given that resources were available and that financial assistance was offered. But the availability of a job may be a stronger incentive for leaving school than any grant for staying on.

There is however, considerable evidence to show that extra education in terms of length and qualification leads to economic return, for both women and men, although the returns for men show the customary differential (Table 4.11). One of the main problems of comparing education and the socio-economic group achieved, as in this table, is that the classification of occupations is based primarily on traditional male definitions. This makes any comparison between the socio-economic groups of women and men distorted, although comparisons within sexes is valid. Table 4.12 gives a summary of the education level and earnings relationship for both females and males; Table 4.13 details the relationship between qualifications and earnings.

Woodhall (1973) made a thorough investigation into the economic returns for women's education, and assesses both private and social benefits. Writing before the Sex Discrimination Act, she concludes -

"British and American data show that at every level of education, mean or median earnings of women are lower than for men with the same level of education but higher than the earnings of less qualified women."

She rejects as totally unfounded the belief that education for women is in any sense wasted. The higher the level of education reached by a woman, the more likely she is to stay in work longer and return earlier. Whilst the effects of discontinuity and 'time out' for child bearing will, under the existing system, always affect women's returns in relation to men's on purely financial criteria, higher education for women can have unquantifiable returns in the family, in voluntary work and for the woman's "psychic income". She suggests that there is some evidence that the level of the parents' education has a "spill-over" effect on the education and earnings of their children in both formal and informal ways.
Woodhall concludes by arguing that if taken overall, the returns on men's and women's educational investment are closer than it appears, any discrimination against women or under-employment of women needs to be challenged on economic grounds. This applies particularly to mature women 'returners', even after their break for child rearing.

In a recent paper, O'Donnell (1984) has exposed the invisibility of women in theoretical debates on education and the labour market. She shows how both human capital theorists and screening theorists take little or no account of sex as a variable, although there is ample evidence to show that the relationship between education and occupation for women differs to that for men in two ways.

Male and female candidates with equal qualifications do not stand equal chances, since in some occupations employers prefer one sex, usually male. Women are thus channelled into specific occupational groups and lower levels, despite their superior educational performance in many fields. The argument of screening theorists that education serves to preserve the position of certain privileged groups in society, could accept that men are generally more privileged than women but this does not explain why men are generally preferred, yet higher status women are sometimes selected in preference to lower status men.

The male dominance of many occupations is preserved by both employers and employees, as unions resist women's entry or attempts to secure equal grading. Training schemes, particularly apprenticeships, have traditionally excluded women for fear of lowering wage levels and status, and employers are wary of 'wasting' training on women who will not continue to work for them.

O'Donnell calls for a more detailed analysis of the relationship between education and occupation, and particularly for an examination of the criteria used by selection agencies. That educational level or length has a simple correlation with occupation or earnings can be challenged, especially for women.
Conclusion.

Underlying all the discussion in this section has been the assumption that girls and women experience education and employment in ways that differ from the experience of men. The reason for that difference is explained, at least partially, by the fact that women are expected to fill a domestic role - marriage and motherhood - as well as, or instead of, an occupational one. This has implications for the way that education and employment are perceived by the women themselves, as well as by society as a whole. Although individual women may differ from the expected pattern, those expectations have a profound influence on education and employment. Furthermore, it is assumed, that these expectations may differ with social class, so that women, education and employment may demonstrate different patterns, depending upon the background of the women concerned. As with social class and education, most of these are generalised assumptions which may conceal a variety of factors. Finally, the topic of social mobility has been shown to be highly problematic when related to women. Yet women are socially mobile, both through occupation and through marriage. Yet again, women's domestic role, and particularly her marital relationship, are crucial. It is impossible to conclude any discussion on women and education, education and social mobility or women and social mobility without returning to one of the major sites of male-female relationships - the family. For this reason the second section of this chapter focuses on this.

DECONSTRUCTING THE FAMILY.

It is impossible to undertake a study of mature women and their decision to re-enter education without giving some consideration to their family commitments. In the previous section I argued that it was impossible to discuss the position of women in society, and especially the employment of women, without recognising that domestic expectations and responsibilities affect all women. Since, for most women, these domestic responsibilities are enacted within the arena of the family, this chapter will attempt to 'de-construct' the family. To do this fully would be an enormous task and so some selection is necessary. To aid this selection and to focus on those aspects of the family that are most relevant to this study, I pose an hypothetical situation.
Imagine a situation where a woman, married and with children, is considering the possibility of returning to full-time study or full-time employment. What factors would she take into consideration? How would she assess her responsibilities as a wife and mother and balance them against a need or a desire to make changes? Obviously, her decision would depend upon her own specific circumstances but it is possible to list the kind of factors that might be significant. These could include -

a) Personal factors: her own personality and self-image; previous experiences of family, education and work arenas; how she sees her past, present and future; her abilities, aptitudes and interests.

b) Relational factors: the attitude of her husband and her relationship with him; the number, ages and demands of her children; other dependents and responsibilities to them; attitudes of family and friends.

c) Practical factors: finance; time; distance; availability and proximity of opportunities for study/work; domestic help or sharing of chores.

d) Ideological factors: ideas of what a wife/mother should do and be; normative views about women's roles and rights; social, political or religious guidelines; current media messages about women.

All these factors indicate the kind of areas within the family that should be explored in this section, but before looking at some of these in detail, I propose to make four general points -

i) Ideas about the family and women's position within it are socially constructed and liable to change over time, even within one particular society. Traditional ideas are pervasive and persistent and there is a 'time-lag' between the ideal and the actuality. During periods of rapid change, there is likely to be confusion and conflict within and between ideas and attitudes (cf. Rapoport 1974).

ii) There is not one universal and cohesive cluster of ideas and
attitudes; different groups of women can have very different ideas. As with the hypothetical case above, the variables may be due to personality, socialization, relationships, economic conditions, social class, education, peer groups, regional variations etc (cf Rapoport 1971). There is, however, a tendency to generalise all of the above possible variations into one homogeneous role.

iii) There is a common trend in most writing on the family to move from description to prescription; from "women are ..." to "women should ....". This emphasis on the normative in many studies may be due to the emotive aura that surrounds the family. The dilemma is that the family, whilst the most private and personal of arenas, is also socially, economically, and politically of considerable importance to society as a whole. What goes on inside the family is difficult to ascertain, invisible unless extreme. Yet challenges or threats to the family arouse strong reactions from diverse sources.

iv) For many women, the family and their role within it is a crucial component of identity. Apart from those women who have satisfying jobs, absorbing hobbies or are committed to some form of voluntary work, most women look on their domestic responsibilities as paramount. This may simply be because these responsibilities take up a predominant amount of their time. It may be that no other function seems possible or appropriate or, in some cases, it may be, that control by the husband ensures that all their time and energy is devoted to domestic matters.

Some of these points are reflected in this passage from Barrett (1978) -

"The 'family' provides the nexus for the various themes - romantic love; feminine nurturance; maternalism; self-sacrifice; masculine protection and financial support - that characterize our conception of gender and sexuality. It is, however, an ideological nexus rather than any concrete family system which is involved here and there are many connections between these processes within and outside the locus of the family home .... It seems at least possible that much of the pressure exerted on individuals to conform to various indices of behaviour relate more to fear of social disapproval of 'the family' than to strictly internal family demands .... Families are
enmeshed in, and responsive to, the ideology of 'the family' as well as engaged in reproducing it."

It should not be surprising that attitudes to the family do arouse emotive and often irrational feelings. The appeal of the family should not be minimised; for many it is the site of security, warmth, dependency and closeness. At the same time, it is also the site of tension; of oppression, constraint and even danger. As Zaretsky (1976) notes -

"It is a tragic paradox that the bases of love, dependence and altruism in human life and the oppression of women have been found within the same matrix."

Before examining some of the literature on the family, one further point about terminology and definition must be made. The term 'dual-role' is used extensively in studies of women combining work and domestic responsibilities, sometimes reflecting an ideal 'superwoman' who balances the demands of both without difficulty. There is never any reference to the dual-role of men, although the 'dual-career' family has been identified. The symmetry implicit in these terms has to be challenged. Within the family, the roles, responsibilities and expectations of husband and wife are not necessarily 'symmetrical' and most dual-role women stretch time and energy balancing a range of demands from both work and family. Most evidence suggests that women still give priority to family demands, especially if there are dependent children and perceive work or family as incompatible choices'(cf Chodorow 1978; Martin and Roberts 1984).

The other term that has recently been challenged as too simplistic is the 'three-phase cycle' that is supposed to describe women’s adult life. Over time, there appears to have been a progression through various patterns -

i) Work until marriage - domestic until death

ii) Work until children - domestic until death

iii) Work until children - domestic until school age - p/t or f/t work until retire - domestic until death

This final more complex and alternating pattern emerges from Martin and Roberts' (1984) large scale study on women and work, to which further reference will be made later in the section.

A historical view of the family.

Anthropologists and historians have been debating the origin of the family for a long time. In this section I do not intend to discuss their theories or their findings in detail, since the origin of the family and its subsequent history makes no difference to the fact that it exists. Moreover, it has proved impossible to explain the origin as such, and theories about the need to control the inheritance of private property, to control the reproductive capacity of women and maintain patriarchal supremacy are all inconclusive. Suffice to state, with Edholm (1982) that the family is not 'natural' but a socially constructed pattern of relationships and obligations. Although Gough (1975) argues for some universals in family patterns, she concludes that this does not limit the present day structures nor the capacities of those within them.

More extensive histories of the family also look for common patterns but what emerges most clearly is a diversity of form over place and time, related to the structure of the society as a whole or to a specific position within that society (Anderson 1980). Poster (1978) argues for a more critical theory of the family, based primarily on psychoanalytic theory but also recognising the significance of social constraints -

"In summary, the family is here conceptualised as an emotional structure, with relative autonomy, which constitutes hierarchies of age and sex in psychological forms .... when these categories are studied in detail, a concrete family structure becomes intelligible. In addition to the psychological level, the theory of the family requires two other kinds of analyses. They are the everyday life of
the family and the relations of the family to society. Knowledge of the family's daily life and its relations to society is the background for the analysis at the psychological level."

Anderson (1980) argues for a consideration of several established approaches - demographic, sentiments and household economic. In a survey of each he exposes their limitations but recognises their contribution to understanding family history.

In a more recent feminist collection, Jordanova (1981) emphasises the need to 'de-construct' the family carefully. Present day interest in the family, when influenced by a 'crisis' view can lead to a perpetuation of traditional myths about the family and specifically about women's role within it. Jordanova also draws attention to the weakness of the public/private debate by suggesting that increasing women's 'public' role in the work force does not necessarily imply either an increase in public and political involvement or a reduction in the private and domestic sphere. I would extend her position to suggest that no simplistic public/private dichotomy is possible, and that whilst participation in the work force is important in signifying possible changes in role, the relationships within the family are far more complex than a direct and simple equation implies.

One source that has had a significant impact on the structure of the present day family and upon attitudes about family values are the ideals which stem from the Victorian era. The legacy of that period has not faded, even though conditions have changed. When reference is made to 'traditional values' it is usually to those of the Victorian middle-class.

In Smelser's analogy (1982) this image still haunts our thinking -

"Even today more than a century after the Victorian family's heyday - and when no-one would seriously argue that the family is still essentially Victorian - that family still persists as a kind of ghostly model. It is both a positive and a negative model. On the one hand, there lingers an often unspoken but none the less profound sense that what has happened to the family in the past century is unfortunate; it has disintegrated, fallen from grace. And the yardsticks by which that fall is frequently measured are Victorian
stability, solidity and serenity. On the other hand, those reformers who press to liberate us further from the constraints of the family often find their agenda dictated by a preoccupation with the outstanding features of the Victorian family - its formality, its repression of sexuality, its simply drawn (we would now say sexist) discrimination between the roles of men and women."

"Despite repeated historical assaults, the standards of middle-class Victorian morality and propriety continue to make their presence felt, in the form of nostalgia on the part of those who believe our present family life has corrupted those standards, and in the form of guilty conscience on the part of those who believe we have liberated ourselves from them."

In a time of change and uncertainty, the prescriptive nature of Victorian family life may look more attractive than the reality of the constraint seemed to those who experienced it.

However, any attempt to deconstruct the present day family and the roles and relationships within it must take notice, too, of the influence of more recent history. For example, the current emphasis on the importance of 'good mothering' has its roots in what Davin (1978) calls "the cult of motherhood". She describes in historical detail the concern over standards of mothering around the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century. Official concern can be traced through reports and recommendations in both education and public hygiene, that mothers were failing, mainly through ignorance, to provide good physical care and a moral example for their families. (The existence of poverty, poor housing and squalor as contributory factors was ignored.) "Schools for mothers" and infant welfare clinics were set up to assist those who were failing in their duties. The influence on the education of girls in schools has already been noted. Traces of the same concern can be seen reflected in the post-war welfare state provisions (Wilson 1977); in the influence of Bowlby and in the more recent writings of Kelmer Pringle (1980) and Leach (1979). Popular magazines carry articles designed to assist women in their domestic and caring role and to reassure them of its importance; health visitors and clinics are still available to make sure that mothers do their job properly; legislation exists to remove the children if their care deviates too far from the acceptable norm.
In the past fifteen years, the debate about the family and women's role within it has become polarised. The influence of the women's movement and the call for greater equality of opportunity have challenged the sacred notion of women's primary domestic role. To counteract this, women's activities and responsibilities have been prioritised in one of two ways. On the one hand, domestic skills and arts have been reclaimed and elevated, with some feminists advocating and celebrating the essential 'feminine' difference, claiming superiority for the psychology and character of women (cf Baker Miller 1973). On the other hand, alongside but uneasily allied, are the defenders of the family and advocates of women's primary maternal role (Kelmer Pringle 1980 and Leach 1979). Whilst the media has not reflected the first trend, except indirectly through the action of the Greenham Women for example, public interest has focused on the more conventional exponents. This is, however, no simple return to the glorification of motherhood, but part of a complex political, social and economic reversal of much wider values and attitudes centered on the family. And these, again, are part of an even broader ideology that advocates a return to Victorian values.

It is within this process of change and this conflict of ideology that women's role at the present time must now be assessed.

An analysis of the present day family.

Without doubt the most significant change in the role of women in the post-war years has been the increase in the percentage of economically active married women. Several factors have been associated with this although none of them can be identified as causal. They include the increase in demand for and availability of work for women, particularly part-time; smaller family size and less years spent in child-rearing; increase in the mechanisation of domestic work; availability of 'convenience' foods and refrigerated food storage plus 'easy-care' materials. Since these developments mainly affect married women, it is essential to look at the family to discover the implications of these changes for family roles and relationships,
responsibilities and obligations.

Externally, very little has changed, despite the outraged cries of the traditionalists. The 'nuclear' family with its male breadwinner and female domestic may now be a statistical minority at any one moment in time (11.3% of all families in 1983) but it is a phase through which many families still pass. Most people still spend a considerable amount of their adult lives in a 'man-woman and children' group, living in a single family property. The vast majority of men and women still marry, and then re-marry if their original partnership ends. It is the negotiation of the role of the women within this unit that most reflects the changes that have occurred.

The first studies of these changes were made in the 1950-60s, when the increase in the percentage of married women working became apparent. Myrdhal and Klein (1956) perceived and documented the 'two-role' approach which dominated subsequent studies, largely of middle-class, educated wives (cf also Frogarty et al 1971). Based on the assumption that paid women's work could be seen as a secondary responsibility to their primary domestic role, this study saw only the ability to cope with the 'two-roles' as problematic. The pervasive message of the Myrdhal and Klein study was that the dual-role was desirable for both the individual woman and for society –

"No longer need women forego the pleasures of one sphere in order to enjoy the satisfaction of the other. The best of both worlds has come within their grasp, if only they reach out for it."

In some ways their work was ahead of its time, challenging the "sentimental glorification" of homemaking and motherhood and exploring the social isolation of housewives, but accepting without question the responsibility of women for domestic tasks; advocating the convenience of part-time work and concluding that "the equality between the sexes so nearly achieved" made for an optimistic two-role future.

In a later work, Fogarty et al (1971) appear more aware of the potential problems in dual-role careers but again, only graduates and career women are included in their samples. Summarising both the dilemmas and the viability of 'dual-career' families, they conclude, very optimistically, by advocating that employment opportunities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.14</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The wife's decision to return to work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typical motivation for employment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Typical family circumstances</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td><strong>Typical comment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early return to work while children possibly pre-school. More likely to work continuously and full time than any other group except 6. If childcare problems may accept homeworking or shift work.</td>
<td><strong>Typical employment pattern</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Necessity</td>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband low paid/unemployed/ 'mean' with housekeeping. Large families. (Also single parents, widowed, separated, divorced.)</td>
<td>'I've always worked because I've needed the money, because he spends too much money on drink and therefore I've always had to work to make my own money up ... if I didn't go to work I couldn't afford to dress my children' (Oakley, 1976, p. 110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Improve family's standard of living</td>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children at school.</td>
<td>'My mum worked to buy her own house ... she did night work at London airport, catering for planes so that she didn't have to leave the children. She did it to get out of the prefab; they bought a house, we got out, and then she packed up work' (Oakley, 1976, p. 110).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Social contacts</td>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As substitute for children's company</td>
<td>'You miss your children when they leave home... You're glad of something to do outside the home. 'It's another interest. I enjoy meeting the other women at work' (Young and Willmott, 1973, pp. 102-3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 To escape from children &amp; boredom &amp; frustration of domesticity into adult company</td>
<td>'The baby screamed all night every night... It was a tremendous relief when I went back to work' (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976, p. 164). 'I think I regard my home as a prison. I won't say I dislike (living after children) but my patience is gradually wearing thin' (Oakley, 1976, p. 143).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal fulfillment</td>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As in 4. Also, as children leave home and wife feels need to establish her own identity.</td>
<td>'I'd rather describe myself as a shrink-wrapper than a housewife' (Oakley, 1976, p. 143). 'I do have this fear of becoming a cabbage' (Fahl and Fahl, 1971).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Use of skills</td>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife with 'professional' skills/career aspirations.</td>
<td>'Using skills is almost like a shot of heroin to a drug addict' (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976, p. 86).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Source:** Gowler and Legge (1982)
should be adapted to women's life cycle, rather than that women's lives should meet the demands of paid work.

Later in the 1970s, work on the issue of women's two roles became more polarised as feminist debate argued for equal opportunities for women to participate fully in paid work, with the state or employers providing the necessary child care. This was opposed by those who saw the trend towards more working mothers as being damaging to children and began crusading on their behalf. Subsequently the debate polarised further to include an exposure of the "myth of motherhood", an exploration of the mindless role of the housewife and a challenge to the very existence of the family (Gavron 1966; Firestone 1970; Comer 1974; Oakley 1974; Segal 1983 etc). Opposed to them were those who continued to glorify motherhood (Leach 1979; and Kelmer Pringle 1982); and in between was the 'super-woman' syndrome (Conran 1978), advocating total competence in both spheres.

The Rapoorts (1982) discuss the implication of the dual-work or traditional domestic choices in detail and in the light of a combination of structural and individual factors. They conclude that there can be "gains and strains" in both arrangements, with positive and negative effects on both work and the family.

Hall and Gordon's study (1973) on various groups of women - full-time and part-time workers; full-time housewives and part-time 'volunteers' provides detailed, if possibly dated, information of how women feel about their various choices. The main finding is that those women who are most satisfied are those who are doing what they prefer, although part-time workers seem to face most conflict and are the least satisfied of all the groups.

Further detail on how women decide about family life and possible employment can be found in the study by Gowler and Legge (1982) on dual-worker families. Not only do they examine several types of dual-worker families and focus on three particular areas - economic, technical and emotional - but they also present a composite table of the factors which may affect a wife's decision to return to work. (Table 4.14)

They conclude by suggesting that despite the backlash and cuts which
may reduce women's options, dual-worker families are on the increase and there is a transition towards a plurality of acceptable patterns. However, Moss and Fonda (1980) claim that the traditional pattern is not so easily challenged.

"As well as confronting powerful adversaries, change arouses anxiety and uncertainty. The ultimate political failure has been an unwillingness to confront these doubts and offer people a positive view of what a new relationship between work, the family and equal opportunities could offer all concerned and how it might be achieved."

In another paper in the same volume, Coote and Hewitt (1980) present the official stance of the major political parties and interest groups on work, the family and equal opportunities. Whilst the Labour Party makes supportive noises and the unions appear more interested in defending the male position, the Tory party are represented by the now infamous opinions of Jenkin

"The pressures on young wives to go out to work devalue motherhood itself - parenthood is a very skilled task indeed and it must be our aim to restore it to the place of honour it deserves."

The Motherhood Debate.

As the previous section has suggested, many recent debates on the family have tended to centre on the role of the woman/wife/mother and have developed into polarised positions and become prescriptive polemics about what a woman should or should not do. This polarisation is essentially about prioritising motherhood as opposed to any other occupation or role. Both positions, by appealing to universal "good things" sound convincingly plausible. The "importance of mothering" is difficult to deny but so also is a woman's "freedom to choose."

Neither extreme position confronts the realities - that some aspects of mothering are unsatisfying, boring, isolated; that the dual-role is exhausting and that inadequate childcare is worrying. The polarised and ultimate nature of the debate encourages women to feel "guilty" about whichever decision they make.
Both positions tend to ignore the structural constraints. Society just is not geared to the needs of women with young children; there is no credit given for mothering on return to work; there are few good part-time jobs available; paternity concessions just do not exist; no universal childcare facilities are available. Both positions ignore social class and educational variations - satisfying careers are not available for most women; unskilled jobs are poorly paid and mindless; the domestic role can appear attractive; but many women actually need to earn money.

If the demands of the dual role have not been fully recognised, neither have the dangers of full-time mothering been explored. The effects of 'maternal deprivation' have been made to sound damaging, but the 'smothering' dependency of many children is not recognised. Some studies have shown a link between psychiatric problems and full-time mothering, especially if the home is materially disadvantaged or the mother is unsupported. These findings have largely been ignored.

The major problem for all women entering motherhood is to relate their expectations to reality; to hide feelings of guilt and failure under the cloak of mythology and to perpetuate the greatest 'secret' - that having children is very painful and looking after them is very hard work.

"It is in those and many other ways that the mystique of motherhood remains intact - the fantasy ever tarnished by the reality. Motherhood is the best kept secret in the universe and it is women who have to keep it; they cannot tell it because to do so is to break the chain on which the whole of society depends. " (Comer 1974)

Many of the decisions made by girls and women are influenced by this expectation that eventually or presently they are likely to face marriage and motherhood. These expectations affect education, training, vocational choice, location and type of job. Choices after marriage are even more constrained and involve negotiation within a relationship, which is itself contained within ideological and legal constraints. Motherhood involves various choices, both forced and planned, and even a negative decision (ie not to have children) has to
Table 4.15

Employment status of married and lone mothers: by age of youngest dependent child, 1982-1984

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Percentages and numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married mothers - age of youngest dependent child</td>
<td>Lone mothers - age of youngest dependent child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>5-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status (percentages)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother - not working</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- working part-time</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- working full-time</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size (n = 100%) (numbers)</td>
<td>3,573</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: General Household Survey, combined data for 1982-1984 inclusive

Table 4.16

Household division of labour: by marital status, 1984

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual allocation of tasks</td>
<td>Tasks should be allocated to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly man</td>
<td>Mainly woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household tasks (percentage allocation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing and ironing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of evening meal</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeping cleaning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household shopping</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening dishes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of household money and bills</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs of household equipment</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-rearing (percentage allocation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks after the children when they are sick</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches the children discipline</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. 1,120 married respondents, except for the questions on actual allocation of child-rearing tasks which were answered by 479 respondents with children under 16.
2. 479 never-married respondents. The table excludes results of the formerly married (widowed, divorced, or separated) respondents.

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey, 1984, Social and Community Planning Research

Source: Social Trends 16 (1986)
be taken in a society where the motherhood norm is strong.

Subsequent choices are constrained still further, once motherhood is anticipated. The majority of women opt for the simplest solution - leaving paid employment for a full-time domestic role (Table 4.15). This in effect defers the choices until later, adding the further variable of when to return to part- or full-time employment and the subsequent readjustments that this involves. At this point, however, various complications arise. The period out of employment can have an effect on the woman's perception of herself and her capabilities. Employing agencies do not recognise the value of years spent in childcare and are concerned only with a woman's ability to 'cope' satisfactorily, so that her domestic responsibilities do not interfere with her work.

Part-time work, which initially appears most convenient, is poorly paid, largely unskilled, lacks training and promotion opportunities and is difficult to obtain. However, a return to full-time work demands a major readjustment that may involve the rest of the family. Domestic responsibilities have to be reduced or shared; evidence suggests that they are usually reduced in terms of time but not reallocated in any systematic way.

Land (1981) provides a very useful summary of the issues surrounding what goes on the home when women are also in paid work. She maintains that there are large gaps in our knowledge of these areas such as the pattern of the life cycle; different social class patterns; the impact of women's earnings on the family budget; the effect of women working on their domestic responsibilities; the strategies they use for combining these two demands; attitudes of both women and men to the division of labour within the family. On the decision to return to work, Land comments that -

"Much lip service is paid to the glories of motherhood but in reality, as far as the labour market is concerned, women who have been full-time mothers are regarded as having acquired no new skills and are often treated as if they had lost those they had before they became mothers."

Evidence also suggests that the majority of women and their partners
do not plan their working/domestic roles in advance, apart from a few highly educated and qualified 'dual-career' couples. At the other end of the continuum, some women appear to have no choice at all - single mothers and the very low paid, for whom continuous paid work is the only alternative other than state benefit. But for many women in between, the term 'choice' is misleading. Many take what seems to be the only option and give up paid work but without realising the long term consequences of their 'decision'. It is later that these consequences become apparent, even though the original decision may still seem to be the 'right' one. And it is at this point, during or towards the end of 'time out' that some women begin to re-assess their lives and make decisions about their futures. Even then it should be recognised that systematic plans and deliberate decisions are rare; responding to events, seeing a course advertised or hearing of a job from friends are likely to be the triggers for action. But most women do not make these decisions in isolation and the rest of the family have to be consulted. Their attitudes may determine the path she follows and the question is usually one of priorities. A man's job may affect the amount of time he has available for his family and their material conditions, but it is not likely to affect in any major way the essential everyday running of the household. This remains in the control of the woman, possibly assisted by others in the family, but essentially her responsibility (Pollert 1981; Porter 1983; Westwood 1984). Table 4.16 provides relevant information on domestic roles. As Jordanova (1981) argues, there are very clear cultural expectations within the family that prescribe the appropriate behaviour for each stage of the life-cycle. A woman's activities, in paid work or otherwise, outside the home, inevitably affect the extent to which she can continue to fulfil her responsibilities within it.

This is the vital key to understanding women's position both within the family and outside of it, and the roots of these responsibilities lie deep in the traditional conception of what women's role in the home should be. Ideas about the care of people and care of place have remained remarkably resistant to change. Martin and Roberts (1984) study of women and work suggests that care of place has become somewhat less important, but mainly because modern households and appliances make less demand on time, though creating higher standards. Person care, especially child care, remains a priority. Even for those
who acknowledge a woman’s ‘right to work’ and see such work as beneficial, the consensus is that children should take priority. It is a refinement or modification of the traditional role, rather than a redistribution of it. Therefore it would seem that it is now motherhood not marriage that is the major determinant of women’s role. Even younger women and women who do work, consider that the family should have priority and that, above all, children need maternal care.

Those feminists who focus on the family as the site of women’s oppression, and the reactionary backlash to them that sanctifies the family above all, are both locating their energy on a most important and yet controversial arena. The problem is that the polarised polemics tend to obscure both the actual circumstances and the possibility for change. Labels such as the ‘anti-social family’ (Barrett and McIntosh 1982) and ‘radical lesbian alternatives’ (Hirst 1981) are not likely to appeal to the majority of women, as Hirst (1981) quite reasonably suggests. However, concluding that there cannot be much wrong with the family, because over 90% of the population 'choose' to marry, is equally facile. The alternative socially constructed option for a woman as a spinster or ‘old maid’ is enough to ensure that all but the most independent or affluent woman will decide that marriage is the lesser of two evils. Pervasive socializing influences still create romantic, idealized images, especially for adolescents, even though many young women actually know from observing their parents, that the reality is often very different.

Equally facile are the exhortions from the pro-family lobby which hold up the image of mothering as the most important job in the world and that its value should be recognised as "creative self-employment" (Kelmer Pringle 1980). Such exhortations sound very similar to "the angel in the home". Gavron (1966) Comer (1974) and Oakley (1974) have exposed that myth but have not dispelled it.

To ask why the myth of marriage and motherhood persists is another question. Simplistic notions of the family as ‘functional’ for the maintenance of society, as vital to the capitalist system; or as instrumental in perpetuating the oppression of all women, ignore both the complexity of the issue and the possibility for change.
Relationships between the state and the family may have changed (cf Zaretsky 1976; Poster 1978; Donzelot 1979), and women can be seen as crucial to this change, but their actual responsibility for domestic work and child care still persists, even though reduced or modified. Crude reductionism that sees the existence of the womb as the cause of oppression (Firestone 1970) or even as the justification for their position (Hutt 1972) are equally untenable. To those who seek to maintain the status quo or return to some idyllic familial age, such reductionism is a weapon; to those who seek radical change, such essentialism leaves no room for action or reform. Far more useful is to look at all aspects of women's role, to de-construct the inter-connecting constraints, challenge the unsubstantiated ideology, agitate for legally-backed objections and educate for all possibilities. Each change or modification in isolation may seem of little effect but the constant struggle over issues can at least raise awareness of them.

The seemingly relentless vicious circle described by Chodorow (1978) that "women mother because women mother" would seem a good starting point. While her analysis is primarily psychoanalytical, her prescription for change is social. Of course children need care - constant loving, caring relationships, as well as the physical essentials - but by whom and how that care is provided is open to negotiation and change. External constraints cannot be ignored and can be challenged so that, for example, fathers can and should be more involved with their children. But here the problem is one of privacy. The negotiations within a family relationship are not open to legislation, unless they become extreme or existing provision breaks down. Very little is known of what goes on wihtin this relationship. Bell and Newby (1976) attempted to discuss the "deferential dialectic" between husband and wife and "tension management" within the relationship. More recently, Pahl (1984) has begun to expose the complexity by looking at one very significant aspect within the relationship - the handling of finances.

Women in the family: some conclusions.

The aim of this section was not to provide a comprehensive survey of
family theory nor to attempt the definitive analysis of women's position in society, with reference to her family role. It was conceived mainly as a backcloth against which the decisions of individual women can be understood. My starting point was that the decisions made by women must be seen in a different context to those made by men and that women's decisions can only be fully analysed or understood when seen in the context of familial obligations and expectations. In this particular study I am concerned with decisions made at a particular point in a woman's life cycle and concerning a specific area, that of education. However, I argue that this can only be understood in the light of her retrospective life history, both educational and otherwise, and that in the majority of cases, perhaps in all cases, her actual or future family responsibilities and relationships were and are crucial.

I have suggested that attitudes are complex and multi-dimensional in both origin and influence, related to but not determined by, practicalities and circumstances. Attitudes that influence decisions are subject to change, just as circumstances can be. They are not necessarily homogenous or universal. Nevertheless, all women are affected by the conflicting and often controversial ideologies that concern their roles as women and that the most significant factor - significant but not determining - is their reproductive capacity.

The origin of, and the reasons for, the continuing existence of the family have been treated superficially, not because they are unimportant or inconclusive, but because the influence of the family cannot be denied, even if that origin is obscure. Barrett and McIntosh (1982) define and illustrate fully the significance of familism (political pre-family ideas) and familialism (ideologies modelled on family values). An all-pervasive, deeply entrenched institution is likely to have a major influence on the lives of everyone, but particularly of women, since their very identity is enshrined within it. Exposing and challenging the family does not have to threaten that identity but it can clarify its meaning. As Bridenthal (1982) concludes –

"The major feminist contribution has been to view women as individuals within the family, rather than as mere components or it
or anchors to it; that is, to view women as involved in familial and non-familial activities, as men routinely have been perceived. Put another way, feminists have opened up a whole new vista by asking not what do women do for the family (an older question) but what does the family do for women?
Chapter Five

The education of adults
The decisions made by a group of women about the routes by which they chose to re-enter education have to be seen in the context of what options were available to them. Educational provision varies geographically and many women are not mobile. The initial school experiences of the women may affect what level and what type of educational opportunity is sought. Ideas about the suitability of the applicant and the purpose of the provision will determine whether adults are admitted to conventional educational provision, for example in further or higher education. And there is a diversity of provision in what has traditionally been called 'adult education'. Historical legacies of what is desirable for adults, and particularly for women, have been challenged by those who want new initiatives to be available. All this affects the options that are available in any given place at any given time - but these options are rooted in an historical tradition that has particular views about education in general and the education of adults in particular. I start this chapter on the education of adults with an historical introduction.

An historical introduction with particular emphasis on the education of women.

For this purpose it is not necessary to recount the history of adult education in detail but it is important to remember that educational provision for adults is not new. Like the history of education as a whole it is rooted in religion, particularly in a concern by various church organisations, that people should be able to read the Bible for themselves. Kelly (1970) gives a very full account, particularly of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century movements.

An overview of the history of the education of adults shows several class-based strands that are still significant today. For example:

a) the middle-class liberal provision of education for their own members, especially women denied the conventional openings (eg the University Extra-mural lectures);
b) the middle-class provision imposed on the working class, both improving and liberal (eg Mechanics Institutes) and compensatory (eg Sunday schools for literacy);

c) radical provision for the working class, through Unions and Co-operative movements (eg the Chartists).

A paper by Kelly (1983) summarises this neatly under five main themes —

- education for salvation
- education for vocation
- education for civilisation
- education for participation
- education for recreation.

Each theme can still be traced in the present day provision of University Extra-mural Departments, the Local Education Authorities and the Workers Educational Association, but not all would agree with his claim that

"The most distinctive feature of adult education in this country in modern times has been the contribution of the universities."

What can be claimed, however, is that the present diversity of provision owes much to the gradual recognition that the education of adults is not only necessary but can be instrumental in achieving various desired ends. One further claim in Kelly (1983) that has echoes in this study is that —

"The first school specifically for adults was a Sunday school for working women established in Nottingham in the year 1798. It ran from 7.00 to 9.00 in the morning and taught Bible reading, writing and arithmetic."

That same spirit that motivated women to attend school before the duties of the day, can still be seen in the lives of women today, who fit their studies into the early or late hours to avoid clashes with work or family demands.
That women have always had to struggle for education, particularly for adult education, is well documented by Purvis (1980). The pervasive influence of the "domestic ideology" that only encourages "learning" when it is to enhance their role as homemaker, can be traced historically and in present day provision. From being allowed to attend Bible reading in the Sunday schools, women struggled to be admitted to the Mechanics Institutes and the new Working Men's Colleges, but when separate provision was made, it was in the traditional 'female' skills such as needlework.

Two major movements, however, did provide non-domestic classes that were of direct educational benefit to women. For the middle class woman, attending an extra-mural lecture or class, opened areas of study that sometimes had long-term implications (see Vera Brittain's autobiography "Testament of Youth"); for a working class woman, the Co-operative Women's Guild could enable women to gain both knowledge and confidence –

"It is impossible to say how much I owe to the Guild. It gave me education and recreation ... from a shy nervous woman, the Guild made me a fighter." (quoted in Davies M.L. 1931)

This kind of personal change is well documented in contemporary accounts of educational provision specifically for women. Again the roots of the past are evident in the provision of the present.

Official reports on the education of adults.

In this section I consider briefly those official government reports and other publications from quasi-official bodies. In the section I mention mainly those aspects of the reports that have direct relevance to my study.

In the post-war era there has been one major Government report on the education of adults in England and Wales (Russell 1973) and one on Scotland (Alexander 1975). Other reports have covered specific areas within adult education (Venables 1976) or have been quasi-governmental in origin, from such bodies as the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE). Two ACACE publications are particularly relevant "Adults: their educational experience and needs" (1983a) and
Continuing education: from policies to practice" (1982b).

Russell (1973) in its setting of the early 1970's is an optimistic document, advocating education for all as summarised in its two opening statements -

"In our changing and evolving society the explicit and latent demands for all kinds of adult education have increased and will continue to increase. Adults, in their own right, have claims for the provision of a comprehensive service which can satisfy these demands in appropriately adult ways: all areas of education will be enriched if these demands are met."

"The value of adult education is not solely to be measured by direct increase in earning power or increased productive capacity or by any other materialistic yardstick, but by the quality of life it inspires in the individual and generates for the community at large. It is an agent changing and improving our society: but for each individual the means of change may differ and each must develop in his own way, and his own level and through his own talents. No academic subject or social or creative activity is superior to another provided that those engaged in it develop a greater awareness of their own capacities and a more certain knowledge of the totality of their responsibilities as a human being."

The Russell Report considers university provision as one part of the overall need of adult students. Not surprisingly, it is in favour of expanding the number of places for adult students. It starts from the premise that all adults are entitled to education throughout life, particularly if their formal education has been incomplete.

"Adult education programmes should provide opportunities for adults to complete secondary, further and higher education and offer access to qualifications at all levels."

The right of adults to have access to courses leading to such qualifications is implicit in its advocacy of the benefit of such opportunities, not only to the individual concerned, but -

"We have reached the conclusion that one of the more important
services that adult education can provide for the nation is to create opportunities for people whose education has been curtailed and who wish to qualify themselves."

Although the Russell Report does not concern itself directly with higher education it is assumed that university and other advanced courses will be available for adults, who should be encouraged to prepare for them by obtaining qualifications as necessary -

"There must be opportunity for those contemplating further formal study to try themselves out and assess not only their ability but the strength of their motivation before embarking on it"

- and it continues by questioning briefly the suitability of the General Certificate of Education for adults and commending attempts to find an alternative.

We are left in no doubt by reading this Report that adults should be encouraged and assisted at all levels in their pursuit of further and higher education. It should also be noted that Russell singled out the needs of women as a "disadvantaged" group.

One of the major problems in any discussion of adult education is that of obtaining any general figures about the number of persons engaged in education at any given time. The purpose of the ACACE (1982a) national survey was to discover more about the educational experiences and needs of adults. Carried out in 1979-80, and based on 2460 interviews, it contains information on a variety of relevant topics.

Adults in England and Wales are shown to be generally under-educated in comparison with comparable countries; 75% had left school by the age of 16, 60% at the earliest possible age. Less than 20% had any further or higher education after school and 51% had no qualifications at all. However, 51% of the men and 47% of the women had done some part-time study since leaving.

The survey then went on to look at people's leisure interests, awareness of educational opportunities and attitudes towards education. Overall attitudes towards education were positive but it is difficult to know how accurately such a survey reflects people's real
feelings. For example, 90% of the people interviewed "approved of" adult education, but only 12% were actually involved in study at the time.

The report then goes on to explore current participation patterns more fully and attempts to identify potential needs in adult education and the reasons why adults were not participating at present. The authors identify the "aspiring non-participants" and the "lapsed participants" as groups who might be encouraged to benefit from adult education, some 30% of the current non-participants. In their summary, they argue that there is a considerable scope for continuing education and for more publicity to increase people's knowledge of the opportunities available.

The other ACACE Report (1982b) published in the same year, turns from the assessment of need to the provision of continuing education - to policies and practice. Once again the opening statements include a reiteration of the importance of continuing education and a direct advocation for increasing provision. The terms of reference were -

"to advise generally on matters relevant to the provision of education for adults in England and Wales; to promote the development of future policies and priorities, with full regard to the concept of continuing education as a process continuing throughout life"

In their terms, continuing education is defined as anything which follows preparatory initial education and -

"All adults should be entitled to continued opportunities for education throughout their lives. The education of adults should be given an increased priority in the allocation of resources"

To justify this somewhat optimistic claim, the authors then go on to make a case for continuing education based on six criteria -

that economic and social changes have affected both work and leisure patterns;
that the ability to adapt to these changes is becoming increasingly important, especially for women;
that the demand for continuing education has been identified and that
the supply should be comprehensive and systematic, not just for the affluent and articulate;
that the opportunities and needs for learning exist throughout life;
that it is not so much a matter of affording continuing education but of making better use of the facilities which already exist;
that there is a pressing need for a national policy since the present situation is inadequate and divisive.

The ACACE Report summarises the existing provision of continuing education, examines the participation rates and then investigates the barriers to access, information and counselling associated with finding ways in and through the system.

These chapters are particularly useful in that they categorise the barriers, as well as signifying routes that adults take into and through the existing provision. Even given the present economic restraints, this section is still relevant. The opportunities for adults to gain access to higher education are well covered and the questions of preparation and entry requirements are discussed.

"There is a view that adults should simply be helped to the stage where they can obtain the same qualifications as are normally taken by school leavers. Another view is that if academic qualifications are necessary, then an alternative route to school-leaving qualifications should be provided for adults. A third approach is that any qualifications broadly equivalent to the stated entrance requirements should be acceptable in their place. Yet another proposal which is now gaining currency, is that adults are equally able to demonstrate their competence through life and work experience and this should be recognised as a possible alternative to the conventional requirements. Others go further and advocate open entry facilities for adults, so that they can find out for themselves whether they have the ability to progress .. "

The authors urge that institutions should review their admission procedures and, where possible, make alternatives available for adults.

In another chapter the authors discuss in considerable detail the types of 'barriers' that adults may face as they seek access to
education. Some of these are personal hurdles that have to be overcome, the results of previous educational experience or the constraints of circumstances. But, it is suggested, one of the major barriers is pervasive -

"The major unstated barrier to access is probably the attitude which assumes that education is only for the young as a preparation for adult life. This traditional attitude, which is increasingly irrelevant to the educational needs of our society, is deeply entrenched among adults whose initial education has been minimal and who have never undertaken any form of continuing education. The additional difficulty is that the education system has systematically and effectively labelled some people as successful learners and others as failures."

One further consideration that is particularly relevant to this study is the Report's emphasis on the specific needs of women, whom they see as one of the 'disadvantaged' groups and therefore as a priority when resources are limited.

"Women are also under-represented in many sectors of education ... there is a strong case for making the continuing education of women a priority. After a period devoted primarily to their families and children, many seek to re-enter employment or engage in wider social activity and, unless opportunities for education during or after the period of child-rearing are widely available, most will find themselves at a disadvantage in competing for jobs and in reaching their full potential as individuals and citizens."

Again there is no question throughout this Report that adults have a right to access to education and that, not only should the existing demand be met, but that through wider information and positive encouragement, an increase in that demand could be generated.

The final chapter of the ACACE Report summarises priorities for action -

"The Council is convinced that it is imperative to begin work now to translate policies into practice in order to achieve, over the next twenty years, the comprehensive provision of continuing education
and training for all adults. In support of that conviction we contend that:

Any highly industrialised country which cannot refute the charge that it is an under-educated society is condemning its own future. Every country should ensure the highest possible levels of self-reliance and self-fulfilment among all its citizens, for both their individual and collective well-being.

A democratic society can only be sustained by its individual citizens' ability to take part in and contribute to economic, social and cultural change and growth.

The presently perceived inequalities in our society, which can adversely affect the relationships between government and people and between management and employees, partly reflect the inequalities in the past and present provision of educational opportunities. The widening of those opportunities would help to reduce those inequalities.

Education must therefore be regarded and planned as a continuing process throughout life. It is no longer sufficient to regard education as an early and finite early process in preparation for adult life.

From this we conclude that:

In this continuing process of education, the schooling of young people should be regarded as the initial preparation and encouragement to proceed to the much longer period of adult life, when the skills and enjoyment of learning acquired at school will be continuously exercised and developed. Nobody should leave school feeling that their education is finished.

This continuing learning should comprise both education and training, as those terms are currently understood and applied, and a continuing education system should be built onto, in order to extend, the present provision of education and training for adults in the public and non-statutory sector.

This leaves us in no doubt that:

It is of the highest importance for the development of continuing education that a clear national policy should be agreed. Without this agreement we will continue to lack the impetus needed to encourage and shape the local provision from which the whole system must grow."
Despite the rhetoric, the ACACE Report can be extensively criticised for operating within a narrow definition of continuing education that concentrates upon the compensatory function. Whilst new initiatives are recognised and commended, whole areas of provision are scarcely mentioned. Much of the work controlled by Local Education Authorities and Responsible Bodies is ignored. The needs of the potential participants, identified in the previous ACACE publication, are not fully explored. The authors can be accused of missing a major opportunity to present the case for continuing education in a more comprehensive way. However, for the purposes of this study, it does provide relevant material, with direct emphasis on accessibility and particular consideration for women. But the policies advocated have yet to be put into practice and the ACACE was disbanded shortly after the report was published.

The philosophy of adult education.

This is an area of some complexity in which it is essential to operate with the language and analytical discourse of the philosophers. To practitioners in adult education such debate seems peripheral, if not even trivial. But is is essential, if any attempt is to be made to unravel the aims of adult education and the means by which those aims are achieved, to take this discourse seriously.

The essence of the debate appears to be operating within a series of distinctions - between 'liberal' and 'practical'; between 'education' and 'training'; between 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' and, more recently, between 'liberal' and 'radical'.

On the older, more established liberal front, represented by Lawson (1975,1982) and Paterson (1979), the definition of 'education' itself is limiting, particularly in Paterson's terms.

"The concept of 'education' is the concept of a range of operations directed towards a very general and intrinsically worthwhile purpose, the purpose of building up in people a greater fullness of personal being."

"If a man is being educated, then he is receiving a liberal education and if he is not receiving a liberal education, he is not
being educated."

So on this definition most of what is customarily categorised as adult education is not education at all but simply improving standards of living or leisure or instrumentally obtaining qualifications for an external purpose. Indeed, Paterson is dismissive of many subjects usually included in adult education -

"... when we objectively appraise the educational worth of the knowledge, expertise or skills imparted by such courses, that is when we judge these as examples of knowledge, experience or skill to be acquired purely for their own sakes by free, responsible and intelligent beings, we are often bound to admit that their educational worth is in fact so slight as to be practically negligible; and when we go on to reflect how much there is all around us in the universe to stir, delight and absorb the mind of mature men and women, we might even find ourselves wondering whether courses which deliberately foster an interest in such relative trivia ought not strictly to be recognised as anti-educational activities along with the activities of the bingo-hall, the bowling alley and the amusement arcade."

Paterson goes on to say that such activities may provide a public need for those living in isolated villages or dreary estates. Such a patronising remark calls into question the definition of the "intrinsicly worthwhile purpose" and, while many would hesitate to include bingo in their adult education provision; the tautological definition can be questioned. It is not surprising that this claim has been challenged, particularly by those of the radical position, but also by many in adult education who are dismayed at the elitist connotations of the extreme liberal writers. Hostler (1981) provides a very clear summary of the debates inherent in such a position and the next part of the section draws heavily on his work.

Hostler starts by examining the aims of adult education and defining the terms. He attempts to discriminate between "non-educational" aims (entertainment, mental health, social reform) as opposed to instrumental or liberal aims. Radical theorists would challenge his dismissal of social reform (reducing crime, poverty, inequality and social injustice) as "impossible to achieve by educational means".
Generating an awareness of the need for social reform could be an educational priority.

Hostler goes on to examine the instrumental claims in detail - basic education; practical utility; assistance with the tasks of adult life - and then to question whether education for change is possible or necessary. In a chapter on political education he reviews the possibility but is sceptical of any real change. Again this would be challenged by the radicals whose intention is to promote awareness and to facilitate change. They would argue that most adult education is propaganda for the status quo, encouraging people to adjust to their existing conditions and to acquire skills that will improve their performances in their present roles, whereas education can make them aware of alternatives and prepare them to initiate change.

Hostler then moves on to consider the difference between the instrumental and the liberal approach.

"The essence of liberal education .... is learning which is valued for its own sake. In contrast to instrumental learning, it seeks to be worthwhile rather than useful. Consequently it tends to aim exclusively at promoting personal development, for philosophers have always argued that most things are valued only because they contribute in one way or another towards the living of a fully human life, which alone is claimed to have intrinsic worth.

.... instrumental education is also concerned with personal development. What distinguishes it from liberal education is the latter's assumption that learning should be the cause and not merely the result of growth. The instrumental approach postulates a pre-existing need to learn: it assumes that the student's development will confront him with a series of tasks or problems, and it offers him knowledge as an aid to overcoming them successfully. The liberal approach, however, sees knowledge more as a means of making him develop, and it tries to provide an experience of learning which will bring about his growth."

But this raises the question of whether growth and development are possible for adults and whether all development is desirable. And it is not clear what kinds of learning or knowledge will bring about this
growth.

Hostler goes on to develop further the question of personal fulfilment - intellectual and personal development, knowing oneself, autonomy and individuality. He indicates areas that are not usually considered the concern of adult education, the physical and spiritual for example, thus arguing that developing the "whole person" is an unsubstantiated claim.

In a final chapter he highlights the difference between the schooling of children and the education of adults. While the main aim of schooling might appear to be to enforce uniformity and a standard rate of development, adult education is quite the opposite. The development of the individual, by definition, cannot be standardised. Similarly, the attainment of children can be measured by some standard assessment in comparison with others. This assessment is extremely inappropriate for those who consider the education of adults to be concerned with individuality, autonomy and the fulfilment of potential. "Logically, then, only the student can evaluate adult education" - but in retrospect, only long term appraisal can be considered an effective assessment.

Thus the complexity of the aims of adult education are unravelled, leaving as many unsolved problems as satisfying answers. But lest there should be any doubt about its importance, Hostler concludes -

"Although it pursues a wide variety of largely uncoordinated aims, although its theoretical foundations are incomplete and sometimes obscure, and although its achievements are seldom conspicuous, it nevertheless deserves to be respected, supported and sympathetically understood. It is a distinctively different form of education, which attempts both in its aims and in its methods to do full justice to the special educational needs of adults."

Hostler, writing before the recent revival of radical theory, only refers incidentally to issues that would concern radicals, as I have indicated in my earlier comments. The most direct challenge to the radical position is found in Thomas (1982). He categorises the aims of adult education on a 'consensus - conflict' continuum.
"Although a great part of the literature of adult education, particularly in Great Britain, is concerned with practice rather than theory, it is possible to see two interpretations of societal interests, which approximate to a conflict or consensus view, respectively, of society. Conflict theorists approach the question of interests from the standpoint of the various individuals and groups within society. The needs and desires of these factions, rather than the needs of society as a whole, motivate their attitudes towards the division of power and privilege. ....

Consensus, or functionalist theorists, in contrast, approach the problem of societal interests from the viewpoint of society as a whole. The interests of society are then seen to be compatible with the interests of the individual, for it is the interests of the latter, as part of the whole, which govern the needs and requirements of the total social system. The cohesion, stability and persistence of this consensus model therefore emphasise, not interests and power, but the significance of norms and values which are seen to be the basic elements of social life. To these theorists, adult education is not a facility for promoting the social policies of a particular group, but is a means of transmitting the inherited knowledge and culture of the whole society."

The conflict theorists see adult education as a vehicle for social change, a radical force seeking to make an impact on society and totally rejecting a view of adult education which seeks to maintain the existing social system. The consensus view, which represents the majority, accepts a static view of society, with no change role for adult education.

However the distinction is rarely one of total extremes, but more of a continuum, under which Thomas identifies four positions. From conflict towards consensus are found revolution, reform, maintenance and conservatism. His attack on radicalism goes on to show how most examples are in fact reformist and how aspects of adult education, which were radical in intent have become reformist in practice. Some reformist examples have even moved towards maintenance.

The main targets of Thomas' critique are the writers in the radical tradition who challenge the neutral stance of the liberals,

In her introduction, Thompson reminds us that the contributors to her book regard adult education as a continuation of an initial schooling, that perpetuates and reinforces inequality.

"It is now generally accepted by sociologists that in a variety of ways the operation of the education system serves to perpetuate an unequal and hierarchical society, and to reproduce actively the attitudinal and behavioural conditions necessary for its development in harmony with the vested interests of dominant groups."

In discussing the marginal and low status position of adult education, she shows how the narrow definition of the liberals in advocating education for its own sake, tries to maintain elitism by attempting to keep adult education apart from reality or practicality.

"This ideal of 'education for its own sake' is one which the university tradition in adult education has deliberately cultivated. Its roots in academic scholarship and the patronage of the leisured and genteel classes in the nineteenth century, have contributed to the sense of detachment from contemporary society. Current defenders of this tradition still advocate it in preference to the 'practical instrumentalism' which they associate with more recent innovations like trade union studies and community education."

Drawing on ideas from the work of Friere and Gramsci, Thompson argues that education, even adult education, cannot be neutral but that the difference between compulsory schooling and adult education is that a challenge to the status quo can be encouraged amongst adults. Radical adult education is possible but only if its potential is realised.

"... adult education now needs to be re-examined with the insights provided by the sociology of education. This also means placing adult education firmly in the context of a stratified society and within the realities of political struggle. The collective argument presented here is that without such an understanding, and without such a class perspective, it will be impossible to radicalize adult education or to respond, with any degree of commitment, to the expansion of educational provision for working-class men and women."
Adult Education: a general discussion.

Moving from the fairly confined world of educational philosophy into wider debates about adult education opens up a potential area of almost unmanageable proportions. It is essential that, in this wider context, the main aims of this study should be retained. To view the early educational experiences of a group of women in perspective involved a wider consideration of the education of girls and a review of the evidence about gender difference. The subsequent re-entry of these women, using various routes and having diverse aims, now necessitates a brief review of the education of adults, first in its wider context and then, with particular reference to women. The history of the education of adults and an account of the official position have already set the scene. The brief review of the debates within the philosophy of education serve only to remind us of the differences of opinion within that area. A general survey of the contemporary theory of the education of adults will provide a broader backcloth, against which the specific experiences of the women can be seen.

Any exploration of the education of adults presents a major problem which has been ignored so far in this chapter. The terminology and associated definitions within this area have become confusing and often contradictory. My use so far of the vague term 'education of adults' has been deliberate, to avoid any direct definition of 'adult education'. An idea of the confusion can be gauged by reviewing some of the definitions that have been used. Groombridge (1983) suggests -

"Adult education is the process by which men and women (alone, in groups or in institutional settings) seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skill, knowledge or sensitiveness; or it is any process by which individuals, groups or institutions, try to help men and women improve in these ways."

Legge (1982) gives several 'official' definitions, including that of UNESCO and OECD respectively -
"Adult education is taken to mean forms of study and other activities which are undertaken voluntarily by mature people (i.e., over the age of 18) without direct regard to their vocational value."

"Adult education refers to any learning activity or programme deliberately designed for adults. Its ambit is taken as spanning non-vocational, vocational, general, formal, non-formal and community education and it is not restricted to any particular level."

From these attempts we can see the problem of trying to construct a definition which is wider than the normally accepted 'evening class' meaning, but not so wide as to encompass all learning that adults engage in. Again, the distinction of vocational versus non-vocational is not resolved. Newman (1979) goes even further in his quotation which restricts even the term 'education' to adults, but this does not seem to offer any real solution.

"I see useful distinctions to be drawn between upbringing, schooling, training, instruction and education. I do not apply the word 'education' to the process of preparation for adult status: I think that education is something which only truly begins when adult status has been attained."

Perhaps a more useful approach is not to try to produce a consise definition as such but to indicate what kind of activities are, or should be, encompassed under the heading of 'adult education'. Marks and Simpson (1979) advocate an expansion in all the following areas that they classify in this way:

"An increase in the total number of adults engaged in the systematic learning of anything which is not anti-social. An increase in the total number engaged in one of more of the following categories of systematic learning:

a) those which improve the individual's standard of general education and possibly qualifications;
b) those which increase national productivity and which further individual career progress;
c) those which diminish unemployment or help people adjust to it;"
d) those which diffuse heritage, culture of experiences which confer what used to be called 'liberal education';
e) those which make for the understanding and constructive use of civic, political, community and economic processes to improve society and overcome contra-productive social tendencies;
f) those which serve a multitude of specific aims, such as the promotion of political understanding, or health, or the reduction of illiteracy, male chauvinism, alcoholism, racism and so on;
g) those which enable people to have a fulfilling personal and leisure life;
h) those which tend to reform education into a recurrent pattern."

Under this umbrella it can be claimed that anything and everything goes. And not content with defining and classifying adult education in such generalised ways, many writers in the field go on to explore the other terms that are used to describe the education of adults. Legge (1982) for example, discusses the significance of such terms as re-current education, lifelong education, community education and continuing education. Of these, British sources have focussed on re-current education although the 'official' bodies such as ACACE use the term 'continuing education'.

The problem with a term like re-current education is that it has several possible definitions, as well as interpretations, and thus, implications for practice. Again some idea of the confusion can be gained by looking at several examples of its use. Kallen (1979), in a lengthy discussion of terms and definitions, stresses the strategy and policy aspects of recurrent education and notes how the term has changed its meaning over time. Molyneux (1979) however, uses the term simply to cover adjustments to the present system and not as a radical alternative. Cantor (1974), in reviewing the British system, uses it as a description for periods of formal and structured study undertaken in institutions at certain times or stages in the lifespan.

The fullest exploration of re-current education can be found in Flude and Parrott (1979) and in Houghton (1974). To Flude and Parrott, re-current education has both vertical and horizontal components, catering for whenever and wherever it is needed. They argue that it should not be seen only as a top up, a second chance or a compensatory provision.
Table 5.1 Essential features of a recurrent education system

Availability
1. It should be available throughout the life span.
2. It should maximise choice at every stage of human development.
3. The choice should be specialized or non-specialized, vocational or non-vocational, as deemed appropriate by the participant.
4. It should be available on an alternating principle as this is controlled by economic forces.

Access
1. Access should aim at provision for all members of the community especially those excluded by current practice.
2. Time should be made available to ensure open access to needed societal and personal skills.
3. Access should involve participation in design so that there is not merely feedback but also feedforward.
4. There should be diminution of the democratic control which has arisen because of the fragmentation of knowledge into narrow specialisms.

Relevance
1. The aim of producing autonomous learners and groups of learners should ensure a high degree of social relevance.
2. Relevance should work against the separation of learning and career choice.
3. There must be provision to deal with economic, social and psychological problems.
4. At this early stage there can be no detailed blueprint for a recurrent learning system because this would from the beginning negate the possibility of the level of flexibility which is essential.

"It would be the most natural thing in the world for anyone to start learning anything at any age, and while a person's age might provide some guidance as to how he or she would be taught, it would not be a condition of whether he or she should be taught. The task for the initial period of education would be preparatory, providing young people with the basic tools for a life in which recurring periods of learning were to be regarded as normal."

Houghton provides us with a neat summary of the availability, access and relevance of re-current education (Table 5.1).

I have considered the term re-current education in some detail because its definition and use appear to be very similar to that of the term 'continuing education'. I prefer to use the term 'continuing education', partly because it has become the least controversial and most generally used term (cf ACACE publications) and partly, primarily in fact, because it represents and embraces most aspects of the education of adults. Implicit in the concept of 'continuing education' is an insistence that initial education cannot be regarded as sufficient in itself and that many adults may later wish to 'continue' with their education in some way. With reference to the traditional educational 'ladder' consisting of a recognised progression in stage and age, the idea of adults being able to 'continue' from where they previously 'discontinued' is a useful one. Or, continuing education may embrace the idea of change of direction; a return to education to re-train for a new career or to prepare for a new phase in their life cycle. Thus the term 'continuing education' best describes the main aim and content of this study.

Rogers (1980) points out the connection between change and the need for lifelong learning in his definition of continuing education.

"The starting point is lifelong learning. The argument goes something like this. We all learn continuously throughout the whole of our lives. This learning is related to three main areas of change with which we have to cope. Changes in our personal development, our interests, opportunities and abilities, all lead to new learning and new learning needs. Secondly, changes in our occupations, whether heart specialist, historian or housewife, will call for new
knowledge, new skills and new attitudes. And thirdly, as each of us enters new social roles or as society re-defines the roles in which we find ourselves, so once again some re-learning will take place. Lifelong learning is then for all of us an inevitable reality, episodic not continuous but centred on concrete learning situations.

Continuing education is related to this pattern of lifelong learning; it is that system of education which meets and co-ordinates the learning needs throughout life."

Continuing education does not imply a radical restructuring of society or a drastic change in the existing education system. It allows individuals to choose, from many alternative provisions, the specific way in which they wish to 'continue' their education. This may be vocational or not; liberal or instrumental; it may require the provision of new initiatives or more open access to that which already exists.

Including all the educational opportunities for adults under the umbrella term 'continuing education' directs attention away from the rather narrow limits of 'adult education' and provides a concept that can be translated into strategy or policy, without making major changes to the system or unrealistic demands on it.

There are many reasons why the education of adults has recently received renewed attention. Changes within the structure of society have led to a re-appraisal of education as a whole - often belatedly and with a sense of crisis. Such changes then have repercussions at a later stage, since there is inevitably a time lag before changes in initial education are felt. Thus the need to facilitate change in the lives and work of adults becomes apparent and the education of adults becomes a prime target.

The possible reasons for this increased interest and awareness can be summarised by considering such changes as:

- in psychology - developments in what is known and understood about adults' ability to learn;

- in society - changes in family patterns, especially in the responsibilities and expectations of women;
- in technology - changes within education, in the modes of learning available; new developments that drastically alter work and leisure patterns;

- in economics - changes in the demand for new skills, for new materials, for new knowledge;

- in education - changes in what is expected of the education system, in what type and content of learning is encouraged;

- in politics - changes in what the State sees as the expectations of people and changes in what the State expects of people, changes in what the people expect of the State;

- in values and attitudes - towards leisure and unemployment, training and financial reward.

As such changes are recognised, discussed and debated, so attitudes to the education of adults are influenced by both consensus and conflict. The liberal, instrumental and radical aims of adult education are re-examined, and endorsed or challenged, as the case may be.

Thus the 'theory' of adult education is complex, ill-formed and as confusing as the terminology used. In this section, therefore, I shall attempt to identify the main themes which emerge in the various recent books on adult education, rather than try to identify consistent and cohesive theories.

Most writers start with an attempt to justify the need for adults to be educated and thus make a link between initial schooling and adult education. This justification covers both individual need and social benefit.

Rogers and Groombridge (1976) justify adult education in terms of a neglected resource -

"... the need to develop maximum resourcefulness, imagination, resilience, insight and understanding in the whole population."
Tomorrow's world is made or mutilated by today's adults, not by today's schoolchildren. The hardly tapped capacity of adults to learn is our most neglected political, social and cultural resource."

As well as utilising resources, there is often emphasis on the need to respond to change, both personal and social. The most comprehensive list of potential changes, with emphasis on economic factors, comes in Melo (1974) who summarises seven political and social forces to which education would have to respond —

1. National output - both in aggregate and per capita - will continue to grow, and that there would be a continued and even accelerated advancement of scientific knowledge and applied technology in virtually all fields, which would spur economic growth.

2. Requirements for educated and trained manpower will rise more rapidly than total manpower requirements, that is to say, the 'mix' of manpower requirements would shift steadily towards greater emphasis upon higher skills and specialized knowledge in virtually all fields and levels, with unskilled labour shrinking in proportion.

3. The demand for highly specialized manpower, especially in the sciences and engineering but elsewhere as well, would rise with the greatest speed, and shortages of high talent would spread from one field to another rather unpredictably.

4. The economic necessity to develop each nation's human resources would be reinforced by strong political pressures in the same direction.

5. Although the formal educational system would have to provide each individual with more years of education, it would provide him with a smaller proportion of his total lifetime learning.

6. There would be no serious danger of 'overeducating' the population if national economies were able to maintain a relatively high level of employment and stability.
7. Women constitute the greatest untapped potential of human brain power and energy in most western nations.

Bengtsson (1979) examines changes, not only in economic terms, but in the work/leisure/education life cycle -

"Certainly education is only one among several institutions that will have to respond creatively to these emerging new social and economic forces, but its responses could be of vital importance in terms of making educational opportunities available over the individual's whole life cycle and during his increased non-work time."

He justifies this in terms of three current beliefs -

(a) the belief that education continues to be of vital importance to the personal development of the individual over his whole life cycle as well as to the democratic development of society;

(b) the belief that increased non-work time in the future should provide more opportunities for education;

(c) the belief that the current provision of education does not reflect the changing living and working patterns of an increasing number of people.

Responding to the needs or demands of both individuals and society is another recurring theme. The 1976 Open University Report of the Committee on Continuing Education groups these needs and demands under four headings -

PERSONAL - satisfaction of personal objectives; remedial or compensatory education; the extension of formal education both immediate and after a lapse of time, for personal development and interest.

ECONOMIC - occupational re-orientation; preparation for new jobs and, after they have been taken up, preparation for new responsibilities and opportunities in those jobs; training and re-training.
VOCATIONAL - attainment of professional and vocational qualifications; updating courses to offset obsolescence in both knowledge and experience.

SOCIAL - adapting to changing circumstances, to changing social attitudes and habits; an awareness of personal and social ethics and values; the development of social understanding and skills; fulfillment of particular roles in the community, both voluntary and professional.

Many of the discussions on the educational needs of adults link back to the inadequate or incomplete nature of initial education. Rogers and Groombride provide a useful analogy -

"... (initial) education as a spring wound up for ten or twenty years of childhood and youth and then meant to keep the clockwork going for life."

This 'front end' model is usually challenged by reference to recurrent or lifelong education. MacIntosh (1979) quotes a letter from the Department of Education and Science to ACACE which admits -

"Increasingly we have come to realise that education and training cannot adequately be provided by school and immediately post-school (front end) provision; for a variety of personal, social and vocational reasons, adults need to be able to return to education and training throughout life."

A very full analysis of the characteristic of initial education and the contrast with the education of adults is provided by Wiltshire (1979) in which he emphasises the 'oddity' of adult education. Initial education, he argues, has certain basic characteristics -

(a) It remains an initiatory and preparatory process which normally takes place during the first quarter or third of the lifespan - not only because that is a favourable time for learning but also because the earlier society makes its investment in education the greater will be its return.
(b) It is a process which is in the main controlled by the old and experienced and directed towards the young and relatively inexperienced.

(c) It is sanctioned by legal compulsion in its early stages and (particularly in complex societies) by the strong suasion of career advancement and financial and status reward in its later stages.

(d) One of the main tasks of education thus becomes the provision of evidence of qualification for these rewards, which it has to validate by a complex system of examination, grading and accreditation.

(e) The educational process thus tends to become structured into a progressive and competitive system with its successive stages marked by entry requirements and exit qualifications.

In contrast, adult education differs quite markedly -

(a) It takes place during the last two thirds of the lifespan and is frequently separated from initial and preparatory education by a gap of some years.

(b) It is a transaction between equals: indeed students may be older, of higher status and more experienced than their teachers.

(c) It is entirely free from compulsion; a voluntary activity which students undertake of their own volition and in their own free time.

(d) It is on the whole unrelated to career advancement, since the educational processes which affect this will tend to have been completed earlier in the lifespan, and therefore cannot employ to any great extent the suasion of career, financial or status reward.

(e) It therefore has no need of the apparatus of examination, grading and accreditation, and it is not structured as a progressive and competitive system controlled by entry requirements and exit qualifications.
Whilst much of what we now know as adult education falls into this category, there are aspects that do not fully fit the description given by Wiltshire. Nevertheless, his contrasting characteristics serve as a useful reminder of the essential differences between initial and continuing education.

What emerges overall from both theoretical discourse and consideration of these recurring themes, is not just the justification of educational opportunities for adults, but also the need for diversity in provision. In reality there is a wide diversity in existence but it can be argued that this does not necessarily meet all the needs of the consumer.

The notion that adult education should simply meet the needs or demands of the consumers (i.e. the 'market model') can be challenged on various fronts. The simplistic argument that adult education, like any other 'commodity' should be available for purchase by those who so choose, has been officially expressed in the present economic and political climate. This relegates education from a social good to a private good and excludes all those who are unable to afford it; all those who do not recognise their need or cannot express it as a demand; all those whose needs and demands are not recognised by the providers. This supply/demand approach to adult education was severely criticised by McIntosh (1981a) and Westwood (1980). Westwood notes -

"The market view posits individual choice as a determining factor rather than the social conditions of existence."

For 'radicals' such as Westwood and other contributors to Thompson's (1980) book, an individual choice model is untenable if adult education is to mount a political challenge to hegemony. Westwood uses theories from the sociology of education to examine the conservative and middle-class bias of adult education and to challenge the inevitability of adult education as a reactionary force. Since those who participate in education as adults - or do not participate, as the case may be - have had their views of education influenced by their initial schooling, the subsequent middle-class bias can be understood in the light of contemporary Marxist theories of education. However, with adults, it can be argued, the picture is not so simple, since the
social class of participants is not always the same as their social class of origin. This explanation also ignores areas within adult education that have been sites of struggle and change. If, as she claims, the culture consumption by the middle classes endorses the reproduction theories of Bourdieu, it is also true that the consensus of what should be offered to whom has been challenged, most recently by women.

The lack of theorising exposed by Westwood had been noted much earlier by Purvis (1976). In considering both the content and structure of the existing system, she shows how adult education differs from conventional provision by its low status, non-examinable and non-certifiable nature. Staffed by part-timers with little power or control, it differs from all other types of education where the older the pupil, the greater the prestige. As Keddie (1980) has argued, adult education has more in common with primary schooling, even in its child centered approach, than with higher education. In particular, the provision of education for disadvantaged groups - compensatory or remedial - reflects an alternative (inferior) curricula, as in schools.

The marginality of adult education, even though potentially all adults could be consumers, has led to a lack of theorising or even informed comment. Most adult education literature concerns practice, both descriptive and prescriptive, but with very little exposition of theory. Despite the attempt by Westwood and some other 'radicals' to utilize Marxist theory and to apply some theoretical approaches from the sociology of education, overall there has been no comprehensive exploration of adult education in its present social context.

One of the major debates within adult education, as in all education, is the extent to which it responds to change or initiates change. Most theoretical writing on adult education concentrates on responding to change - technical, economic and social. Having identified such change, it then recognises new needs and demands arising from this change, and seeks to supply appropriate provision. The current expansion in educational opportunities for the unemployed is one such example. Provision can be justified by pointing to need. Radical critics, however, would see this as cosmetic or palliative and would argue that the education of adults can, and indeed should, initiate
change. This may involve providing opportunities for change in the individual or group, as in 'consciousness raising' or in increasing awareness of social and structural constraints, leading ultimately to more radical change in the system. Many of the examples in Thompson (1980) would fit this approach, despite the criticism of Thomas (1982) already described.

The major problem of assessing this debate is that the evidence is thin and the definitions are too narrow. In a later section of this chapter some impression of the current width and depth of provision of educational opportunities for adults are surveyed.

Before looking at these opportunities, however, it is essential to know something of the potential of adults to learn. The content of what is taught and the methods by which it is taught must recognise that we need to know more about adults as learners.

Adults as learners.

One theme which re-occurs frequently in writings about the education of adults is reference to the needs/wants/motives of learners. As I have discussed in the previous section, one perspective sees adult education as a response to these perceived needs and demands. Coupled with this has been a recent re-appraisal of what might be called the psychology of adult learning. The purpose of this section, then, is to review briefly what we know about adults as learners, both in terms of their ability to learn and their motivations or reasons for wanting to do so.

One of the major problems in this area arises because of the influence of developmental psychology on educational theory. This is dominated by the tendency to think in terms of development 'stages' and therefore, of learning as a progressive process, co-existent with age. Many theorists previously saw childhood and youth as periods of progressive advancement, adulthood or maturity as a 'plateau', leading eventually to 'decline' in old age. Such a developmental framework is clearly inappropriate in discussions of adults as learners and has, more recently been seriously challenged.

Knox (1979) provides a useful summary, although even more recent
### Table 5.2

#### Some Milestones of Ego Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Impulse control, Character Development</th>
<th>Interpersonal style</th>
<th>Conscious preoccupation</th>
<th>Cognitive style</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impulsive</td>
<td>Impulsive, fear of retaliation</td>
<td>Receiving, dependent, exploitative</td>
<td>Bodily feelings, especially sexual and aggressive</td>
<td>Stereotyping, conceptual confusion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wary, manipulative, exploitative</td>
<td>Self-protection, trouble, wishes, things, advantage control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-protective</td>
<td>Fear of being caught, externalising blame, opportunistic</td>
<td>Belonging, superficial niceness</td>
<td>Appearance, social acceptability, banal feelings, behaviour</td>
<td>Conceptual simplicity, stereotypes, clichés</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conformist</td>
<td>Conformity to external rules, shame, guilt for breaking rules</td>
<td>Aware of self in relation to group, helping</td>
<td>Adjustment, problems, reasons, opportunities (vague)</td>
<td>Multiplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious-conformist (self-aware)</td>
<td>Differentiation of norms, goals</td>
<td>Intensive, responsible, mutual, concern for communication</td>
<td>Differentiated feelings, motives for behaviour, self-respect, achievements, traits, expression</td>
<td>Conceptual complexity, ideals of patterning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>Self-evaluated standards, self-criticism, guilt for consequences, long-term goals and ideals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>Add: Respect for individuality</td>
<td>Add: Dependence as emotional problem</td>
<td>Add: Development, social problems, differentiation of inner life from outer</td>
<td>Add: Distinction of process and outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>Add: Coping with conflicting inner needs, toleration</td>
<td>Add: Respect for autonomy, interdependence</td>
<td>Vastly conveyed feelings, integration of physiological and psychological, psychological causation of behaviour, role conception, self-fulfilment, self in social context</td>
<td>Increased conceptual complexity, complex patterns, toleration for ambiguity, broad scope, objectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Add: Reconciling inner conflicts, reuniication of unattainable</td>
<td>Add: Cherishing of individual</td>
<td>Add: Identity</td>
<td>Add: Identity</td>
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Note: "Add" means in addition to the description applying to the previous level.
Source: Adapted from Loewinger (1976, pp. 24-5), quoted in Martineau and Chickering (1981).
developments are significant. Drawing mainly on U.S. sources, he suggests that adult learning has to be –

related to educational level rather than age;
related to role change in home, job or community;
related to personality variables.

"Effective practitioners typically understand that almost every adult is able to learn almost any subject given sufficient time and attention. Furthermore, adults vary in learning ability, but for the individual person, learning ability is quite stable during most adulthood."

Knox argues that learning ability is best seen as a search for meaning in which the social environment is important. Most adults perform well below capacity and underestimate their ability. It is essential that adults learn at their own pace. He notes that very little research as looked at adult learning in a societal context.

Ansello (1982) recognises the importance of social change in his summary of the four factors which he considers affect adult learning –

- the large scale demographic shifts which have led to an ageing population;
- the reshaping of secondary education in both number and form;
- new conceptions of adult development;
- the substantiation of 'lifelong' learning in a variety of forms.

One of the most recent summaries of adult learning can be found in Evans (1984b). The underlying assumption of his argument is that development is not confined to childhood and adolescence but that adults have to be able to adapt to change throughout their lives. Drawing on a variety of psychological sources, he condenses the theoretical material in a number of useful tables, which document the changes that may occur. In Table 5.2, taken from Martineau and Chickering (1981) but based on Loeveringer (1976), he shows some milestones of ego development.
Table 5.3

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Developmental Tasks of the Adult Years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late adolescence and youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achieving emotional independence</td>
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Table 5.4

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<th>Characteristics of Healthy Person – Healthy Environment and Educational Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy person</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Self-acceptance; valuing self and others</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Sense of self-determination, control, self development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Clear and realistic perception of self and environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Openness to and understanding of and ability to manage emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Capacity to understand, relate to and work with others</td>
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Table 5.5

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<tr>
<th>Students' Orientations to Higher Education</th>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
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<td>Social</td>
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Source: Evans (1985)
In this theoretical paradigm, change and transition occur at times of instability which are then interspersed with periods of calm and stability. Transition times are key periods for growth and development and therefore critical times for learning. Some changes may be anticipated, others unexpected. Change does not always occur at specified ages, although socially accepted patterns may predominate. (Table 5.3 summarises the developmental tasks of the adult years.)

Some indication of how education might respond to these changes is given in Table 5.4 from Chickering (1981), which attempts to define a 'healthy' person and environment. Appropriate educational responses enable the individual to cope with change and to accept new roles and responsibilities.

Moving on to consider different learning approaches, Evans draws extensively on the work of Kolb (1976) and his four modes of learning.

"The effective learner relies on four different learning modes - CONCRETE EXPERIENCE (CE), REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION (RO), ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALIZATION (AC) and ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION (AE). That is, he must be able to involve himself fully, openly and without bias in new experiences (CE), he must be able to reflect on and observe that experience from many perspectives (RO), he must be able to create concepts that integrate his observations into logically sound theories (AC) and he must be able to use these theories to make sound decisions and solve problems (AE)." (Kolb quoted in Evans (1985))

Finally, Evans looks at motives for learning and orientations towards education. Drawing on material (Table 5.5) from Entwhistle (1983) with reference to younger students, Evans argues that these orientations, interests, aims and concerns also apply to adult students. Autonomy, independence and self-knowledge all aid adaptation, which Evans argues, is the central learning task for adults.

A new and exciting approach to adult learning is summarised in Giles and Allman (1981) and in Allman and Giles (1982). In these papers they illustrate how unsuitable a standard of development based on children
may be, when applied to adults. They argue that we do not know if the mental processes of adults are qualitatively different and, if they are, we do not know how to assess them.

Giles and Allmen question the use of age difference studies as developmental studies, since societal differences over time may also be responsible for any perceived differences. Physiological decline does not mean mental or psychological decline. New paths, as in the 'plasticity' model may cause growth patterns to undulate and the importance of self-perception on attainment needs to be recognised.

Any discussion of change must see the individual in context, must recognise personal-social interaction, emphasising a change in self-concept and not just a change in external events. Allman and Giles (1982) stress that this requires a qualitative change in thinking, thus using a cognitive developmental perspective on personal change and dialectical operants. They go on to discuss the work of Riegel and particularly his characteristics of 'mature thought'.

"Mature thought does not seek to eliminate contradictions but to tolerate and be excited by them and thus motivated."

"Reigel's model of mature thought is one which sees thinking as the posing of problems or finding of questions rather than simply the solving of problems or the answering of questions."

There is, however, a dilemma in relating mature thinking to self-concept. If the concept of self is resistant to change and dissonance is perceived as a threat that has to be resolved, the development of contradictory logic may not be tolerated. If, however, adults come to assess knowledge with reference to context and thus accept the relativity of knowledge, then some change in self-concept is possible. Such change may not be intentional, as Allman argues -

"My contention is that intentional change in and of itself may not be a catalyst to adult development or personal change as we've defined it. Unintentional change also affects adults' lives. Sometimes it evolves from or interacts with an intentional change while at other times it just happens. Those changes which we intend upon ourselves may not occasion qualitative changes in the way we
think because we will strive to maintain our self-concept despite the intended transition. Again this will also apply to concepts which are inter-active with or supportive of our self-concept. It is the unintentional changes which reveal contradictions not those which we can readily manipulate to eliminate contradiction."

Relating this to adult education, for example, the decision to re-enter education or become a mature student (an intentional change) may, but not necessarily will, lead to development and change in self-concept (unintentional change). However, the type of teaching and learning to which the adult is exposed may or may not encourage the ability to reflect, to analyse and synthesize, to organize for themselves.

"If people are involved in critical reflection and the creation of knowledge, it is bound to change the ways in which they perceive themselves and construe the world."

If the teaching and learning methods employed encourage the finding of questions and the posing of problems, then the raising and resolving of contradictions becomes part of the learning process and mature thinking is facilitated.

This discussion returns us to the question raised in the earlier section about the purpose of education for adults. If it is to encourage the development of full potential, it will be necessary for the tutor/teacher to facilitate change or to assist the student when change is taking place. Sensitive and perceptive tutors have known this intuitively for a long time; the theoretical psychology of adult development is just beginning to confirm it.

Allman (1983) develops further some of these ideas, with particular reference to the relationship between teachers and adult learners.

"... it is worth noting that there is a fundamental difference between enabling the development of youth and the development of the adult. The teacher of children and adolescents will be enabling the learner to develop competencies, ideas and cognitive structures which the teacher has already developed. The enabling process where adults are involved demands a different perspective of development,
because enabling in this context pertains equally to teacher and student. This difference alone would appear to require essentially different relationships between teachers and learners."

She also expands the processes which may occur when adults re-enter formal education systems.

"(Perry) found that in the early stages of college or university study, students were dominated by a blind acceptance of authority and academic expertise and therefore tended to seek absolute and unchallengeable truths. Later, however, they move away from this form of thinking towards understanding that knowledge and authoritative explanations are relative. In the final stages of development, while continuing to accept the relativity of knowledge, many learners will form a commitment to particular explanations rather than others. If this progression were not studied longitudinally, and the learner's concepts of knowledge and learning comprehensively explored, a researcher could easily mistake the final stage as the first. However, the difference is paramount. The final stage involves a recognition and tolerance of contradiction, and therefore it appears to involve the development of dialectic operations."

Using an andragogic approach, tutors would recognise, support and encourage the student through this development. The problem is that some teachers, as adults and the product of conventional education, have not themselves engaged in 'dialectical operations'.

What adult students may well display is not a steady developmental progression but periods of change, alternating with periods of stability. The periods of change may not coincide with external changes, but may, in complex ways be related to them. Hostler (1981) notes -

"Growth in adulthood consequently tends to proceed in intermittent 'bursts', each of which involves a major reorientation of personality or lifestyle, followed by a period of consolidation and adjustment."

But in observing development and change, cause and effect may not be easily disentangled.
Table 5.6a

**Chart 1: Learning Projects**

1. A learning project (major learning effort):
   - highly deliberate effort
   - to gain and retain certain definite knowledge and skill
   - clear focus
   - at least 7 hours

2. Populations surveyed:
   - Toronto: pre-school mothers; elementary school teachers; lower white-collar women and men; factory workers; municipal politicians; social science professors; unemployed men; IBM salesmen; professional men; 16-year-olds and 10-year-olds
   - Vancouver: members of public employees' union
   - Syracuse: suburban housewives
   - Tennessee: large rural and urban populations
   - Nebraska: adults over 55
   - Fort Lauderdale: adults who recently completed high school
   - Atlanta: pharmacists
   - Kentucky: parish ministers
   - West Africa (Accra, Ghana): secondary school teachers; bank officers; department store executives
   - New Zealand: several North Island populations

3. A middle or median person:
   - conducts 8 different learning projects in one year
   - spends a total of 700 hours altogether at them

4. Who plans the learning efforts from one session to the next?
   - the learner: 68%
   - a group or its leader/instructor: 12%
   - a pro or friend in a one-to-one situation: 8%
   - a nonhuman resource (records, TV, etc.): 3%
   - mixed (no dominant planner): 9%

5. Out of 100 learning projects, 19 are planned by a professional educator and 81 by an amateur.

6. Most common motivation: some anticipated use or application of the knowledge and skill.
   - Less common: curiosity or puzzlement, or wanting to possess the knowledge for its own sake.
   - Rare (less than 1% of all learning efforts): credit.

---

Table 5.6b

**Chart 2: What Personal Changes Can Someone Strive For?**

a. self-understanding
b. express genuine feelings and interests
c. close, authentic relationships with others
d. broad understanding of history, geography, cultures, universe, future
e. better performance on the job; reshape the job or its meaning; new job
f. quit drinking; stop beating children; quit heroin
g. cope better with the tasks necessary for survival
h. body free from excessive tenseness and wasted energy; physical fitness
i. new priorities among goals (desired benefits); a fresh balance of activities or expenditures
j. reshape relationship with mate; new mate or partner (for an alternative living arrangement); new circle of friends
k. capacity for finding a calm center of peace and inner strength amidst the turmoil
l. adequate self-esteem
m. reduction of psychological and emotional problems and blocks that inhibit full human functioning
n. improved awareness and consciousness; more open-minded and inquiring; seeking an accurate picture of reality
o. greater sensitivity to psychic phenomena and to alternate realities
p. freedom, liberation, looseness, flexibility
q. competence at psychological processing, at handling own feelings and personal problems
r. zest for life; joy; happiness
s. liberation from female-male stereotyping, or from other role-playing
t. emotional maturity, positive mental health; higher level of psychological functioning
u. spiritual insights; cosmic consciousness
v. less selfish and more altruistic; a greater effort to contribute to the lives of others
w. acceptance and love of self and others; accept the world as it is
x. come to terms with own death

Source: Tough (1976)
Chart 3. Some Methods For Personal Growth

1. books
2. conversations with a close friend or an informal helper; relationship with mate or love partner
3. jogging; diet; bioenergetics; massage; acupuncture; biofeedback; sports; movement and dance therapy
4. yoga exercises; martial arts (T'ai chi; aikido; judo; karate)
5. individual counseling; individual psychotherapy; group therapy
6. behavior modification
7. encounter groups; sensory awareness; psychosynthesis; Gestalt therapy groups; Transactional Analysis; psychodrama; art therapy
8. individual use (whenever appropriate) of personal exercises and psychological processing such as thinking, listing wishes and fears, interpreting dreams, keeping a journal, moving to music, contemplation and reflection, listening to one's unconscious
9. consciousness-raising groups and literature for women and men
10. out-of-body experience or other psychic experiences; astronauts' experience of seeing the earth from outer space
11. guided fantasies; directed daydreams; Transcendental Meditation; Mind Games; hypnotic trance
12. re-living one's birth or infancy; primal therapy
13. religious, spiritual, cosmic-unity, symbolic, or consciousness-altering experiences — via religious services, spiritual practices, mysticism, psychedelic drugs, Mind Games, prayer, wilderness solitude, music, meditation, sex, chanting, spinning, baptism in the Holy Spirit, Zen, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Taoism
14. Tarot; I Ching
15. alert childbirth; living with children; Parent Effectiveness Training
16. films; television; audiovisual environment; self-improvement tapes and kits
17. tackling a challenging task or an educative job; working in a growth-facilitating organization
18. course; conference; discussion group; management training; organizational development
19. self-help groups and other peer-groups
20. music; arts; crafts
21. deliberate change in life-style; new circle of friends; new neighborhood; expressive clothes
22. travel or live abroad; live within a commune or some other subculture or culture

Source: Tough (1976)
In the remainder of this section, I want to consider the work of two Americans, both of which have been influential in discussions of adult learning - Tough (1976) in Tight (1983a) who relates self-planned learning to major personal change and Mezirow (1981) whose theory of adult learning and education has particular relevance for the study of mature women.

Tough conducted a massive survey of 'learning projects' in a wide range of contexts. He then examined a list of possible personal changes that may be desired, and possible methods that may be pursued to effect those changes. (Tables 5.6a/b/c/ list these in full) Tough suggests that one major implication of his findings is that many learning projects take place without the involvement of recognised institutions and most of the methods do not require 'teachers' in the formal sense. This has major implications for those concerned with the education of adults. However, the essence of Tough's work was to investigate self-motivated learning and change - intentional learning - though, as we have seen, that may not be initiated by, or leading to, intentional change.

Possibly some of the most exciting theoretical material on adult education comes from Mezirow (1981). Not only does he propose a theory which has direct implications for adult educators but also one which accords with the experience of many practitioners. Most importantly, for the purpose of this study, it is derived from the empirical work with mature women re-entrants and has, therefore, direct relevance to many facets of my undergraduate sample.

Mezirow bases his work on the three generic domains of adult learning proposed by Habermas - technical, practical and emancipatory. Mezirow then takes further the third domain - 'emancipatory action' and links it to his own concept of 'perspective transformation'.

"Emancipation is from libidinal, institutional or environmental forces which limit our options and rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted as beyond human control."
Mezirow connects this with his concept of perspective transformation.

"Through extensive interviews it became apparent that movement through existential challenges of adulthood involves a process of negotiating an irregular succession of transformations in 'meaning perspective'. This term refers to the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one's past experience."

Basing his theory on a study of re-entry women, he argues that educational experiences led these women to examine the cultural assumptions involved in the traditional stereotypic view of women's role expectations.

"Perspective transformation is the emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings. It is the learning process by which adults come to recognize their culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and the reasons for them and take action to overcome them."

The dynamics of perspective transformation were identified by Mezirow as consisting of ten elements -

1. a disorienting dilemma;
2. self-examination;
3. a critical assessment of personally internalized role assumptions and a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations;
4. relating one's discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues - recognizing that one's problem is shared and not exclusively a private matter;
5. exploring options for new ways of acting;
6. building competence and self-confidence in new roles;
7. planning a course of action;
8. acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
9. provisional efforts to try new roles and to assess feedback;
10. a reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective.
Figure 5.1 Levels of Reflectivity

Source: Mezirow (1981)
Mezirow argues that perspective transformation may occur as a result of external circumstances or that a sudden insight may occur. However it is more likely that a series of transitions or role changes may provide the opportunity for self-reflection, which is the essential of perspective transformation. He warns that perspective transformation may be problematic, involving negotiation and compromise, particularly in relationships where a trend towards reciprocity and equality leads to greater autonomy and self-determination. Again, it can be seen how applicable it is to women who have traditionally adopted the position of dependency.

One of the major components of perspective transformation seems to be 'reflectivity', linked to a critical awareness of 'consciousness'. In an analytical diagram, Mezirow summarises this process. (Fig.5.1)

Theoretical reflectivity and critical consciousness are the central components of perspective transformation and are, Mezirow argues, an adult capacity.

"... critical consciousness and particularly theoretical reflectivity, represents a uniquely adult capacity and, as such, becomes realized through perspective transformation. ... If adult education is to be understood as an organized effort to facilitate learning in the adult years, it has no alternative but to address the distinctive learning needs of adults pertaining to perspective transformation."

Mezirow finally explores the implications of his theory for adult education in terms of learning goals, learning needs, facilitation of learning and programme evaluation. Returning to Habermas' three dimensions, he suggests traditional adult education has relied on the technical, task orientated approach and the attainment of 'competence'. But social interaction in the second domain and perspective transformation in the third domain involves other educational approaches. Good educators can, and have, facilitated and reinforced perspective transformation, enabling students to challenge assumptions and relate learning to their own experiences.
"Critical reflexivity is fostered with a premium placed on personalizing what is learned by applying insights to one's own life and works as opposed to mere intellectualization. Conceptual learning needs to be integrated with emotional and aesthetic experience."

Indeed, the requirements of perspective transformation can be seen reflected in many new initiatives in women's education.

"Perspective transformation .... also involves learning needs attendant upon systematically examining options, building confidence through confidence in new roles, acquiring knowledge and skills to implement one's plans and provisionally trying out new roles and relationships."

All three domains are relevant, for adults need to control the environment, to engage in social interaction and to experience perspective transformation, enhancing their capacity to act as self-directed learners.

Mezirow's charter for andragogy reflects both ideas from Allman and Giles as well as Tough, giving a rich basis for the practice of adult education based on a better understanding of adults as learners. Thus the charter provides an appropriate link forward to the next section where the practice of adult education will be considered.

"Andragogy .... must be defined as an organized and sustained effort to assist adults to learn in a way that enhances their capability to function as self-directed learners. To do this it must:

1. progressively decrease the learner's dependency on the educator;

2. help the learner understand how to use learning resources - especially the experience of others, including the educator, and how to engage others in reciprocal learning relationships;

3. assist the learner to define his/her learning needs - both in terms of immediate awareness and of understanding the cultural and psychological assumptions influencing his/her perceptions of needs;
4. assist learners to assume increasing responsibility for defining their learning objectives, planning their own learning program and evaluating their progress;

5. organize what is to be learned in relationship to his/her current personal problems, concerns and levels of understanding;

6. foster learner decision making - select learner-relevant learning experiences which require choosing, expand the learner's range of options, facilitate taking the perspectives of others who have alternative ways of understanding;

7. encourage the use of criteria for judging which are increasingly inclusive and differentiating in awareness, self-reflexive and integrative of experience;

8. foster a self-corrective approach to learning - to typifying and labelling, to perspective taking and choosing, and to habits of learning and learning relationships;

9. facilitate problem posing and problem solving, including problems associated with the implementation of individual and collective action; recognition of relationship between personal problems and public issues;

10. reinforce the self-concept of the learner as a learner and doer by providing for progressive mastery; a supportive climate with feedback to encourage provisional efforts to change and to take risks; avoidance of competitive judgment of performance; appropriate use of mutual support group;

11. emphasise experiential, participative and projective instructional methods; appropriate use of modelling and learning contracts;

12. make the moral distinction between helping the learner understand his/her full range of choices and how to improve the quality of choosing vs encouraging the learner to make a specific choice."
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS.

Mature students in higher education.

It may seem peculiar to begin a discussion on educational opportunities for adults with a section on mature students in higher education. Not only is higher education rarely considered as part of 'adult education', but those adults who do enter higher education are clearly a minority. However, in terms of 'continuing education' it can be seen as relevant. It may seem like working 'backwards' to start with the 'top' of the educational hierarchy and then consider later the various 'lower' or preparatory levels but the reasons for this reversal are several and remain consistent with the study as a whole.

The overall aim of this survey of the education of adults is to provide a background to my empirical study, which concerns, primarily, mature students in higher education. Secondly, any discussion about the access and performance of adults in higher education has relevance for those sectors of continuing education which provide, or are used as, preparatory routes to higher education. Thirdly, it can be argued that the extent to which mature entry to higher education is discussed, advocated or encouraged is some indication of how the concept of continuing education is being applied. Whilst the opening up of the traditional education sectors is not the only course advocated by supporters of continuing education, it is currently a provision which exists and could be extended with relative ease. For example, the cost of extending part-time degree courses in conventional universities is minimal compared to the cost of setting up and maintaining the Open University.

The admission of adults to conventional institutions of higher education is not a new phenomena. It has always been possible for older students to apply and to be admitted on some courses, if they fulfilled the required entrance criteria. Jennings (1983) notes how University Extension courses allowed a few adults to enter, as in the Cambridge affiliation scheme of 1886, and of how the WEA originally intended to provide access to higher education. The Adult Education Residential Colleges, although not primarily designed for this purpose, provide a route to university, their two-year diplomas being accepted as an entrance requirement and, in some cases, giving
exemption to the first year of a degree course. The previously available Mature State Scholarship scheme, though always pitifully small, did indicate that a tiny minority of adults in higher education was acceptable. Indeed a post-war scheme encouraged men to complete their educational careers, if they had been interrupted by active service and, in times of shortage, teacher training institutions have deliberately recruited mature students. So the idea that older students can participate in higher education has a fairly long history.

That these diverse schemes have existed for some time gives no indication of potential demand - places were filled where available and the numbers concerned were always small. However, the creation of the Open University has shown dramatically how great the concealed demand for higher education among adults might be.

One of the early conferences on access to university for mature students (Oglesby 1977) considered specifically the question of admission for those without recognised qualifications. Whilst still advocating generally the use of GCE 'A' levels, both as selection criteria and as preparation, the Conference Report called for more information to be made available on the admission of mature students. It recognised also the problem of grants for those who do not fulfil the normal entrance requirements. So whilst universities themselves were slowly acknowledging the possibility of admitting more unqualified adults, there was still much support for the established entrance requirements.

One major advocate of extending the opportunities open to adults in higher and further education has been ACACE. Jones and Williams (1979) paper surveyed the numbers of adults in universities and polytechnics, looked at alternative access programmes and advocated policy changes. They suggest that policy goals, in terms of both manpower and political objectives, reinforce the need, not simply for skill changes, but for wider opportunities in all the post-secondary education of adults. Examining specifically the demand for university places, they raise the question of the use of GCE 'A' levels, for both preparation and selection. Again there is no evidence for or against their use by adults, but the authors expose the problems inherent in comparing young school leavers with 'A' levels, against mature
applicants with wide experience and high motivation but no certifiable
evidence of their ability. After reviewing some of the special schemes
and programmes provided for adults, and examining some of the barriers
and obstacles that exist, they conclude that the basis of the
 provision is already there but that a more open and flexible policy
would allow more adults to benefit from it.

"The lessons of present practice in higher, further and adult
education are that an adequate system of re-current post-secondary
education could be established without heavy new expenditure ..... 
the basis of the system is there. But its operation needs careful
revision to give open access to what is already there. ..... The
primary task is to educate the educators to see the desirability of
a more open policy, and to educate the public to demand it."

Another conference reflected the optimism of the late 1970s on
"Innovation in Access to Higher Education" (1978). Together with
papers on admission practice in Sweden and Canada, McIntosh (1978)
s summarised the British position. In contrast to the other two
countries, figures of mature students look small and the diversity of
admission schemes more limited. Apart from the Open University, the
pioneer in distance learning, Britain appeared lacking in imaginative
schemes or flexible provision. Here the dilemma of full-time versus
part-time study was raised, not only because of the discrepancy in
funding and grants, but because, in Britain, part-time higher
education appears as a 'second class' option. Part-time provision
receives fewer resources, appears less serious and therefore lacks the
high status of full-time study. Access and mode of study, therefore,
seem to emerge as two major points in the discussion.

Trends and provisions on a wider scale were examined at an
international workshop in Paris in 1981 and documented in Mercer and
Thacker (1982). Here the emphasis was on management issues. Starting
from the premise that a demand existed by adults for higher education
and that it was likely to increase, various alternative admission
policies were considered. Roderick (1982) suggested that there were
several possible options ranging from the usual pre-requisites,
through demand for special requisites, a special entrance examination,
entrance interviews, extra preliminary courses, to the compiling of a
personal dossier or even the removal of all conditions and a policy of
'open access'. In practice many of these options already exist, although the overall pattern is very confused and depends on the policy of the institution and the attitude of individual departments. The question of access seems to be the key issue since, once accepted, mature students perform as well, if not better, than conventional students. The problem is that if strict qualification criteria (eg A level grades) are not required, how can admission tutors ensure that the limited places available go to the most suitable candidates?

These papers all reflect the good intentions reflected in the Department of Education and Science (DES) paper "Higher Education in the 1990s". The falling birth rate, and thus the possible decline in the number of younger applicants, would give rise to a greater number of places available for adults, and allow scope for new initiatives and diverse provision. The reality of the 1980s saw a marked change in the possibilities available, although much of the earlier rhetoric remains.

The implications for institutions of higher education in accepting mature students are explored in a paper by Daniel (1982). His emphasis was on the administrative issues and called for more integrated programming of full-time and part-time provision, with some credit system which would allow adults to accumulate courses towards a degree. He suggests that the major obstacle to this kind of development was psychological rather than practical - the system could be adapted only if staff were willing. Apart from special requirements at the admissions stage, no major reorganization would be needed if institutions were committed to the idea and staff were willing to implement it. It is interesting to note that one of the most recent developments in university provision for adults is a considerable increase in the number of part-time degrees now available.

The question of mature entry is also explored by Squires (1981) in a more general book on access to higher education (Fulton 1981). Here the differences in attitude and provision between universities and the public sector (polytechnics and colleges of higher education) are noted. Squires isolates the various factors which may affect mature demand as personal, occupational, financial, vocational and institutional. The greater flexibility of polytechnics in terms of admission procedures and the provision of both full- and part-time
courses, may account for the greater number of mature students attracted to them. In addition, the student population of polytechnics is less homogenous than that of universities, with the inclusion of many sandwich and in-service courses. But Squires, too, notes the move to recruit what he calls 'semi-qualified' mature students into the universities for various part-time courses.

One of the major problems in this area of mature student access is the vast diversity of definitions and provisions that exist, even within the university sector of higher education. Not only is there no clear agreement on the definition of 'mature', in age or qualification, but each institution makes its own admission rules for mature applicants and each department has, formulated or unformulated, its own policy.

This is shown clearly in the paper by Liggett (1982), whose survey of admissions policies attempted to ascertain the flexibility shown to mature applicants. Using all the UK university prospectuses, plus questionnaires and correspondence, he demonstrates how confused and complex the picture is. What emerges is that there is very little consensus over the definition of, or provision for, mature applicants and a noticeable difference in the attitude of the various institutions towards unqualified adults. Apart from a very few specified institutions and schemes (eg Cardiff, East Anglia, the Joint Matriculation Board,) which offer advice and leaflets, the topic receives anything from "matures are welcome to apply" at best to no mention at all. Wise choices of both institution and subject are crucial, if mature applicants are to be successful but the available information is very sparse. Liggett argues that it is not a matter of lowering standards but of providing advice, although many adults may have no option but to apply to their nearest university.

A team from the University of Sheffield has been working on mature student access for some time and two papers by Roderick et al (1982a/b) survey the supply and demand of mature applicants by a comparison of 'success' rates derived from UCCA figures. They conclude also, that advice and wise choice are crucial. Looking at the demand rate, the acceptance rate and subject choice of applicants aged over 21, of both sexes and various age groups since 1974, their findings are not encouraging for would-be mature students. Even though the
actual number admitted has risen, the 'successful' proportion has declined and conventional age applicants still do proportionally better. However there are exceptions; in subject choice, sex and age groups. For example, older women do best, especially in subjects like social science. The choice of subject proved a crucial factor and many adults would need advice to maximise their chances, advice that is almost totally lacking. The authors conclude -

"Mature applicants have not generally been as successful in obtaining university places as have conventional students and though the number of mature applicants has increased every year, the proportion obtaining places has actually decreased. In what are likely to be difficult years ahead for universities, mature students may lose ground unless departments make a conscious decision to admit older students who, by virtue of their experience and post-school study, are able to cope with and benefit from degree level studies." (1982a)

As I have suggested earlier, one major discussion point with reference to mature applicants concerns the admissions criteria. The standard General Entrance Requirements (GER), essential for conventional age students, can be waived for matures, though some institutions insist on at least two A level passes before entry. The debate about the general suitability of GCE examinations for adults will be reviewed later in this chapter, but the question of alternative admissions criteria needs to be raised here.

Two major pieces of work on alternative admission policies have been produced by Evans (1983, 1984a). In his first report, "Curriculum opportunities - experiential learning and access", he examines the extent to which experiential learning is accepted and recognised as admission criteria.

Experiential learning can be defined as -

"... knowledge and skills acquired through life and work experience and study which are not formally attested through any educational or professional certification."

These may be presented in portfolio or profile form, and recognised officially or unofficially.
Table 5.7 'Unqualified' Mature Students in Higher Education
Numbers of entry 1980-81

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>under 21</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>26-39</th>
<th>Over 40</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Other UK Qualifications</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>113</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unidentified qualifications</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
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Open University: new undergraduates 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No formal qualifications</th>
<th>% of 14478 total</th>
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<tr>
<td>RSA/CSE</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>O levels</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CNAA figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Matures</th>
<th>% of all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First degree</td>
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<td>Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts/social science</td>
<td>1332</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and management</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Design</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Other courses               |         |
| DipHE                       | 589     |
| Certificate courses         | 52      |
| Total                       | 641     |

| Overall Total               |         |
|                            | 2614    |

BEC Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEC</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>General</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>16000</td>
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<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>825 (3.2%)</td>
<td>25500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>275 (2.8%)</td>
<td>9667</td>
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Source: Evans (1983)
Summary of CNAA student registration statistics for Non-Standard Entry

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<th>Institution</th>
<th>Total NS entry</th>
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<th>Business</th>
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<td>14</td>
<td>8 18 26</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Evans (1984)
Of the 493 institutions surveyed, not one had a recognised and stated policy on experiential learning, though many were positive in their attitudes. There were no examples of what Evans would call 'good practice'. In the absence of any clear statement, the admissions policy depended upon the attitudes and interpretations of departments and individual admissions tutors. This publication also provides a useful summary of the overall entry figures for mature students in a range of institutions and courses. (Table 5.7)

In his other report on admissions to CNAA courses (Evans 1984), he provides a profile of non-standard entry. (Table 5.8) This enables us to ascertain the number of 'unqualified' matures on non-university degree courses — a figure which it is very difficult to obtain from institutions for which, at present, no 'clearing house' system operates. Evans warns that the overall figure of 4.5% for unqualified mature students should be viewed with caution, particularly because it conceals the wide discrepancy between courses (e.g. CQSW courses show 32% but is a course which deliberately recruits mature people and recognises relevant experience as a 'qualification' for entry). Evans also gives the figures for DipHE courses which are particularly relevant as an access route, enabling students to continue or transfer on to a degree course at the end of the diploma.

Comparison between institutions is difficult because one course which recruits non-standard applicants may not reflect the overall attitude of the institution as a whole, and which may even have a very negative attitude. Certain courses can gain a reputation locally for welcoming non-standard applicants, thus encouraging still more to apply.

To my knowledge there has been only one study of prospective mature students who enquired but did not apply, other than from OU statistics, and, indeed for any single institution such a study would be very difficult to implement. However, the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) entrance procedure ensures that all prospective candidates must request a form, thus enabling Griffin and Smithers (1984) to follow up those who obtained a form but did not subsequently apply.

In 1980, 1217 forms were requested and 706 (58%) not returned. Of those not returning forms and successfully contacted, 243 replies
could be used. The reasons for not applying fell into ten categories -

(i) put off by procedure;
(ii) applied elsewhere;
(iii) financial problems;
(iv) put off by discouraging response;
(v) special course requirements not fulfilled;
(vi) already qualified therefore disqualified from scheme;
(vii) employment prospects changed;
(viii) took 'A' levels instead;
(ix) personal or domestic problems;
(x) preferred course unavailable, went elsewhere.

Of the 243, 25% did nothing further but of those who went on to follow alternatives, 28.8% obtained places elsewhere; 14.8% went for 'A' levels; 8.6% applied to the OU and only 2.5% failed to get a place and gave up. The authors suggest that the prospect of the JMB examination puts off all but the most confident but that subsequently, 40% of all the non-returners were either preparing for entry via 'A' levels or were working towards a degree in another institution. It may be that the original applicants were pursuing various alternatives anyway and finally chose not to use the JMB route. It would be most useful to know why the 25% did nothing further, given that they were willing to reply to the original follow-up enquiry.

In the past few years the question of unqualified entry has been tackled by providing a recognised preparatory course for those wishing to go on to higher education. These courses, usually, but not always, attached to the institution concerned, are frequently called 'access' courses and should not be confused with the more general 'bridging' courses such as 'Return to Study' or 'New Opportunities for Women'. The access courses under discussion here are those which are validated routes into higher education and designed specifically for this purpose, although obviously not all those taking them do continue.

The preparation and selection provided by Dip.HE courses is one example. Bremner and Wells (1983) claim that these can be very successful when designed specifically for the needs of mature unqualified students. Open College schemes, linking colleges of further education with various institutions of higher education,
now quite widely provided and perform a similar function. The qualifications they provide are recognised as alternative admissions criteria.

Direct access courses such as those at Sheffield University (Hedderwick and Mitchell 1985) and at Manchester University (Jones and Johnson 1983) suggest that this route can be important, not just in enabling more mature students to apply but in 'selecting' those who are subsequently successful. Such schemes not only serve as alternative admissions criteria, but also provide participants with an informal means of assessing their own potential as students, as well as preparing them with improved study skills. Similar courses are used in New Zealand (Davis 1984) and Australia (Smith 1977; Barrett and Powell 1980).

The success of these preparatory courses goes some way to allaying the fears of those who are unwilling to accept students without recognised qualifications, that lowering the standard of access will lead to lowered standards of degree performance. This is based on the underlying assumption that the General Entrance Requirements (GER) of a certain number of GCE 'A' level passes should be the standard entry to degree studies and that any alternative is somehow inferior or at least questionable. If it were known that 'A' level performance was an excellent predictor of degree potential, then this caution might be justified. Admitting non-standard entrants might be challenged as 'taking a risk' that denies a place to a GER candidate. In a critical and highly competitive era, when some higher education institutions are struggling for survival, such a concern is understandable if not actually justifiable. However, predictions based on 'A' level performance are not accurate, especially for adult candidates. In addition to this, some institutions and departments are engaged in a 'league' table to see who can score the highest 'points' from the grades of their entrants. Mature students with lower, fewer or no 'A' levels become a liability. This situation has recently been remedied by a directive from the Committee of Principals and Vice-Chancellors (CVCP) that applicants over the age of 21 should not be included in such figures.

However, to reinforce the case for admitting adults to universities, it becomes important to review the evidence which compares the
performance of unqualified mature students with those of the conventional 18-plus age and GER qualifications.

The performance of mature students.

In this section I shall consider several studies of mature students, both women and men, at universities in the United Kingdom; in a later section I shall review the studies that concentrate on women students only.

Interest in the potential of mature students goes back many years, although in this survey I shall concentrate only on studies of the past twenty years. Nisbet and Welch (1972) looked at the attainments of mature students admitted to Aberdeen University between 1965 and 1967. The drawback of the study for my purpose is that it does not give any indication of the sex of the student or the subjects they were studying, except that all the sample were arts or science students, consisting of 146 men and 34 women. Overall, the authors conclude that the mature students did as well as those of conventional age in terms of withdrawal and final degree result. They note that the mature students seem to come from similar backgrounds to the younger students and had probably done reasonably well at school, although not well enough to have qualified for university entrance on leaving. A surprising finding was that one third, of both men and women, had done no study between school and university, and since some must have left school with qualifications below that of normal entrance requirements, the university were still willing to accept them. The criteria for acceptance were not discussed. Nisbet and Welch note that the main motive in applying was 'dissatisfaction with job' but we do not know how this applied to the women in the sample.

Despite conflicting evidence from the earlier reports he cites, Walker (1975) concludes his study of mature students at Warwick University (admissions 1966-71) with the finding that there is no difference in wastage between mature and younger students and that matures obtained better degree results, with the best results in the 26-30 age group. In the period concerned, 231 mature students completed their degrees, (192 men and 39 women), and there was no significant difference between the sexes. Only 37 (16%) were over the age of 30, though the average age of the women was slightly higher than that of the men. The
most popular subjects were philosophy, politics and sociology.

Walker's paper contains very useful details about the entry qualifications of his sample. A total of 125 (54%) students were admitted without fulfilling the General Entrance Requirements (GER), and, although some of the non-GER entrants appear to have held two or more 'A' levels, they were in the wrong combination to be considered as 'qualified' applicants. Overall, mature students without GER did significantly better than those matures with GER, whose results were very similar to the younger students. From this study it would appear that 'unqualified' applicants were correctly selected and could perform better than those with accepted certification.

The study by Roderick and Bell (1981) concerns the achievements of older unqualified students at Sheffield University, admitted under the JMB scheme. Admissions for 1975-77 were considered, consisting of a total of 62 students. They give no indication of sex, but the majority were in Social Science or Arts departments. Of the 62 originally accepted, 16 did not start the course; 9 withdrew during it; 5 failed or did not complete their degree; and only 31 obtained a classification. Of these, 7 achieved good passes (1 or 2/1) and 20 got 2/2s. In contrast to Walker's sample, these unqualified mature students did worse than the qualified matures at the same university and worse than their younger counterparts.

Roderick and Bell go on to compare their Sheffield results with those of unqualified mature students at four other universities in the JMB scheme, although the numbers and details vary considerably. The overall results confirm the Sheffield findings that unqualified matures have problems completing the course and do not do particularly well. Unfortunately, there is no comparison with universities outside the scheme, so that no conclusion can be made about the efficiency of the admissions procedure itself.

However a wider view of the subject is taken in another paper from Sheffield (Roderick, Bell and Hamilton 1982), which includes material from the paper discussed above, as well as more general data. They explore more fully the numbers and the attainment of unqualified mature students at most British universities. Such data is difficult to collect on a large scale because the age of the 'mature'
classification varies, the definition of 'unqualified' is imprecise, the statistics which differentiate between qualified and unqualified are not always available and universities vary in the way they select their unqualified intake. Nevertheless, the paper includes data on 359 mature students at 17 institutions. From this the authors conclude that unqualified matures do not perform as well as either qualified matures or conventional age students and that a proportion as high as 35% either fail or withdraw.

Such findings are not likely to encourage universities to admit unqualified applicants, especially at a time when competition for places is severe. It is particularly damaging when we do not know anything about the age or sex of the unsuccessful students, or the distribution of the failures between various institutions and departments. It could be that some methods of selecting mature students are more accurate, in terms of predicting success, than others or that some institutions provide better facilities for such students and thus prevent possible failure.

In the final part of their paper Roderick et al review some of the alternative preparatory courses available for unqualified adults wishing to apply to university. Although they claim it was too early at the time of writing to assess the attainment of unqualified matures after taking such courses, the authors suggest that mature students generally might be wiser to prepare for university in this way, rather than by gaining 'A' levels, which put them into direct competition with conventional applicants. No mention is made of Open University (OU) credits as entry qualifications, except to note that some universities are now listing OU courses as acceptable alternative qualifications for mature applicants.

The most recent survey of mature students at a single institution is by Lucas and Ward (1985), of 354 entrants, age 23 plus, over three years at Lancaster University. There is an unusually high proportion of mature students at Lancaster (about 10%), which reflects their positive attitude towards mature applicants, some of whom use the Open College access route.

Comparisons with normal age students were made at the end of Part I of the course (ie after one year) and at the end of Part II (end of third
Table 5.9

Analysis of the degree performance of mature students admitted to the University of Lancaster, 1978-1980

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<th>Year</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>O’</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>P/A</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Fail</th>
<th>%</th>
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**Notes:**
1. M = mature (i.e. 23 years and over on entry)
2. O’ = other (i.e. all other entrants)
3. Over these three years, 56.7% of mature students obtained 1st or 2i degrees compared with 32.3% of 'other' students.

Source: Lucas and Ward (1985)

Table 5.10

Analysis of mature student entrants to the University of Lancaster by age group, sex and entry qualifications, 1978-1980

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<th>Age Group</th>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>Open University</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>35-39</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Open College and other 'access' courses</td>
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<td>40+</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>CCE/Marieth, Fircroft, etc.</td>
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<td>ONC/SCVTEC, etc.</td>
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<td>Other qualifications (including combinations of the above qualifications)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</table>

| TOTALS | M | 78 | 38 | 54 | 51 | 47 | 31 | 18 | 15 | 10 | 22 | 27 | 77 | 354 |
|        | F | 72 | 56 | 34 | 31 | 26 | 22 | 16 | 15 | 10 | 19 | 20 | 39 | 174 |
|        | (%) | 8.7% | 24.1% | 22.1% | 9.3% | 11.6% |

Source: Lucas and Ward (1985)
and final year). On both occasions mature students gained higher marks than normal age students, although there were variations by subject, sex and age. An overall summary of the results is shown in Table 5.9. Although mature students may be marginally more likely to drop out for personal or non-academic reasons, they –

"... were found to be at least twice as likely to achieve first class or upper second class honours degrees and were only half as likely as the normal age entrants to gain third or pass degrees. In the three years on which the research was based, 57% of mature students obtained a first or upper second class degree, compared with 33% of their younger contemporaries. There were few failures, with the younger students being three times as likely to be placed in this category."

Although mature men gained the highest percentage of first class degrees, when results for first and second were combined, they included 95% of all mature women, 85% of all mature men. Thus the authors conclude –

"It would seem therefore, that admission tutors need have no worries about the perceived difficulties (such as family responsibilities) of mature women applicants."

Lucas and Ward also include a breakdown of the entry qualifications of all the mature students in their sample. (Table 5.10) Although the numbers were too small to compare the performance of particular access routes, the specially designed access courses are being monitored by them. A large scale report is currently being prepared by Pillings.

If large scale reports of access are now providing useful information about mature students, then large scale surveys of performance, such as that by Woodley (1984) reflect an encouraging trend. Using extensive figures from the Universities Statistical Record (USR), he followed the 1972, 1973 and 1974 intakes of all UK universities, resulting in a sample of 165,400 conventional age entrants (age under 21 on admission) and 18,343 mature age (over 21) students.

Performance was measured in two ways:
(i) Overall progress - successful (graduated or still studying); failed (academic failure); or withdrawn (for non-academic reasons).

(ii) Degree performance - first or upper second; other class of degree.

In terms of any analysis of entry criteria, the USR classifications conceal potentially significant variables. Non-GER applicants are sub-divided into three categories - ONC/HNC; other UK qualifications; and foreign qualifications. Thus 'other UK qualifications' can range from none at all to other higher education qualifications, such as a teaching certificate.

Woodley's findings on the performance of mature students are summarised thus:

1. Mature students are slightly more likely to leave university without a degree.

2. Mature students are just as likely to gain a first or upper second:
   a) mature women students tended to gain a better degree than younger women but mature men were slightly less successful than younger men.
   b) In arts and social science, mature students gained better degrees than younger students but in science the reverse was true.
   c) mature students with foreign entry qualifications were more successful than younger students with similar qualifications. Those with 'other UK qualifications' fared slightly worse than their younger counterparts. In the other qualification groups, the degree performance of mature students closely matched that of younger students."

From this Woodley concludes -

"In terms of policy-making the present findings would suggest that universities should have few qualms about increasing their mature student intake. As a group they perform as well as younger students, and women and those aged twenty-six to thirty are particularly successful."
The only question unanswered is whether unqualified mature applicants could be accepted in greater numbers without lowering these overall standards.

Providing evidence that the admission of mature students to higher education is not likely to lower standards, indeed possibly the opposite, is only one part of the debate. Even if mature students do as well or even better than younger students, some staff in institutions of higher education are wary of admitting mature students in case they do not 'fit in' or are more demanding in terms of needing extra attention or time. Their good results may conceal the amount of extra help they need. There are a few studies that look at the experience of mature students in higher education and assess their particular problems. Most conclude that they make very few extra demands on the system, although an awareness of their particular problems by staff is always useful.

One early study (Cleugh 1972) looked at the experiences of a group of teachers on secondment to a course at the London Institute of Education. He found that their sources of strain concerned finance, family and other responsibilities, physical fatigue and fear of inadequacy. Most of the students had found ways of coping with the stress, although married women were thought to be under a particular strain.

"A wife particularly is very much at the mercy of conflicting claims, and one could almost go so far as to say that she would be unwise to embark on a course if she knows beforehand that her husband is not fully in accord with her plans and prepared to do his share of the extra work."

Although this comment is only the view of the author, the implications are far more serious and still form the underlying assumptions about women mature students. That these potential problems also affect men mature students is rarely recorded - they, too, have to be able to cope; need support and encouragement from their spouse; have to realise that other responsibilities will need to be reallocated etc. The assumption is that women may only take on a course (or indeed go out to work), if they can manage to organise these things and fulfil all their other responsibilities; men can do it anyway and others around
them just have to cope.

Smith (1983) looked at the learning difficulties of part-time students and found that they stemmed from a lack of time, lack of assurance on progress, or choice of a too difficult or irrelevant course. He suggests that the main solution might be to concentrate more on pacing – that adults may need more study time than younger students, though whether this is due to slower processing, more outside commitments or more conscientious application is not clear. In my experience, adult students are so anxious to do well that they try to do everything that is suggested or recommended, so that they can be sure that they are up to standard.

Adults may well need to be taught how to study more effectively in the time they have available, by being more selective in the tasks they set themselves. One of the advantages of the access courses, such as that described by Bremner and Wells (1983), is that sessions on counselling and study skills can be incorporated, to increase confidence and better prepare mature students before they embark on their degree course. Some would argue that most conventional aged students would benefit from such provision as well.

Elsey (1982) reports on a study of mature students at Nottingham University. Though based on a very small sample of interviews (eleven men and six women), he identifies the need for support facilities and help with relationships, as well as study. However, he concludes that, whilst individual arrangements may be necessary, no major change in the system is needed or extra facility demanded.

Whilst admitting more mature students may call for greater flexibility and recognition of problems peculiar to their age, the prevailing attitude in most institutions seems to be that they are welcome, if they fit in and make no extra demands. This contrasts quite markedly with attitudes in the United States, Australia and New Zealand, where there are more mature and part-time students and specific facilities are provided. The very detailed paper by Knight and McDonald (1982) is just one of many that explores the study programmes and strategies needed to assist matures. These authors end by suggesting that the problems might not all lie with the students and that the system could well benefit from the additional challenge of older students.
In the ACACE paper by Hoggart et al (1983) the list of propositions included in their report provide a very useful summary of current thinking on adults and higher education, at least for those who advocate more open access. Their points also reinforce the concept of 'continuing education' as discussed in the previous section.

"Our argument and the changes we propose are stated under the following propositions:

1.1 An adequate approach to continuing education requires a shift in focus from the institution to the student.

1.2 An educational system adequate to the needs of continuing education will be, above all, open to student needs. The student will have adequate purchasing power and adequate guidance.

1.3 The higher education system has provided some continuing education for more than a century; but opportunities for development have been missed. The main obstacle is in attitudes.

1.4 There are large disparities in the resources allocated to full-time and part-time students and, in the part-time sector, between vocational and non-vocational study.

1.5 Rapid technological development both demands regular updating and creates more leisure. These are the two 'main' grounds for transferring resources to continuing or post-initial education.

1.6 The use of continuing education to remedy earlier educational disadvantages is less acknowledged than its use in providing advanced further training.

2.1 Continuing education caters for all adults undertaking formal or non-formal study, full or part-time, at any level and at any time after the completion of, and after a break from, their initial education at, and immediately following, school.

2.2 Staff attitudes are too much dominated by the 'front-end model' of education.

2.3 Historically, academic drift has often led to (i) a reduction in provision and status of part-time and preparatory lower-level work; (ii) excessive concentration on 18-plus full-time students.

2.4 Expansion in the 1960s was a missed opportunity.

2.5 There is every reason to suppose that there is a substantial latent demand.

1.6 Part-time study is a main key to new developments in higher education.
3.1 The type of higher education normally available during the day should also be provided during evenings and weekends.

3.2 Every community with reasonable access to an institution of higher education should have its own centre suitably equipped for use by adult students. Such provision will have both professional and academic implications for staff.

3.3 There is a need for greater co-operation between educational and other institutions in the provision of continuing education.

3.4 Contracts for new academic staff should be broadly based and include a formal commitment to continuing education.

3.5 The professional development of teachers should include training for work with students in continuing education.

3.6 Curricula should be more flexible, so as to suit adult needs.

3.7 Teachers must be receptive to new teaching methods.

3.8 A great range of acceptable selection criteria, such as experiential credits, should be explored.

3.9 Wider acceptance of modular courses and credit transfer is needed.

3.10 There should be financial provision for a universal entitlement to continuing education.

3.11 Research is needed on which to base changes in continuing education.

4.1 Recent initiatives reinforce the case for wider and more flexible access.

4.2 Recent developments give evidence of the need for local information and advisory services.

4.3 There have been some, but only a few studies of who adult students are.

4.4 Problems of financial support for adult students are still insufficiently considered.

4.5 Overall trends suggest there is growing recognition of the case for expanding continuing education.

Other provision for adults.

In this section I want to look at the other institutions and courses that are concerned with the education of adults. The coverage will be wide, though brief, since these areas are peripheral to the main study. However, this coverage is relevant for several reasons:
a) the educational opportunities discussed here provide one route for re-entry taken by some women in my sample;
b) these courses provide alternative routes which could have been used and thus represent the wide variety of re-entry routes available;
c) the wide range of possible routes provides a comment on the diverse yet disjointed provision of education for adults.

Whilst the wide range in existence provides a number of flexible alternatives, it also presents confusing choices for those who are unfamiliar with the full significance of the options.

In this section I shall be reviewing those options that are generally available for adults, both men and women, but I shall concentrate particularly on women's use of them. Some courses, whilst officially open to both sexes, are primarily designed for the needs of women. The following list summarises the options available:

1. GCE '0' and 'A' level courses: in LEA establishments, both full-time and part-time; in schools and community colleges, alongside younger pupils.

2. Bridging courses: such as Fresh Horizons, Return to Study, Second Chance and New Opportunities for Women, plus the various 'Open College' schemes.

3. Extra-Mural and WEA classes: both those with no 'qualification' on completion and those leading to diplomas and certificates.

4. The Open University: undergraduate, associate and community education courses.

5. Colleges designated specifically for adults: both residential (eg Ruskin, Hillcroft) and non-residential (eg Birkbeck).

6. Vocational courses: Wider Opportunities for Women and other mature students' training schemes; Women into Technology schemes; Women's Training Centres.
Not included in this list are those 'leisure' courses provided by LEAs and other bodies or weekend and summer schools, where emphasis is on practical and recreational activities. Although these constitute a major part of what is customary called 'Adult Education' and their importance should be noted, their relevance for this study is minimal.

1. Adult students and the General Certificate of Education.

This is a topic of considerable importance for adults, especially for those who hope to continue into higher education. The validity of GCE examinations as selection criteria and their usefulness as preparation for degree courses has been debated for some time and has already been discussed in the section on access.

Although the Russell Report (1973) advocated the continued development of alternative qualifications for adults, very little has been done in this field. One or two examination boards do offer 'alternative' O/A level examinations and an 'English for Adults' special syllabus has been used, but the majority of adults who want a recognised qualification continue to take the same examinations as the younger students. Some providers have instituted special classes for adults only but the students attending such courses take the same examination as the younger candidates.

This is an issue which was covered quite fully in Hutchinson and Hutchinson (1978). As their book is concerned primarily with the development of one of the first of the institutional initiatives, Fresh Horizons at the City Lit, it is not surprising that they are critical of the "GCE route march". As Fresh Horizons and other access courses became more widely known, admissions tutors in some institutions of higher education were more willing to accept their students, even with no GCE qualifications. Against GCE the Hutchinsons raise the standard criticism that a syllabus and examination designed for school pupils is not suitable for adults. In addition, it takes a considerable length of time for an adult to acquire the minimum required for GER. They also reject the idea that boards should implement alternative syllabuses for adults and argue for a more open and flexible admissions policy for adult applicants. But
until the universities demonstrate their willingness to accept alternative qualifications or experiential credits of some sort, many mature students aiming for higher education will choose the GCE route. In many areas no alternative course is available and GCE may be still the only option. It has the advantage that it is well known, parents may be familiar with its requirements through their children's work and it leads to a qualification that is widely accepted.

The need for a variety of re-entry options and alternative qualifications seems to be at the root of the debate initiated by Butler (1981) and responded to by Fieldhouse (1981). In her paper, Butler argued, from evidence collected from adults who were taking GCE courses, that we should be wary of replacing them with alternatives without taking due recognition of their value. For those continuing into higher education as well as for those wanting a recognised objective, she argues that GCE serves a useful purpose. She suggests, not surprisingly, that those taking such courses are generally satisfied with them and would not consider an alternative. Indeed the demand for GCE by adults is high - in 1979 65,242 candidates over 21 took a subject with the Associated Examinations Board, and there are eight boards altogether.

Fieldhouse (1981) challenges her conclusions because, again not surprisingly, students on an alternative access course did not see GCE as an attractive alternative. Which, as Butler again replies, only reinforces the need for a pluralist approach and a wide variety of courses offering different options to adult students. As the Hutchinsons pointed out -

"Those who followed the GCE route have followed an obvious and accessible way rather than specified a demand for a preferable alternative."

I do not find it surprising that students committed to gaining qualifications, or those accepted for higher education through having achieved their GCEs, should feel satisfied that they took the best route and are not likely to demand an alternative. Using the term 'route' or 'route march', as Hutchinson does, reinforces the arduous and lengthy nature of the process. Whilst recognising that it can be
both arduous and lengthy for some students, I prefer the concept of a 'ladder' leading upwards, since that is implicit in our educational system, where 'O' levels lead on to 'A' levels, which lead on to further or higher education. The term 'ladder' implies both achievement and progress, increasing confidence and raising ambition. But whatever term is used, adults are likely to go on taking GCEs for as long as the system remains unchanged, although the proposed GCSE may raise problems for adults.

Peach (1984) stresses the need for adults enrolling on GCE courses to be given clear advice and pointed to alternatives, if these are more suitable. GCE classes provided for adults are better taught by those who realise their different needs and not just taken by traditional 'school teachers'.

Nashashibibi (1980) argues that 'O' level English courses can be adapted for use with adults, if the tutor is sensitive to their needs. She suggests that it is good subject for re-entry, in that it provides essential skills for further study and that taking and passing an examination increases confidence, in preparation for more advanced courses. This is certainly supported by evidence from my undergraduate study, where 'O' level English and Sociology were the most common re-entry points.

One arrangement in some authorities that has attracted much interest but as yet has not spread widely, is the opportunity for adult students to study for GCE examinations alongside school pupils in their normal day-time classes. This idea, pioneered with the concept of 'community colleges' has been documented by Fairbairn (1978) and Hughes (1977), among others. In his review of the scheme, Fairbairn writes -

"There has also been a marked increase in the number of adults joining day-time GCE and non-vocational classes alongside VIth form pupils and in recognition of this, the Authority has provided a compensatory scheme so that the school pupil/teacher ratio does not deteriorate."

As Hughes' study of one particular community college in the early days of the scheme reports, this day-time provision attracts mainly women,
since only retired or unemployed men would be able to attend regularly. For this reason, most community colleges provide creche facilities.

The main advantage of this scheme is that a wide variety of subjects can be offered; in theory all the school's GCE options could be open to adults, even though only one or two may wish to participate. This contrasts with evening classes which can only be provided if there are sufficient numbers for each subject and therefore, only the 'popular' subjects are available. There are one or two important considerations, as Hughes reports. The admission of adults depends on the availability of resources (eg in science); on the previous standard of the adult student (eg in languages); and ultimately, on the co-operation of the teaching staff. However, with the concept of a community college now established, staff are appointed with this in mind. Indeed there is evidence to suggest that the arrangement can benefit not only the adult student, but the teacher and the class pupils as well. Participants in the scheme talk of the younger students' amazement and admiration for adults who choose to come back to school, a lesson which might well have long term benefits in the future.

The main disadvantage as far as the adult students are concerned is that they have to fit into the standard school timetable, so that although it maybe convenient for women with school age children, it can mean attending single or double periods on several days of the week.

Even in times of economic restraint, such an arrangement requires relatively little extra finance if space is available, especially since the adult students actually pay for the privilege of being taught and being allowed to take examinations.

A community tutor in one college carried out a survey of the participants in classes, courses and clubs affiliated to it (Worcester 1982). In 'cultural subjects', which included GCE classes, women outnumbered men, except in maths and, as expected, the day-time students were overwhelmingly female. Of the total of 18 plus participants in the year studied, there were 553 women and 304 men. Worcester describes most of the women as 'middle-class', but it should
be noted that this particular community college serves a highly selected population. It is sited in a very prosperous village and students attending from the surrounding area would have to be car owners.

One of the main items for debate and for considerable concern at the moment, is the immediate effect of the current economic situation on adult education classes, especially those provided by LEAs. One of the effects of the cuts in spending is to make such classes self-financing, by raising fees and ruthlessly applying the minimum numbers rule. Not only does this deter those who cannot afford the higher fees, but it will also limit choices, since only the most popular classes will survive. Small day-time classes with creches are probably the most vulnerable. Daines et al (1982) in a survey of participation changes in one area, report a reduction in classes, closing of centres, less publicity and lower expenses for tutors. This has resulted in less choice, more travelling and the disappearance of disadvantaged groups. As discussed earlier, the weakness of the 'market approach' is that those who might most benefit from educational opportunities will be the least likely to take advantage of them. But one other result will be that the GCE options available for adults become considerably reduced.

Meanwhile, some GCE classes will remain available for those who wish to resume their education in that way, provided that they are able to afford them.

2. Bridging courses, new initiatives and access routes.

Since the emphasis of this study is on women using traditional routes to return to education, a detailed examination of alternative provisions is not intended. However, these courses do provide an alternative route for those who do not wish to return straight into the traditional system. It is interesting that not one of my undergraduate sample had attended any of these alternatives, apart from those who transferred from the Open University. It may be that these initiatives are too new in this particular geographical area or that the university concerned preferred to accept applicants with the more traditional qualifications.
During the decade 1970-80 a number of new initiatives were implemented which were aimed specifically at women, such as New Opportunities for Women (NOW) courses. Most were offered during the day time, with a creche, so that, although they were technically open to both sexes, they attracted principally, though not exclusively, women with young children. There were basically three types of course, although the content varied and often overlapped. The Return to Study courses, like the higher education access courses discussed earlier, are open to all. These courses have a direct educational input and are designed for all those who wish to acquire or improve their study skills before continuing into further or higher education. Many students go on to Open University study, as well as conventional institutions of higher education.

New Opportunities for Women (NOW) and Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) courses offer a wide range of experiences and information to those women who want to broaden their horizons and discover what opportunities are available. The difference between them is that WOW courses, often funded by the Manpower Services Commission, were originally conceived for those women who definitely were ready to return to work, as opposed to education. These courses will be discussed more fully in the next section on women's education, since they form one of the major innovations directed specifically to the needs of women.

However, 'bridging' courses like these, together with 'O' and 'A' levels, Open College and 'Flexi-study' courses form a relatively new but now quite widely available route for would-be returners. There is some evidence that alternative 'access' provision is increasing. (cf Appendix II)

3. Extra-mural and WEA provision.

Many 'bridging courses' are provided by University Extra-mural (Adult or Continuing Education) Departments and/or the Workers Educational Association, so they can easily be identified as possible re-entry routes. However the main part of Extra-mural and WEA provision is in the form of tutorial or short course form, leading to no specific
qualification and offering no advice or information about further courses, other than a descriptive list of what is provided by that particular institution or in the geographical area concerned. Indeed, many students who attend such courses are interested only in another similar course for the following session.

One of the problems for both students and for those surveying the provision, is that the range of courses offered by such institutions and 'responsible bodies' is very wide and differs markedly from place to place. Very few systematic or large scale studies of students attending such courses have been carried out and very few comprehensive surveys of what is provided are available.

One exceptional case is the University of London survey reported by Whitaker (1984) of 1416 students attending 145 extra-mural classes. The typical student on the short course appears to be the middle-aged woman, who has attended a course before and whose motive in attending is to 'widen interests', to 'find out more' or 'for pleasure'. Younger men, with work related interests, attend the longer certificate courses. Retired women and housewives predominate, but they do not appear to be the already well-educated who are always presumed to be the main recipients of adult education. According to this study, the majority of women students completed their education before 16 years of age, thus suggesting an undetected compensatory element. It could be that some of these women feel they are too old to wish for further education, other than these courses, but there could be a number of possible 'returners' concealed among the housewives. It could be that these women who were early school leavers, have become upwardly mobile though marriage. In attending such classes they may be adding to their limited educational experience, whilst appearing part of the more privileged middle class.

4. The Open University.

The ongoing debate about the social background of adults participating in education and the complaint that most students come from the already educationally privileged middle-class, has been levelled particularly at the Open University. It has been accused, for example,
of mainly providing opportunities for those with some further or higher qualifications, such as teachers, to improve them to degree level. In terms of providing a 'second chance' it can be said to have succeeded but it has not appealed in proportional numbers to those who had no 'first chance', ie to those in socially disadvantaged groups, to those in unskilled and manual jobs. The OU does not appear to have recruited the numbers of working-class applicants that it had hoped. However, investigations into the social-class origin of its students reveals a different picture and, in terms of working class parent figures, it rates more highly than any other university (McIntosh 1978).

What the OU has shown beyond doubt is that there is a massive unmet demand by adults for higher education. Every year applications for places have been greater than those available and this continues to be the case. Large numbers of women have been able to benefit from its existence; over 40% of its students are women and over 14,000 women have already graduated. Undoubtedly the part-time and flexible nature of the system has been a major attraction, both to women in paid work as well as to those with family commitments at home. McIntosh (1979) and Griffiths (1980) give an overall view of the OU and the performance of women. Despite the problem of combining home, family, possibly work and study commitments, the women who persist do very well; on average better than the men, even though they may take longer to gain degrees.

But besides the awarding of degrees, the OU performs other functions in adult and continuing education. Its programme offers adults the opportunity to take single courses - for personal interest, to update professional knowledge or to test out their ability to study by this method. Its other re-entry role is to provide an opportunity for students to obtain credits, which then enable them to transfer to other institutions of higher education. There is considerable evidence, although figures are not available, to suggest that many university departments accept full-time mature students on the basis of their OU credits and in preference to 'A' levels. Thus the OU can provide an access route and preparatory experience, but mainly for those who can move from part-time to full-time study.

Among other benefits that the OU has had on adult education, it has provided a wide range of materials in various media forms which can be
purchased and used in other contexts; it has pioneered the idea and practice of distance teaching and yet retained the traditional group tutorial where possible; it has shown that adults from various backgrounds and without formal qualifications, can engage in serious study and can reach high standards of attainment.

From the vast amount of literature about the OU, the overall message is well summarised by Molyneaux (1979).

"Certainly the debate on alternative educational strategies is much enhanced by the presence and experience of the OU. Its creation was a political act of faith as much as a radical experiment in the extension of existing opportunities, a belief in the potential of continuing education at university level. The lessons from it may well run deeper so far as alternative educational facilities in Britain are concerned."

5. Re-entry to vocational training.

As discussed in an earlier section, there has long been a debate in adult education about the distinction between 'education' as such and 'training'; whether courses can usefully be classified as 'non-vocational or 'vocational'. The issue is further complicated in the case of women for whom paid work, and hence 'vocational' aspects, may be of little concern for part of their lives. Are domestic subjects therefore, 'non-vocational' and not connected with work, or are courses in homemaking more accurately described as 'training'? Another anomaly arises with classes for GCE subjects, which can lead on to higher education courses with a vocational component (eg teaching, social work, library studies). Or at another level, are WOW type courses, which must be orientated towards paid work, not also educational?

This kind of confusion is not just of academic interest but relates directly to the classification, and therefore funding, of courses and to the fees, grants or payment available for the students. The reason for raising this debate here, is not to provide a workable definition but to signal the confusion that exists for those seeking a re-entry route. So called training courses can provide a genuine opportunity
for women, not just to return to work but also to discover what other options, including educational options, are available. Many women who take WOW courses, or who took the now discontinued TOPS courses, did proceed to further or higher education, rather than directly into paid work. The experience of the course may have opened up options previously unrealised.

A concise survey and comment on vocational courses is provided by Blunden (1984) and a detailed evaluation of the first WOW courses by Fairbairns (1977). The latter stresses the need for women applying for such courses to be given advice and counselling and to be re-directed to other more suitable courses where necessary.

In recent years, a whole range of Women's Training Schemes have been set up (eg in Nottingham, Leeds, London), mainly assisted by funding from the European Social Fund. These are intended to provide re-entry openings for women into non-traditional spheres, but the experiences of those running these courses suggest that their function may also be educational and developmental, in a wider sense.

At a different level, there are now many well-documented courses in higher education that have a vocational bias, such as the Women into Technology scheme (Swarbrick 1984), for which bursaries from the MSC are available. The Open University has taken special initiatives in this area to encourage women to return to or to enter technological fields (Bruce and Kirkup 1985).

Conclusion.

The only aspect of adult education, and particularly re-entry to education, that has not been covered in this section is possibly the most important of all and that is the provision of advice, information, guidance and counselling for all those adults who wish to re-enter or who are unsure what direction to take. Schemes such as EGSA (Butler 1984) and ECCTIS (the OU computerised system) are comparatively recent, though the current rate of unemployment has caused more resources to be channelled into information and advice work generally (eg the MSC TAPS scheme).

Whilst the diversity of educational provision for adults offers choice
and flexibility, that same diversity causes complexity and confusion. A few good books do exist and many individual institutions do offer advice, but the provision is patchy and potential re-entrants need both persistence and confidence before they start. It is not surprising that most of the women in my sample had no preconceived plan and proceeded from stage to stage without a clear objective and without professional advice.

The length of time taken by admissions procedures, especially UCCA and the OU, necessitates forward planning, though only those inside the system may be aware of this. For women, the Women Returner's Network publication may be one solution, if it is made widely available and updated. An account of research carried out by me for this publication is appended to this study (Appendix II). Encouragingly, despite the complexity and lack of comprehensive information, many adults, particularly women, are continuing to re-enter education, using all the various alternatives available.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION: A DISCUSSION OF POLICY

The debates covered in the previous section and the examination of the practice of adult education have focussed mainly on the education of adults of both sexes, with only passing reference to the specific experiences of women where relevant. Indeed, it is impossible to discuss the education of women without some reference to the wider field of adult education as a whole. However, the overriding concerns of this study are the educational opportunities available specifically for women, based on the underlying premise that the educational and life experiences of women differ from those of men. The final section of this chapter, therefore, concerns women and education - the current debates about women's education, their experiences in traditional institutions as well as the specific initiatives that have focused on their needs.

In the debate on recurrent education discussed earlier, Schade (1972) was quick to realise the crucial importance of the concept to women. Faced with the changing social patterns of family life and women's greater involvement in paid work, the idea of continuing or recurrent education offered a real opportunity for women who wish to return
after their child rearing break. But the needs of women for education have remained marginal, both in status and provision, and no coherent or comprehensive policy has been implemented. In the introduction to the 1985 World Yearbook of Education which concentrated on Women and Education, Margarry (1984) listed the problems as under-participation, under-achievement and under-representation. She suggested that traditional concepts of gender had persisted, so that the education of women was still considered marginal, despite a considerable number of worldwide initiatives and case studies reviewed in the yearbook.

As with the education of girls, it was the 1970s that saw the emergence of both concern and campaigns about the performance and potential of women. But, not surprisingly, given the peripheral nature of adult education as a whole, it was 1980 before any wider recognition of women and education emerged. Reviewing the position in 1980 Gray and Hughes wrote -

"And yet there is one great area of provision, where needs cry out and are unmet, where provision is sparse and sporadic, where even recognition that there is a need is not only lacking but even resisted. This is the area of women's education."

Adult education, they claim, has not looked further than the traditional domestic and titillative courses, not noticing that a major social change has occurred.

"Half the world's population now stands on the threshold of a full life after countless generations of subservience that has often bordered on slavery, inferior status that has frequently been exploitation, and low esteem that has gone hand in hand with a chronic lack of confidence. Half the world's resources of human talent and skill is now pressing for full realisation. Half the world's people are now available to fill many roles previously occupied by the other half, and to develop many new roles. And the other half has an urgent need to re-orientate itself in preparation for the changes that are coming."

As well as new skills, they argue that women will need increased confidence to meet these changes, confidence to emerge, to know that they have qualities to succeed, to know how to make mistakes;
confidence to expect that acceptance will be made. This need can be met by education in two ways.

"Continuing education for adult women has to be both a compensatory and an equalising force. ... first, ... to provide women with the opportunities to discover and come to terms with themselves as individuals ... second ... to help examine the position of women from a wider political perspective, focussing on the relationship of women as a group with society in general."

- but the problem, as yet, has been unrecognised -

"The fact remains that in Britain there is little understanding and recognition of the size of the problem, how extensive are the unmet educational needs of women. We believe that each sector of education faces a challenge to its efficiency and its humanity: the education of girls in schools and colleges, opportunities for women in higher education, provision for mature entrants or re-entrants to education ... - all these are pressing problems."

On a wider scale, Hootsman (1980) was also making the demand known. Writing in a European journal, she claims -

"Adult education is begining to realize that although for years its participants have been predominantly female, the courses and programs have not adequately met women's needs and aspirations."

She argues that there is a need for the educational system to give credit for child rearing time and to recognise that women's responsibilities lie elsewhere but -

"The main issues being addressed at present include ones clustering around the current emphasis on the most disadvantaged groups: women who were unable to complete secondary or even elementary school, and those who have not been able to get any kind of supplementary training and education that even approaches the goal of 'equality of opportunity."

Programmes are needed that give women strength, self-confidence and qualifications. To facilitate learning, women need to overcome the
initial barrier of a self-image, based on inadequate early education and years of unrecognised, undervalued tasks.

"Despite the competencies learned in child rearing and home management, most women return to the labour market or to further study with a sense of fear and trembling. Their former education has been either inadequate or untested or even outdated by technological and economic changes."

Hootsman lists and discusses five types of programme needed for women re-entering working life, both educationally and vocationally orientated –

1. courses stressing social-cultural orientation;

2. courses leading to qualifications or diplomas at the secondary school or university level;

3. courses for (re)entry to work or study, often called 'threshold' programs;

4. vocational training, especially in non-traditional fields;

5. management and leadership training.

Looking back on the British pattern, what appears most striking is that all five of the types of programme have already been provided, if on a very limited scale, but no overall integration can be seen between these programmes. Women must just hope to discover the type of course that meets their particular need; there is little advice available or progression between programmes.

Several papers presented at the Women and Adult Education Conference (1984) suggest that debates about women's education may have taken a more radical turn. McIntosh (1984) describes the three facets of women's education as requiring –

i) more women on existing courses
ii) more courses about women – as a challenge to male knowledge

iii) more courses for women – re-entry courses for building confidence and acquiring skills.

Spender (1984) in her paper described education as being in the control of white middle-class males and designed for white middle-class males. This challenge to the male-dominated education system is taken up by Thompson (1983), who calls for women's education to be critical of patriarchy. She argues particularly for recognition of the double oppression of working-class women.

Although women are in the majority in traditional adult education, they are confined to courses of domesticity and excluded from control or choice. As Thompson (1983) notes –

"It is one of the contradictions of adult education that whilst a significant majority of the students are female – and a good proportion of the part-time tutors as well ... - the organisation and provision of classes takes very little account of the social, economic, cultural and political conditions of being female in our society."

Courses that enable women to cope better with their role go no way towards changing it and re-echo the sentiments of the nineteenth century, that saw the main aim of education for women as improving their domestic performance. Again Thompson, referring to basic education, notes –

"In this respect 'coping and life skills' concerned to assist in 'domestic management' and 'health and family relationships' will do little except confirm women in an exaggerated commitment to the priority of their traditional roles. If women really are disadvantaged because of limited opportunities or poverty, or their subordination to men, learning to cope – to put up with – unsatisfactory circumstances, defined as an essential life skill, is most definitely not the kind of remediation we should be promoting."
As Keddie (1980) points out, 'women's interests' on the syllabus usually means domestic skills or subjects concerned with appearance. It is a further irony that learning to improve domestic performance is often classified as leisure.

This point of view is challenged in Thomas (1982), whose critique of the radical position includes a denigration of the needs of women. In obviously cynical vein, he notes that "... middle class housewives are sometimes categorised as 'educationally disadvantaged' "

and claims that "there is such a thing as a non-political dressmaking class."

This type of comment on women's education not only reflects a traditional male view of women's role but also illustrates the incapacity of many educationalists to appreciate that women may be disadvantaged simply because they are women. The radical perspective would certainly take this position.

But despite the 'patriarchal' nature of education and the male dominated and orientated nature of training, Thompson (1983) is optimistic about the potential of some of the more recent innovations in women's education. The result of such an experience can raise individual consciousness in terms of ability and potential; can raise political awareness and the need for, and possibility of, change. New Opportunities for Women (NOW) type courses and 'Women's studies' courses are directly concerned with these two objectives and with increasing personal and political awareness. Thompson's main reservation is that such courses have attracted mainly middle-class women and left working-class women untouched by education. Another reservation is that widening horizons may result in women carrying two increased responsibilities, since involvement in, and awareness of, the world outside the home does not necessarily reduce domestic responsibilities. Indeed, more outside activity can result in increased guilt and even greater domestic obligations. This 'double burden' is a real problem which always arises in any discussion about widening educational opportunities for women.
Challenging the patriarchal nature of education — its structure, content and control — has become one important strand in the radical feminist perspective. The emergence of the subject 'women's studies' has posed a challenge to traditional the discipline-based form of higher education, since the majority of women's studies courses are inter-disciplinary. Such courses, at all levels, have challenged traditional forms of teaching and assessment, in that their structure is non-hierarchical, participatory and student controlled. Whilst such an approach can coincide with some branches of adult education, more traditional and academic institutions are sceptical of both the need for, and credibility of, such courses.

In most areas of adult education, the range of subjects considered appropriate for women are not questioned and it is presumed that most women are quite content with those provided — after all, women are thought to be interested in domestic topics, physical activities and improving their appearance. Women are free to participate in other subjects, both neutral and those designed mainly for men, if they so chose. But such subjects, always male dominated and controlled, do not explore or challenge inequalities nor question male derived content or method. Thompson (1983) concludes —

"So long as the opinion leaders and policymakers in adult education continue to describe the world as though women don't exist, or to associate women simply with domesticity and child rearing, adult education will continue to reinforce inequality between the sexes to the long term detriment of both men and women."

While Thompson has done a great deal to publicise the deficiencies in the education of women, in the way that Spender has in the education of girls, it is essential to retain a realistic view of the current situation and of what changes are imminently possible. To condemn all educational knowledge as male dominated does not remove such knowledge from the curriculum nor lessen its status. To provide courses for women that are based on feminist principles may enable women to perceive and challenge the traditional provision but it does not lessen the prestige of existing institutions and courses. If, in the short term, women wish to re-enter education and equip themselves for a male dominated world of work, they have no option but to acquire
qualifications that are recognised and to study in institutions that are dominated by men. That is not to argue that exposure and challenge is inappropriate but that pragmatic considerations are equally important. It is significant that those who most obviously challenge the system have often benefitted most from it.

These issues are taken up and explored in a book on women and education by Hughes and Kennedy (1985). In this book, discussions on women's life cycles, women's studies and women's participation in education, are followed by a collection of case studies covering a wide range of courses and activities which now make up the diversity of opportunities open to women.

Hughes and Kennedy classify women's education as containing four components -

i) extending traditional 'women's' subjects and opening up 'male' subjects, making them relevant to women;

ii) positive discrimination to compensate for girls' and women's lesser educational opportunities and the existing provision not meeting women's life-cycle;

iii) courses for women about women; women's and feminist studies to provide a re-vision of the world for women;

iv) a feminist dimension and the inclusion of women in all adult education; gender in the curriculum of all courses.

Hughes and Kennedy start with an examination of the complex and fragmented pattern of women's life-cycles and argue that these must be recognised by those who provide education for women -

"Women's life lines tend to be criss-crossed, blurred, seemingly confused and although we have identified the multiplicity of women's roles, these are not separately valued but jumbled together in the sole role of homemaker. Men's life patterns tend to run in parallel and rarely come together; work is separated from home and home from leisure, so men's lives are divided in terms of roles and status; they have space but little connection between parts .... In fact
### Table 5.11

A MODEL OF WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL LIFECYCLES

(Starting where the student is but how much questioning of where the student is going?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single/Young</th>
<th>Young/Married/Single Parents</th>
<th>Middle Aged</th>
<th>Young/Old</th>
<th>Elderly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few responsibilities for others</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Children at school/return to paid work or part time work? Other interests.</td>
<td>Elderly dependents to care for</td>
<td>Dependent on others/alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings/unemployed</td>
<td>Dependents?</td>
<td>Losing children; gaining elderly dependents</td>
<td>Reviving family and friendship links; retiring from paid work; voluntary work; how to adapt to the ageing process and develop psychologically</td>
<td>How to maintain independence and sense of self when physically becoming weaker, dependent on and fearing control by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence variable, sometimes economic restrictions</td>
<td>How to maintain independence/sense of self</td>
<td>How to regain independence/sense of self</td>
<td></td>
<td>Minimal formal education*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free time/leisure</td>
<td>Less time/little space/little money</td>
<td>New ground, interests; catching up educationally; building confidence; achievement in change</td>
<td>Potential for personal change/new interests</td>
<td>Less access to educational provision; have time — lack money and mobility; physical debilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NEEDS

| Work-related training, continuing education and qualifications, specialised interests | Child-care, low fees, daytime classes, local centres; education — domestic vocational or liberal | Returning to education, work training, qualifications, specialised and new interests | Survival skills, liberal studies | Easy access, daytime classes, low fees, social facilities and transport |

---

* This will change by the twenty-first century as adults should be better educated when they reach pensionhood.

**Notes**

1. There are certain areas of survival and social skills which could be needed at any time in the lifecycle.
2. Women do not retire totally — maybe from low paid work but not from domestic ties and responsibilities.
3. Women with disabilities, depending on age and specific needs, can fit into this schematic model at all points, if facilities and opportunities are provided.

**Source:** Hughes and Kennedy (1985)
educational provision for adults reflects the dichotomy between work and leisure (men's experience?) rather than relating the multi-dimensional variety of women's lives.

We would argue that, on the whole, providers of education do not appear to recognise that life is not evolutionary but is fragmented by times of reassessment and changes of direction which require different learning opportunities."

Whilst I do not support the implication that women's fragmented lives may be an advantage if only they were recognised as such and appropriate provision made, Hughes and Kennedy rightly expose the rigidity of much educational provision for adults. Finally, they offer a model for women's education which combines the changing life cycle with a perception of educational need. (Table 5.11)

Women and education: provision and practice.

As before, from a discussion of policy, I turn now to provision and practice. I have suggested in the previous section that concern about women and education is comparatively recent and some sources would suggest that very little has actually been done to change policy or alter provision. This applies to women's participation in traditional forms of education, as well as to the newer alternatives.

I concentrate first on those who are using the traditional route, into and through higher education. In a previous section I reviewed the available evidence about access, performance and attainment relating to mature students in general; in this part I intend to look only at those studies that concern women.

The earliest accounts of mature women students come from the United States, where both adult students and more part-time provision have been accepted for some time. Title and Denker (1977) offer a very detailed analysis of the position of re-entry women, concerning both practical and psychological implications. Although the percentage of adults in higher education in the US is high, and the demand from older women increasing proportionally faster than that from men, the
authors conclude that very little research or evaluation had been done in this area and that many barriers, both to entry and success, still exist.

LeFevre (1972) was one of the first to document the experiences and perceptions of a group of women returning to study at the University of Chicago. Although they were graduate students, they reflect many of the doubts, motivations and experiences of undergraduate returners.

"At the time of their first interviews, a week or two before entering their degree work at the university, these beginning students were excited and just a bit apprehensive as their dream was about to meet the first test of reality. ... Four months later, after experiencing the reality of their first term of university work most ... reported that the combination of homemaker and student roles had been strenuous, but all ... had successfully completed the quarter's work. They were evenly divided between those who felt excited and affirmed by the intellectual stimulation and those who were more conscious of the strain imposed by the work."

LeFevre sees the changing roles of women giving rise to a need for re-assessment on the part of women; a process that occurred for this sample even within a traditional academic institution and without the aid of specific counselling or guidance.

"They perceived an opening of the self to a new depth, breadth and richness of experience so vivid for two women that they spoke of rebirth. These women have not only been socialized into a new professional role and identity, but they have found in the university and professional life an opportunity for personal growth they found impossible in the traditional feminine role. The traditional feminine role in our culture does not lead to the full development of women's maturity or abilities and does not provide an adequate basis for a rich and productive life after children leave home. The rapid change in women's life-span pattern and in the larger society no longer makes it feasible for a woman to devote her life to raising a family or to assume that she can remain economically or emotionally dependent throughout her seventy years of expected life. It becomes a matter of increasing urgency for women to discover new patterns and alternative satisfying roles."
Table 5.12 Women students accepted through the UCCA system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All women</th>
<th>Women as % over 22 of all</th>
<th>Women as % over 25 of all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1978/79</td>
<td>30412</td>
<td>2281 7.5</td>
<td>1581 5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979/80</td>
<td>32048</td>
<td>2275 7.1</td>
<td>1570 4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980/81</td>
<td>30796</td>
<td>2310 7.5</td>
<td>1570 5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981/82</td>
<td>30230</td>
<td>1904 6.3</td>
<td>1300 4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982/83</td>
<td>29275</td>
<td>1961 6.7</td>
<td>1405 4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UCCA Statistical Supplements for years stated.
### Table 5.13a

**Higher education** † — full-time students: by origin, sex, and age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th><strong>Males</strong></th>
<th><strong>Females</strong></th>
<th>Thousands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-time students by origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the United Kingdom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities † — undergraduate</td>
<td>128.3</td>
<td>130.1</td>
<td>145.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— post-graduate</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector higher education</td>
<td>102.0</td>
<td>109.3</td>
<td>111.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total full-time UK students</td>
<td>254.2</td>
<td>262.6</td>
<td>277.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From abroad</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total full-time students</td>
<td>274.2</td>
<td>301.2</td>
<td>318.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-time students by age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 or under</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19–20</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>104.6</td>
<td>117.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–24</td>
<td>104.6</td>
<td>108.7</td>
<td>95.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or over</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 See Appendix, Part 3: Stages of education.
2 Origin is on fee-paying status except for EC students domiciled outside the United Kingdom who from 1980/81 are charged home rates but are included with students from abroad. From 1984 origin is based on students' usual places of domicile.
3 In 1980 measurement by age changed from 31 December to 31 August.

**Source:** Department of Education and Science

### Table 5.13b

**Higher education** † — part-time students: by type of establishment, sex, and age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th><strong>Males</strong></th>
<th><strong>Females</strong></th>
<th>Thousands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-time students by establishment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open University †</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector higher education</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>110.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— part-time day courses</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— evening only courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total part-time students</td>
<td>142.0</td>
<td>168.1</td>
<td>205.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-time students by age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 or under</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19–20</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–24</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or over</td>
<td>111.7</td>
<td>120.5</td>
<td>126.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 See Appendix, Part 3: Stages of education.
2 Calendar year beginning in second year shown. Excludes short course students up to 1982/83. In 1984/85 there were some 4,4 thousand specialised short course students for whom data by sex were not available; these have been excluded.

**Source:** Department of Education and Science

**Source:** Social Trends 17 (1987)
Referring to the LeFevre study, Frazier and Sadker (1973) write -

"The comments also give some hint of the special problems mature women face. They may feel torn from trying to fulfill their family's needs as well as their own academic pursuits. They may feel ill at ease on campus surrounded by younger students, and they may suffer worry and concern that years away from the classroom have left them incapable of doing rigorous academic work. Their problems vary and mature women who return to college will need special advising, counselling and placement services - help that universities often do not supply."

 Whilst it may seem desirable to provide extra assistance for mature students, especially mature women students, other studies have shown that most women can not only survive, but even do very well, without any extra provision.

In the United States the numbers of women students has increased rapidly. Saslaw (1981) looked at the figures for mature women students and noted a considerable percentage increase between 1974-79. The figures for women aged 25-34 were 42.7% full-time and 72.5% part-time, of all female undergraduates. In 1979, the total of women aged 25-34 in college was 1,319,000; aged over 35 was 914,000; two-thirds of all older students are women.

The British picture looks very different as shown by the UCCA statistics in Table 5.12. Nevertheless the movement of adults, and especially women, into higher education as a whole has increased. (Table 5.13a/b) As discussed earlier, the idea of mature students is not new and women have, on occasions, been encouraged to return to education for specific purposes (eg to meet the demand for more teachers in the 1960s).

In fact one of the earliest studies of women re-entrants (Gibson and Pococke 1968) concerns the experiences of mature students at a college of education. Although the sample is small and the subjects taken were mainly non-academic (eg art and craft), the attitudes of the women clearly reflect the early days of awareness of women's changing role. High motivation and excitement are tempered by a lack of confidence in
their ability, and guilt and concern over the possible neglect of their families. All these characteristics are still there in my sample of the 1980s. From Gibson and Pococke:

"Once the children were over the baby stage I felt lost at home all day and wanted to do something definite."

"My headteacher told me I should apply for training and when another headteacher said the same I began to get interested." (Woman who had been teaching untrained)

"Having worked in other occupations I feel that I have had a wider experience of people and life."

"I find myself torn between home and college commitments"

"My daughter in particular appears unconsciously to be suffering a reaction to my interest and absorption in college."

"An encouraging husband and family are a great asset"

"The family as a whole gives me every encouragement and everybody helps with the chores."

And from my undergraduate sample:

"I felt a bit cabbagey - you know it's all very well doing the housework and washing nappies but there's not much satisfaction in it and I thought something like that would give me an interest."

"I helped at the local school and Mrs. W (headmistress) had gone through as a mature and she said to me "Why don't you do something about it?" .. just ring up and make enquiries ..."

"I think it's an advantage to do it when you're older .. you know, I've seen it with the young ones in my class, they sort of drink in everything that's said ... very idealistic ... they don't see the ifs and buts ..."

"My worries were far more on the domestic level; I didn't want the
Table 5.14 A comparison of three studies of mature women students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Morgan and Dunn Ulster</th>
<th>Hopper and Osborne</th>
<th>Coats Undergraduates Q.</th>
<th>I.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=41</td>
<td>N=46</td>
<td>N=27</td>
<td>N=19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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<td>SLA: 15-16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>17-18+</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>SL Quals</td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O levels</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2+ A levels</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A levels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age on entry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldest</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>..</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = unfinished course Q = Questionnaire sample I = Interview sample
children to suffer."

"I couldn't have done it without the help and support of my husband and family"

Apart from the Gibson and Pococke paper, there are only two other British studies specifically of women who enter higher education as mature students. As pointed out in the previous section, there are studies of both men and women matures, some of which recognise the difference in experience and performance, but few that set out particularly to focus on women.

The two studies concerned are by Morgan and Dunn (1981) and a chapter in Hopper and Osborne (1975).

Morgan and Dunn focus specifically on a group of mature women students at the New University of Ulster. Despite the setting - a new university in Northern Ireland - and the course - a four year degree course leading to a graduate teaching qualification - it does provide the only sample that can usefully be compared with my sample.

Both differences and similarities emerge. Of the 41 women in the Ulster sample, the majority are described as coming from 'middle-class' backgrounds; had been educated at grammar schools; had gained good 'O' level results but had, with few exceptions, poor 'A' levels. It is suggested that most of them could have entered university earlier had they not opted out during their sixth form years. The majority left school at 17-18 years. After leaving school their patterns of paid work and child rearing and their age of re-entry appear to be similar to the women in my group. In particular, 12 of the 41 had returned to education and taken 'A' levels after leaving school, although we do not know exactly what proportion of the sample were totally 'unqualified' on entrance to university.

As a convenient reference source the details of the Ulster and my undergraduate samples, together with data from Hopper and Osborne, where applicable, are collated in Table 5.14.

It is apparent from the Morgan and Dunn study that the women in their sample did remarkably well at university with 30 of the 41 gaining
'good' (ie 1 or 2/1) degrees. Figures for the women in my sample compare well with these.

Morgan and Dunn conclude with several recommendations, of which the following are particularly relevant:

(i) Regardless of previous educational experience and present domestic situations, mature women can do well as undergraduates.

(ii) Some evidence of recent study, plus the motivation to apply and the persistence to continue, seem more relevant than recognised entrance qualifications.

(iii) Due to the life-cycle of most women, which includes a break from paid employment, mature women students returning to education over the age of 25 years should be seen as 'normal' and not as exceptions.

(iv) Accessability, personal contact and general reputation of being open to mature students led most of the sample to apply. Some form of information and advice for those who do not know of the opportunities available should be provided.

Apart from Morgan and Dunn, the one other study to contain specific data on women students and a discussion of their particular position can be found in chapter 8 of Hopper and Osborne (1975). They extract their data from a total sample of full-time undergraduates at three universities and one polytechnic. A summary of their findings is collated in Table 5.14 but it should be noted that the material was collected in 1970-71. In addition to sex, their sample is divided by age; women under 30 (n=27) and women over 30 (n=19). For comparison my sample has been similarly sub-divided.

The social class background of their sample, as with the Ulster women, appears to be 'middle-class'; a majority had attended grammar school, including a very high number of women from private schools; a good proportion staying on for the sixth form, especially in the younger age group. Hopper and Osborne classify their sample as having been 'initially selected' or 'initially rejected' and by this criteria, most of the group were initially successful. The figures are slightly
confused by the high proportion educated privately and whose selection pattern is difficult to detect. Unlike both Ulster and my sample, the women in the Hopper and Osborne study did obtain a number of 'A' levels at school, although most of these were in the younger age group. There is no indication why the 26 who gained more than 2 A levels at school did not proceed to higher education at that point. Nor do we know how many others subsequently qualified for entry or how many were accepted as 'unqualified' applicants.

Most of Hopper and Osborne's discussion on selection and mobility does not apply easily to women but they do recognise that most re-entered education when their period of child rearing was nearing completion and they had fulfilled their traditional female role. There is also a suggestion that some of these women may have had their initial educational career interrupted, by marriage or pregnancy for example, and are only later able to continue; and that, for some of the sample at least, the ending of a marriage had caused them to re-orientate and prepare for the future. All these categories are reflected in my undergraduate sample.

Since most of the women in the Hopper and Osborne sample were described as from middle-class origins, it is not surprising that the possibility of mobility through marriage was not discussed. A rigid classification system was not used in my sample, but quite clearly, more than half described themselves as coming from 'working-class' families. Yet, at the time of entry to university, all the married women had acquired middle-class status and lifestyles.

Hopper and Osborne's assertion that females who take initial rejection routes -

"... have virtually no opportunities for subsequent selection via apprenticeships and day release schemes, and are especially unlikely to become adult students ..."

can be challenged. While apprenticeships are certainly not available, it must be recognised that marriage can and does provide a vehicle for upward mobility for many women. It could also be that the ten years separating the two studies have seen a change in attitudes, both to women and to education, so that more adults are now aware of some of
the possibilities open to them.

One further discrepancy between the studies may be attributed to the time lag. This is the suggestion that the demand for education by adults, both men and women, may be attributed to the post-war 'bulge' and the shortage of opportunities available. This resulted in many potentially able students being denied the opportunity for higher education when they left school. However, it has been obvious that the demand for higher education among adults has continued to increase, including applications from 'younger' women, some of whom were educated in the comprehensive system. Hence the suggestion that the initial selection/rejection process or the 'bulge' cannot be accepted as reasons for the rising demand.

However, several factors mentioned in Hopper and Osborne are echoed in my study. In their very detailed discussion of the inter-personal factors which may have affected schooling and the decision not to continue into higher or further education, they list the lack of parental interest; serious disruption of family life; and peer-group pressure. All three are reflected in several examples among my women, especially the kind of event that disrupts family life and places particular demands on a daughter.

When Hopper and Osborne consider factors which characterised their pre-entry years and may have led to a return to education, several similarities emerge. Many women were active in voluntary organizations and discovered their potential through these activities; sponsors, spouses and tutors were often the trigger that initiated or encouraged their return; the use of 'O' and 'A' levels to prepare for admission; the so-called lucky chance that led them to discover that such a course was available; and the 'gratitude' they felt for having been given an opportunity to prove themselves at last.

Finally, in comparing the three studies, one important variable that cannot be discussed because information is unavailable is the criteria by which each institution decides on the admittance of mature students. The differences in the samples could reflect admission policies which select according to sex, age and qualifications. Many women could be excluded simply because they did not fit the requirements of that particular institution at that particular time.
The final study of mature students to be reviewed in this section is particularly interesting since it documents a specific initiative to admit unqualified mature women to the University of New South Wales. Martin et al (1981) describe their detailed study of 18 of the 48 women admitted in 1975 under this scheme. Their ages ranged from 25 to 40 plus; most were married and half had dependent children. Their social background is described as middle-class.

Whilst most of the paper is concerned with descriptions of the women's reactions to the experience and the problems of coping with the course, one section explores their reasons for applying. Overall, their motives appear to be non-instrumental, although a few of them did have specific careers in mind. Far more important to these women was the opportunity to compensate for earlier disadvantages, interrupted schooling and the lack of opportunities to continue. Alongside this was the awareness of the restricted role available to mature women once their child care responsibilities ended, plus their own need for personal growth and fulfilment. Again the feelings of excitement and of gratitude emerge, responses to an opportunity that was, in this case, unexpectedly offered.

All these studies of mature women students indicate quite clearly that they are able to survive and succeed in traditional settings and alongside students of the conventional age, despite the fact that their needs are not recognised and no special provision is made for them. The complacency and stagnation of the higher education system in this country is challenged by Buswell (1983):

"The norms of our higher education system are the norms of the bachelor boy student, which partly explains why child care facilities are offensive to this tradition whilst football pitches and bars are commonplace. Course design and planning has been implicitly related to a concept of a 'normal' student who is a clean-limbed 18 year old ex-sixth form white male. Yet 'abnormal' students might increasingly be in the majority. It is absurd to suggest that students fit the course rather than vice versa. We have to change the norms so that women who have babies, husbands and homes are not treated as abnormal because they cannot conform to
patterns of study designed for 18 year old men."

A similar point was made by Blackstone (1976) in one of the earliest British references to the needs of mature women for higher education:

"At the other end of the educational system, courses for adults must be constructed with the specific goal of attracting women and offering recognized qualifications. At present the opportunities are limited to three areas. Degree level or equivalent courses in higher education rule out most adults; job training or re-training, because it assumes employment experience, rule out many women; adult education, which does not assume school leaving qualifications or employment experience, does not lead to any qualification either. Courses for adult women which avoid these shortcomings must be well publicized and must carry generous grants in order to remove the financial obstacles to taking them."

Other educational opportunities for women.

A brief review of the various components of women's education would suggest that in the past 15 years, some of the traditional assumptions have been challenged and quite a number of new initiatives have been provided. In terms of adult education as a whole their influence has been considerable, although fragmented.

Without doubt the main contribution has been under the general heading of 'New Opportunities for Women' (NOW) and courses of a similar nature. Earlier return to study provision, like Fresh Horizons at the City Lit. (Hutchinson 1978) had afforded the opportunity for adults, both men and women, to resume their education and prepare for entry to various institutions. However, the first recognition that women, because of their distinctive life cycle, might need a special type of provision, appears to have come with the original NOW course at Hatfield Polytechnic (Michaels 1973). This was followed soon after with similar courses in Newcastle (Aird 1980) and then many others, in towns and cities throughout the country. Most are jointly organised by University Extra-mural or Adult Education departments, together with the Workers Educational Association (WEA). The experiences of both
tutors and students connected with these courses have been well
documented, though most are accounts of particular places (eg Aird
1980a/b in Newcastle; Baum 1983 in Ulster; Dolan et al 1984 in
Tunbridge Wells; Hill 1984 in Luton; Marshall 1983 in Scotland;
Sharpe 1983 in Cwmbran). These were courses that recognised a major
need among women, not just for educational openings as such, but for
stimulation, re-assessment, information, guidance, counselling and
advice, about themselves and their future.

On a much larger scale, the desire by women for education and advice
is shown by Atkin and Hutchinson (1981) in their account of the
response when a popular women's magazine carried an article on
'Second Chance' opportunities. As discussed in a previous section,
many other sources mention the overwhelming response by women to
educational openings - to access courses (Jones and Johnson 1983);
to the Open University (McIntosh 1979; Griffiths 1980); to Adult
Education Colleges (McLaren 1985); and to a range of traditional
provisions (Nashashibib 1980). Many accounts of Return to Study and
other access or bridging courses also emphasise the demand from
women for this sort of provision (eg Douglas 1984; Hutchinson 1978,

In 1980, the Times Higher Education Supplement carried two very full
articles - on a European Conference on women and education (Barry
19.9.80) and on bridging courses for women (Hutchinson 19.12.80).

The most comprehensive survey of bridging courses for women was
carried out by Stoney and Reid (1980) for the Further Education Unit
(FEU). Their conclusions provide a useful summary of bridging
courses as a whole.

"Bridging courses tend to be found where adult education as a whole
is flourishing, the bridging course forming one element in a network
of local provision. Tutors of neighbouring colleges, polytechnics
and universities have in some cases built up informal links with
each other so that students can be referred to the course best
suited to their needs. In a few instances some of these links have
been formalised so that, on successfully completing a bridging
course, students have a right of entry into higher level courses."
Because many bridging courses have been initiated in response to local needs they tend to be highly individual in both character and name. Courses of similar name, for instance, may have different curricula and vice versa. This creates problems for those, such as potential students, who are trying to locate and identify such opportunities. Efforts to coordinate and advertise bridging course provision on a regional and national level, through the organisation of conferences and workshops for tutors and the publication of guides for mature students, have only just begun. (See Appendix II for one example of this.)

The research, here and abroad, indicates that the demand for bridging courses is often latent rather than explicit and that women are often ill-informed of the opportunities open to them. This places the onus on the providers to identify and anticipate student needs.

"The two main organizational barriers to women taking part in bridging courses are lack of creche provision and timetabling outside school hours. Although most colleges apparently would like to provide creche facilities from 9.00 to 5.00 they are often constrained from doing so by the cost of implementing local authority regulations. In some cases the creche is available for only part of the day. Whilst most bridging courses do seem to timetable classes within school hours (or in the evening) in some instances there was not sufficient time after the course for students to collect children from school."

"There is some indication that the criticism that women attending the courses come from more favoured backgrounds is true. Few in the sample, however, were found to have qualifications of an academic kind or to have held jobs involving any degree of responsibility. Many had been involved in voluntary work or other social activities, suggesting that the commonly held belief that many women who attend bridging courses have led sheltered lives at home in the past is unrealistic."

From the various papers and publications documenting these courses, it is possible to make some comparisons with my sample. Several general factors about women attending bridging courses emerge:
(i) students come from a wide range of educational backgrounds, including those who have already had some form of higher or further education;

(ii) women attending these courses do not usually have a clear idea of what they wish to pursue in the future and are exploring the options;

(iii) many descriptions of such courses comment on the lack of confidence among the students; even those who have previously gained quite high academic qualifications seem to have lost their confidence during years of child rearing;

(iv) an overwhelming demand being voiced in these courses for more part-time provision, both educational and vocational, to accommodate the requirements of child care.

In contrast to the above, the majority of women in my study returning through the more traditional routes had relatively low initial educational qualifications and no completed higher education at all (apart from one domestic science teacher). Although many women looked back to a time when they lacked confidence in their academic ability, they had overcome this by their own persistence and achievements, not by participating in any special course. None of the sample had taken a preparatory course of any kind. Many of the women had quite clear ideas of what they hoped to do in the future and even those who did not, knew how to obtain advice and information. This, of course, is much easier when you are inside the system and resources are available. And finally, almost all my sample were, by choice, full-time students; not one expressed any wish for a part-time alternative and indeed, several women had left part-time study for what they perceived as a more satisfactory method of obtaining a degree.

What seems to emerge is that there is a need for both alternatives. Women with enough confidence and determination, who wish to use the GCE ladder need opportunities to take this more formal path. Those who lack confidence or who need more advice; those who have heavy domestic responsibilities and those who prefer a wider, more flexible preparation may be more suited to the special provisions that have
Finally, it is important to stress that there are other re-entry points to education used by women. Hughes and Kennedy (1985), at the end of their book, carry a list of organisations which, they see as 'educational'. It lists many which would not normally be included in an educational source book, such as the Womens Institutes, National Housewives Register and the Young Womens Christian Association. Deem (1983) analyses the various aspects of what she terms the 'popular' education of women, including this type of provision. The educational potential of organisations like these have never been explored on a large scale, although studies of individual ones do exist.

Another educational experience available to women that is infrequently documented in educational literature is that provided by the various voluntary organisations in which women may be active. One important re-entry point identified by Stoney and Reid (1980) was through playgroup leader courses. This was re-inforced by examples in my study, where women had taken courses as part of their involvement in playgroups, Samaritans, Marriage Guidance and other voluntary bodies. Again the educational potential of this involvement needs to be explored. The role of the church and other religious movements needs to be noted, since invariably women are involved in large numbers in some sections of these. Finally, although in a minority, some women do gain experience and motivation to continue, through the various educational activities of trades unions and political parties.

Conclusions.

This section has attempted to cover many aspects of the education of women, both in policy and practice, and at all levels.

It has shown how the traditional provision for women was premised on her domestic role, even when disguised as leisure, and how the demand by women for other educational opportunities has only recently been recognised. It has attempted to make visible the presence of women in conventional higher education. It has reviewed the newer initiatives which have been implemented in response to an awareness of the changing role of women.
I have argued elsewhere that the initial schooling of girls differs in its expectations and its results because of the stereotypical image of femininity and masculinity which pervades education. I have suggested that the anticipated life pattern of women still affects the performance of girls.

In examining the education of women, particularly the re-entry to education of mature women in compensation for their previous performance, we still see this legacy of schooling. The main barriers of lack of confidence and limited self-image are part of that legacy, possibly compounded by years of stagnation whilst confined to the domestic sphere.

I have shown how women seek out various re-entry points but how the lack of information and guidance makes that re-entry a lottery; who you know, where you live and what you read determines the options.

On the positive side, I have shown that when women do re-enter conventional education their performance is more than satisfactory. When women do discover alternative provisions, they can transform their lives. In all the literature and in all my empirical work, I did not encounter one women who expressed the wish that she had not taken up the opportunity to return to education.
Chapter Six

A study of mature women undergraduates
MATURE WOMEN UNDERGRADUATES: THE QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE

Introduction.

This part of my study set out to look at the retrospective educational histories of a sample of mature women admitted to a university as undergraduate students. In all, the intake for five years was studied. In the first phase of the research, all women undergraduates over the age of 22 years on entry, admitted in 1979, 1980 and 1981 were contacted by post and asked to complete a questionnaire. Of the 49 women contacted, 40 replied. Of those 40, a sub-group of 31 were contacted again and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. The 9 eliminated at this stage were women who were overseas students, young women who had filled in time before attending university or, in one case, an older woman who was educated prior to the 1944 Education Act. Of the 31 invited to an interview, 29 agreed but only 27 interviews were successfully arranged. This sub-sample of 27 are referred to as the 'Interview sample' and are discussed fully in the next section.

Two years later all mature women undergraduates admitted in 1982 and 1983, plus three 1981 entries who had been missed in the previous phase, were contacted and asked to complete the same questionnaire. Of the 38 listed, 28 replied. Four replies were from women admitted under a new part-time scheme and these were included in the subsequent analyses. All the other women in both samples were full-time students.

Thus the phase one questionnaire sample consisted of 40 women; the phase two of 28 women. All subsequent analyses in this section are based upon the total 'Questionnaire sample' of 68 women.
The questionnaire sample.

(i) Age.

The youngest women were 22 at the time of entry, all younger students having been eliminated. The oldest woman was 66 on entry.

The age distribution was as follows:

- age 22 - 29 = 25 women
- 30 - 39 = 29
- 40 - 49 = 11
- 50 - 66 = 3

The differences between the group of 25 women who were under 30 on entry and the 43 women who were over 30 will be considered later.

(ii) Marital status and children.

At the time of the study, of the 68 women in the sample, 39 had children, 29 did not. The details of marital status and children are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With children</th>
<th>No children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or divorced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or widowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the questionnaire did not specifically ask for full details of children, most replies gave the age and often the sex. Of the 39 women with children, only 7 had all of them over the age of 18, meaning that 32 women were still responsible for the care of dependant children. The youngest recorded a child of 2 years, another of 4 years; all the others had children of school age or above. One women, already with children, stated that she was expecting a baby.

Numbers of children per woman were as follows:

- with 1 child - 6 women
- 2 children - 22
- 3 - 7
- 4 - 3
- 5 - 0
- 6 - 1

(iii) Subject studied at university.

Not surprisingly, the 68 students were not evenly distributed across departments or subjects within the university. Many departments had no mature women undergraduates at all.
The following table shows the distribution of the mature women in the Questionnaire sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social History</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Studies</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Sciences</td>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ergonomics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Biology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Social Admin.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Psychology</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library and</td>
<td>Library Studies</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Studies</td>
<td>Education and Library Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>PE and Recreational Management</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaire sample: their school experiences.

1. Selective examinations at 11+ or 13+.

Of the 68 women in the questionnaire sample, over half (41) had passed a selective examination at either 11+ or 13+. Only one reported that she had passed and had not been allowed to go a grammar school.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>11-plus pass</th>
<th>11-plus fail</th>
<th>not taken</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private (includes convents)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Modern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish academies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the remaining 40 who had been successful, 36 had eventually attended grammar school, although some had originally been allocated to secondary moderns and had taken a further selective examination at 13+. Three of the 11+ passes went to independent schools, together with 7 others who were also educated privately. Six out of the ten privately educated women had attended convent schools; the other three had gone to independent day schools. No-one had been sent to boarding school.

Of the 19 women who 'failed' the 11+/13+ examination, 5 were placed in 'intermediate' schools. Most came from the nearby city which had a well-developed tripartite system at the time. So 13 'failures' went to secondary modern schools.

Of the 8 who did not take a selective exam, 6 were in private schools which had their own entrance tests and two went on to comprehensive schools. In their comprehensive schools they were not placed in the 'grammar' or top streams.

Of the 68 women in the sample, 8 had received all or part of their secondary education outside of England and Wales. Three had been to Scottish academies and are classified with the grammar school pupils; two had all or part of the schooling in Kenya; one had spent some years in Cyprus. Two women had been educated in convents - one in Ireland and the other in France. Table 6.1 summarises the selective examination results and the secondary school experiences of the sample.

Hence it can be seen that by the age of 13, one third of the women, 22 out of the 68, had been 'cooled out' of a potential academic career, either by failing an examination or by being placed in non-academic schools or streams. The 46 women in grammar schools, academies or private schools still had the possibility of an academic career before them - but by the age of 16 the options had closed still further.

2 School leaving ages.

The next milestone in the educational careers of these women was the age at which they left school and the qualifications they had obtained before leaving. Of the 68, 31 left at 15 or 16; 37 at 17 or 18 plus.
Table 6.2 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire Sample (n=68)

Type of secondary school attended and School Leaving Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar and Academies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Modern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.2 shows the details of school leaving age and type of school attended.

The significant divisions arise at 15 (i.e. those women who left without taking any examinations); at 16 (i.e. those who could have taken GCE 'O' level or CSE at school); and those that left at 17 or above who could possibly have taken 'A' levels at school.

However, in terms of the type of school attended, the age of leaving is even more significant. All those selected for grammar school would have been expected to complete at least five years of secondary schooling and thus to leave at 15 required special permission. Four women at grammar school left at 15. In addition to these, 13 women left grammar or private schools at 16. Thus at the end of compulsory schooling, 31 women had left school and only 37 were still on the potentially academic path. Four of these had managed to extend their opportunities, even though they attended secondary modern or intermediate schools.


At the end of their initial schooling 19 women had obtained 2 or more 'A' levels; 34 women had obtained at least one 'O' level and 15 women had left school with no academic qualification at all. One or two had passed an RSA commercial subject, but these are ignored for the purpose of this study. CSE grade one passes are counted as GCE 'O' levels, but other CSEs are disregarded, since they are not accepted as qualifications for higher education.

In terms of future academic potential, only 19 of the original 68 remain. As might be anticipated, most of these 19 were from private or grammar schools but two women, originally allocated to secondary modern schools, had obtained two 'A' level passes each.

Of the 36 originally allocated to grammar schools, 20 obtained one or more 'O' levels but two left with no qualifications at all. (These were two who had been given permission to leave early.)
Table 6.3 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire Sample (n=68)

Type of secondary school attended and leaving qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2+ 'A' Levels</th>
<th>'O' levels</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar and Academies</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Modern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
private schools, 3 gained 'A' levels and 7 gained 'O' levels. The details of type of school and qualifications obtained are summarised in Table 6.3.

Taken overall these results are not particularly surprising but become significant when their subsequent educational patterns emerge.

The 'successful' pupils.

In terms of academic attainment at school, the 19 who left with two or more 'A' level passes can be considered academically successful. These are the women who might have considered continuing into higher education at that stage. Although their future paths will be described in detail later, it is worth considering here their decisions on leaving school.

Of the 19, 5 did go from school into full-time higher education. Three women went to university — and all three left without completing their degrees. One woman went to a polytechnic — she also left without finishing the course. Another woman went to a College of Education to obtain a teaching certificate in domestic science. She was the only woman in the entire sample to successfully complete a course of higher education after leaving school.

Of the remainder, most went to do courses in secretarial work or nursing, or to work for Local Government, the Civil Service or a bank. Two took part-time qualifications in personnel management. One was prevented from continuing into higher education by illness; two became pregnant soon after leaving school and one, with three 'A' levels, got married straight away.

4. Reasons for leaving school.

One question on the questionnaire asked those who had left school before the age of 18 to explain why they left at that particular point. The intention was to discover why those who could have continued with their education actually decided to leave.

Most women who completed this question did so quite fully and many
Table 6.4 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire Sample (n=68)

Reasons given for leaving school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External circumstances</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No alternative</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family event</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental decision</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To start job</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not necessary for a girl</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed exams</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get married</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal feelings</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School was a negative experience</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No confidence in ability</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No tradition of education in family or no encouragement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
gave several reasons for leaving even though such a retrospective question has to be answered with hindsight. Although some of the reasons given may overlap or conceal other reasons, this section of the questionnaire provided a great deal of information.

Reasons for leaving, though diverse, fall into several main categories. (Table 6.4) By far the most common reason given was that school was a negative experience. This came from women educated in all types of school—private, grammar, intermediate, secondary modern and comprehensive. These negative feelings were sometimes expressed quite vehemently, sometimes just simply stated and sometimes explained more fully.

"Extreme dislike of school and everything connected with it. Over-emphasis on adherence to rigid school rules and discipline. Total lack of communication between self and most of the staff—tried to achieve in world of employment."

"Bored with school. Discipline in particular in small all-girls school."

The second most common reason for leaving mentioned finance. This was often stated simply as an apparent need, though sometimes accompanied with details of family circumstances.

"Family were poor—younger brothers and sisters—no possibility of staying on. Could only stay to do 'O' levels because headmistress arranged for grant towards uniform."

The next two most common reasons were very different. Many women wrote that they had no option but to leave because the type of school they attended offered no alternative. Others were not aware at the time that any choice existed.

"Secondary modern only took pupils up to 16; most left at 15. It was very rare in the area ... for anyone to receive education beyond the statutory limit."

"The school, being an intermediate, didn't have a sixth form—pupils wishing to carry on with 'A' levels had to move to the
grammar school. My parents couldn't afford to let me stay longer and uniform expenses would have been considerable."

But equally common as a reason for leaving were events that might be described as circumstantial - and possibly traumatic. These included illness; family problems, especially divorce of parents; moves from one place to another and evacuation.

"Family problems caused me to leave school early. My father died when I was 11 and later my brother-in-law died, leaving my sister with two babies. Mother was supporting us all and I felt it was my duty to go out to work to help with the money."

All other reasons given occur less frequently. These include the simple statement that "parents decided"; that the woman had "no confidence in my ability"; that "all my best friends were leaving"; that "there was no tradition of further education in the family". Others stated that they left to get a job and one said that she left (grammar school at 15) because she wanted to get married. Only two women wrote on their form that they were expected to leave because further education was not seen as appropriate for a girl, though from talking to the women it was apparent that this attitude was concealed under other reasons, like finance and family trauma.

In all, 41 women gave an answer to this question. Two main themes emerge, both of which may have relevance for subsequent events. One theme is a sense or resentment that circumstances forced the women into leaving school - personal, parental or structural, but essential external. Linked to this may be the desire to compensate for these earlier experiences, which so often emerged when women were asked why they had decided to re-enter education. And the other main theme is the sense of unhappiness which permeated many women's secondary school experiences. Here what needs to be explained, is why women, whose initial schooling had been a negative, even hated, experience should subsequently have decided to return to an education system that had previously caused them pain.

The school experience - mixed or single sexed?

Because of the current debate about the possible benefits of
Table 6.5  Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire Sample (n=68)

Type of secondary school attended: mixed or girls only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Girls only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Modern</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
single-sex schooling for girls, I asked specifically if their secondary schools had been mixed or single-sexed. The response was complicated because some women had been to more than one secondary school, although the last one attended has been the basis of all previous discussions.

The types of school attended are shown in Table 6.5. This includes all the schools listed in questionnaires, even when women had attended more than one. It can be seen that the majority of women in the sample had been educated for most of their secondary schooling in single-sex schools. This is not surprising given the type of schools they attended and the years of their secondary education.

All the private schools were single-sex, again not surprising since many were convents. Success rates for these schools varied, as did the women's attitude to school. Most of the grammar schools attended were also for girls only, as was customary at the time of selective schooling. Indeed, mixed grammar schools were comparatively rare. It is interesting to note that the Scottish academies are mixed - but these were attended by relatively young women.

Intermediate schools were all single-sex; comprehensives all mixed - but the numbers are too small to be significant. Only the secondary modern schools seem split between mixed and single-sex but here the success of the pupil or their attitude to school seems to depend on other variables. The only firm conclusion is that the majority of the sample attended single-sex schools but it must be noted that one of the main reasons why women gave negative opinions of their education was that they were fed up with the atmosphere of an all-girls establishment.

Between school and university.

The next phase in their life cycles that I asked about in the questionnaire was the period between leaving school and coming to university. Obviously, the length of time involved here depended on the age of school leaving and the present age of the women. This period ranged from 4 years for the very youngest subject (18-22) to 38 years for two of the oldest women. The main clusters fell between 5
and 15 years and between 15 and 25.

There were four particular aspects of this period that were interesting:

i. their participation in higher or further education immediately after leaving school;

ii. the paid work that the women had done - and in some cases were doing - up to the time of their entry to university;

iii. the other activities that had filled these years, notably childrearing but also involvement in voluntary activities;

iv. the courses they had taken and the academic qualifications they had gained between re-entry to education and admission to university full-time.

Each of these topics will be reviewed in turn.

i) Higher or further education after school.

After school, seven women had gone into higher education. These include the five with two or more 'A' levels who were described earlier, as well as two others with sufficient 'O' levels to get into colleges of education.

Of these seven women, only one, the domestic science teacher, completed her course. The three at university, one at polytechnic and two at colleges of education all withdrew. Overall, for the women undergraduates in the sample, their initial attempts at higher education were a disaster. Indeed, some had two attempts - at university and college of education and at art college and college of education. Yet all these women, with one exception, who had 'dropped out' of higher education at 19 or 20 successfully completed their university courses as mature students. The one exception was one of the three women in all 68 who failed to complete their degree courses at the time of this study. She had gone to university straight from school and had failed then to complete her degree.
Table 6.6 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire Sample (n=68)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Jobs held since leaving school</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial and clerical</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library work</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Service and Local Government</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdressing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory work</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled service work (eg cleaning)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank work</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womens Services</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing Office</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the rest of the women in the sample, 17 went from school into full-time further education. This is approximately the norm for female school leavers today - but probably above average for the age group concerned. In addition to these, 4 women added to their school leaving qualifications with further 'O' or 'A' levels at the local college.

Of the 17 who took full-time 'vocational' courses, 11 were towards some kind of qualification in the business studies/secretarial/clerical field. These included RSA, OND, C and G, BEC and other qualifications.

Other further educational courses were few. Three were in nursing (SRN, SCM etc), two for library assistants (C and G and Diplomas) and one in catering (OND and HCIMA).

The 11 women who took part-time courses followed similar subjects; 5 in business studies etc; 2 took hairdressing apprenticeships; one took a C and G as library assistant and one a Diploma as a pharmacy technician. Two women took the Institute of Personnel Management Examinations, one of whom failed.

So, like many girls leaving school at the same time, most of the women in the sample went into further education to gain qualifications in areas that were, and still are, the traditional 'female' occupations.

ii) Paid work.

The study did not set out to examine in detail the work patterns of the women in the sample, since it was concerned primarily with their retrospective educational histories. However, the women were asked what jobs they had done in the intervening period - and the results are shown in Table 6.6.

Of the total of 116 jobs named by the 68 women, one third (39/116) were in some form of secretarial or clerical work. Of the additional 13 who mentioned Local Government or Civil Service, most were also of a clerical nature. So the most common occupation of the women in this sample who had worked was clearly in the 'white blouse' category. Added to this must be the 9 retail and the 3 banking jobs.
The 'semi-professions' accounted for a further 25 jobs - in teaching, nursing, pharmacy and libraries. Those with library experience are a far higher proportion than in working women as a whole because of the large number taking Library and Information Studies. One of the requirements is that applicants should have some form of full-time library experience before starting.

Manual and unskilled jobs were few. Some of those who had worked in catering held good qualifications; and all the hairdressers were fully trained, in two cases to an advanced level. Only one woman had spent most of her working life in a factory, as a machinist, but four others had spent some time in factory work. A few women mentioned periods of employment at other unskilled work - as barmaids, dinner ladies, cleaners etc. One wrote of a succession of "grotty jobs" and several, especially amongst the younger women without children, had spent periods unemployed. Others had taken time out for travelling or working abroad.

Overall, the occupational patterns of the women in this sample are not remarkable. They include the traditional 'female' jobs and are, in most cases, fragmented and disjointed careers. Very few, even amongst those women who are single and without children, have followed one consistent occupational path, with the exception of three librarians, a nurse and the two in personnel management. Among the married women with children, the pattern almost always includes a break from paid employment.

iii) Childcare and voluntary activities.

Of the 39 women in the sample who had children, 34 had taken some time out of paid work whilst their children were young. The remaining five did not make it clear whether or not they had stopped paid work at any point. The number of years out depended to some extent on the number and age range of their children; the minimum break was one year, taken by a woman with just one child; but there were women who had not worked for 19, 20 and 21 years. Not surprisingly, the older women had spent the longest periods at home. Given that the most common number of children was 2, the most common 'break' was 7 years - both of which are the norm for women at the present time.
Table 6.7 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire Sample (n=68)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GCE passes</th>
<th>AT SCHOOL</th>
<th>POST-SCHOOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2As</td>
<td>0s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUP A</td>
<td>(n=19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUP B</td>
<td>(n=35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUP C</td>
<td>(n=14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another feature of these years, for women who had taken time out of paid work, was their involvement in numerous voluntary activities. It appears that women who return to education are likely to be 'activists' in other ways (cf Hopper and Osborne 1975). Indeed, their involvement with voluntary organisations may be their initial re-entry point to education. In this questionnaire sample women mentioned activities such as Pre-school Playgroup participation, involvement in Citizen's Advice Bureaus, in WRVS, in Women's Aid, Youth Clubs and in Social Services or Probation Department voluntary schemes. (More details of this voluntary work emerge in the following section on the Interview sample.)

iv) Returning to education.

The final aspect of this period between school and university to be explored on the questionnaire concerned the adult educational record of the women in the sample. In this I include all the 'educational' activities listed by the women but particularly those that led to some form of recognised qualification.

The nature and extent of their educational activity as adults depended on their initial school or immediate post-school qualifications. On the basis of these the sample was divided into three groups A, B and C. (Table 6.7)

GCE qualifications.

Of those in group A, who left school with two or more 'A' level passes, few had taken any further academic qualifications. Two women had added to or improved their grades. The rest were accepted on the basis of their initial qualifications and subsequent vocational experience.

Of the 35 women in group B who left with some 'O' level passes, 14 had obtained at least 2 or more 'A' levels as adults and thus fulfilled the General Entrance Requirements (GER). But 21 of this group were accepted on other criteria.

The 14 in group C who had left school with no academic qualifications, 8 had subsequently obtained some 'O' levels and at least two 'A' levels. These are counted in the total who entered with GER. This left
6 in this group who had no 'O' or 'A' level passes at all, either from school or subsequent study.

Thus, as Table 6.7 shows, of the 68 women in the sample, 41 entered university with at least two 'A' level passes of some sort, gained either at or after school. This leaves over one third (27/68) with other qualifications or as 'unqualified' entrants.

Other qualifications.

Of the 27 non-GER entrants, 7 had taken one 'A' level and were accepted on the basis of that. Five of the rest had OU credits which provided acceptable evidence of recent study and an indication of the standard attained. Other qualifications included City and Guilds (2), BEC Diploma (1), Dip.HE (2), OND and HCIMA (1), Adult Education College courses (2), University part-time courses leading to Certificates, (one in Industrial Archaeology and one in Social Studies,) and an FE Teaching Certificate.

Four women in the sample entered university without evidence of academic study as an adult. Two of these were older women taking the part-time degree course, both of whom had School Certificates from school. The other two had 'O' level passes from school but no other qualifications at all.

Of those who had engaged in some form of study as an adult, 31 had studied on a part-time basis before coming to university; 15 women reported that they had been able to study full-time at some point before they entered.

In terms of the period between school and university there is one remaining question to be answered - why did these women apply for a degree course at this university? To answer this we need to consider first what the women were doing immediately prior to their admission.

Activities prior to admission depend on several factors - their age, qualifications, marital state, number and age of children etc. Of these the responsibility for dependent children is probably the main factor influencing whether a woman was in paid work or studying.
Table 6.8 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire Sample (n=68)

Activity immediately prior to admission and marital status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full</td>
<td>Part</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part</td>
<td>Part</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Part</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unem</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unem</td>
<td>Part</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unem</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals 16 5 8 10 29
full-time. Table 6.8 summaries the activities of the women in the sample immediately prior to their entry to university.

Women without children (n=29)

Of the women without children 21/29 were working full-time, with 12 of these (12/29) participating in part-time study as well as full-time paid work. None of this group worked part-time. Five of the 29 were in full-time study immediately prior to admission - two at Adult Education Colleges, one taking a full-time 'A' level course and two taking DipHE courses.

The remaining three women in this 'childless' group were unemployed, two of whom were studying part-time.

Women with children (n=39)

Of these women only nine were in full-time paid work (9/39) and of these nine, seven were also studying part-time. These seven women, then, were responsible for a full-time job, looking after children and studying part-time simultaneously.

Of the women with children working part-time (11/39), eight were also studying part-time. Of the remaining 19 not in paid work, eight were studying full-time - mainly on 'A' level courses. Two women who described themselves as housewives were doing no study prior to admission but the remaining nine not in paid work were all studying part-time.

Generally, then, those without children were likely to be working on a full-time basis and possibly studying part-time, if at all. Note that these were the younger women, needing to earn their living and already quite well qualified. But 16/29 were studying in some form or other.

The women who had children were less likely to be in full-time paid work but they were more likely to study full-time, if the opportunity arose. Most of them, however, combined childcare with part-time work and/or part-time study, using the opportunity to improve their educational qualifications. Of this group, 32/39 were studying in some way.
Reasons for applying to university.

Given that 48/68 were already engaged in some form of academic study, the decision to enter university might be seen as part of an on-going progression. Particularly for those doing 'A' level or DipHE courses, a degree might seem the next step up the qualification 'ladder'. For others, full-time study was an attractive option after part-time courses with, for example, the Open University.

One item on the Questionnaire asked, rather ambiguously, why they had decided to study at this university and this was answered in two ways. Most explained why they had decided to apply to a university - which was the intention of the question. Others explained why they had specifically chosen this one. Some answered in both senses.

Overall, the reasons given fall into several categories, both instrumental (to get a better job) and personal (for self-fulfilment) -

- needing a better qualification 20
- interest in the subject 9
- part-time study not satisfactory 5
- family responsibilities over 7
- marriage at an end 7
- encouraged by family/friends 4
- needed a change 11
- to compensate for/complete education 9
- personal identity/self fulfillment 16

In many cases women gave several reasons, sometimes connected, sometimes not.

For some, circumstances had already triggered the decision -

"Academic confidence already gained through doing OU studies; marriage break up led to personal freedom and need to re-assess
career and ambitions; wanted a vocational course which could be applied to a specific job as well as a degree."

"Am divorced; against my principles to ask for maintenance - therefore must support myself - therefore need training. Think the course I am doing should give a wide range of possibilities."

"My marriage broke up and I found myself in an ideal position to consider full-time education - to enhance career prospects - hopefully!"

For others it was not the end of marriage but the lessening demands of childcare that spurred them into action -

"Youngest daughter at school; no wish to enter full-time employment because of family. Desire to use brain! Became interested in daughter's school and helped; encouraged by members of staff to do something constructive."

"My children are much more independent now. After doing voluntary advice work I decided I liked the information giving element and investigated the library schools near home. (This university) said they would accept me as a mature student with just one 'A' level at the appropriate grade."

"Genuine and growing interest in literature and language; desire to really think; as children were growing up and leaving home, I felt the need for something absorbing to fill the gap; active encouragement by my husband."

For many the need was for better qualifications to improve their job prospects or to prepare for a return to work -

"I could not get any further in my job without a degree and decided now was the time to try and change career as my children were growing up."

"Career opportunity restricted with only qualifications in hairdressing ... want wider scope, which now requires extra qualifications in today's competitive job market. I was working
part-time in hairdressing salon but wages very low for long hours of standing."

"No further prospects in job without qualifications; wanting chance to study full-time."

Other influences also emerged. Given the earlier school experiences of some of the sample, an element of compensation was not surprising -

"An opportunity to do something I had always wanted to do ... when the door opened I walked through and have enjoyed every minute of it."

"... going back into education was, in a way, Hobson's choice, and in another way a challenge and a chance I had earlier been denied."

"To continue education curtailed at 15; to improve chances of obtaining job; to fit in with family responsibilities; to continue with interest in history."

"My marriage broke up; after returning to my parents' home it was suggested that I do the university course I would have taken had I not married at 19 years of age."

Closely connected, although not always explicit, was a desire to gain personal satisfaction, to test potential, to face a challenge or to discover an identity -

"Realised that I had no qualifications to get a job and few opportunities. Not prepared to spend time waiting for grandchildren to come along ... I need to be a person too. Always wished I could have got a degree."

"It was a mixture of recommendations, conditions being right and a wish not to miss an opportunity that was being offered - and wanting to discover the extent of my ability."

"With a need to occupy my time and perhaps establish an identity .."
Table 6.9 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire sample (n=68)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Women OVER 30 (n=43)</th>
<th>Women UNDER 30 (n=25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At school</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Modern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And for one woman, there were many reasons -

"Lack of qualifications; hope of career prospects; something I dreamed of doing. Encouragement by boy-friend, friends, workmates, children. To prove I could!"

The questionnaire sample: the significance of age.

In the final part of this section I shall consider the difference between two groups of women in the sample, classified according to age. When looking at the characteristics and histories of the women, it became apparent that those over the age of 30 years were markedly different to those under the age of 30. This section looks briefly at the differences between those two groups. There were 25 women under 30 at admission, 43 over 30.

Personal characteristics.

The significance of age is reflected fairly obviously in the marital state and child bearing of the two groups. Those under 30 were mainly single (ie never married) (12/25) or once married and now separated or divorced (8/25). All of the remaining five women were currently married but all were childless. In this group, only two of the divorced women had children.

In the older age group, only three women were single (ie never married); two were married and childless. One women, the oldest in the sample, was widowed; seven were currently separated or divorced; six of these had children. The remaining 30 women were currently married and with children.

School experience.

Table 6.9 summarises, for each group, the type of school attended, qualifications gained at school and after school.

Overall the under 30s were more successful at school in academic terms. Of this age group 16/25 had attended grammar schools (64.0%) and 12 women left school with two or more 'A' level passes (48%). In
the older group, 20/43 had been to a grammar school (46.5%) and only seven had two or more 'A' levels. In terms of non-selective schooling, however, the groups are similar - 6/25 (24.0%) of the younger women had been through comprehensive or secondary modern schools; 11/43 (25.6%) of the older women had been to this type of school. The main difference is that a small but significant number of the older women had been allocated to the 'intermediate' type of school; these schools would largely have disappeared by the time the younger women reached the secondary stage of their schooling. Rather more of the older women had been educated privately, mainly in convents, suggesting that their family backgrounds were more 'middle class'. Only three of the older group had been educated prior to, or during, the Second World War. At the other end of the age range, only three of the whole sample had been to comprehensive schools, one in the older group, two in the younger.

Approximately half of the women in each group reached '0' level standard and left school with one or more '0' level passes but no 'A' levels. This was regardless of the type of school attended. Of the under 30s, 12/25 (48.0%) and of the over 30s, 23/43 (53.4%) fall in this category. However, only one women in the younger group left school with no GCE passes at all, whilst 13/43 (30.2%) of the older group left without this kind of paper qualification. Partly this reflects the type of school attended - most grammar and private school pupils gained some 'O' level passes, - and partly the time factor, as more non-selective schools increasingly offered GCE courses. Indeed, two of the younger women allocated to secondary modern schools gained two 'A' levels each before leaving school, one when the school became comprehensive and the other by transferring to the sixth form of another school.

Attitudes to their schooling, reflected in their school leaving ages and reasons for leaving, were more positive in the younger group. This may explain why they tended to achieve more or, in achieving more, why they felt more positive. Of the younger group, six left at the earliest age (15-16); 25 of the older women left at this stage. Not all those staying on completed two years or gained further qualifications, but at least they were willing and allowed to stay beyond the fourth or fifth year. Because more had stayed on, for the younger group, there were fewer reasons for early leaving - finance...
and parents were mentioned twice but only one implied that school was a very unhappy experience. Reactions from the older women were very different - finance and family problems were frequently listed, having no choice because of the system and its lack of chances and, mentioned most often of all, a negative feeling about school - unhappiness, dislike and even hate. All this serves to reinforce the general conclusion that their initial schooling was more successful in every way for the younger women.

It is impossible to say if this is due to the passage of time, changing attitudes to schooling, the improvement in atmosphere within many schools or increased opportunities to achieve more now available to all pupils. Or it could be that, in retrospect, the older women, whilst feeling more negative about their schooling can express those feelings and rationalise them, particularly now that they have begun to compensate for previous failure. The older women can re-examine their own experiences in the light of what they now see happening to their own children at school. So while the actual experiences of the two groups are different in term of school type and attainment, their reflections may be affected by many other factors.

After school.

Of the women with 'A' levels in each group, not all went on to higher education. Three from each age group started university or college courses, leading to a degree or teaching certificate. Only one, a domestic science teacher, completed her course; all the others withdrew. Rather more of the younger group, (15/25), went on to some form of further education after school; 12/43 of the older women had done this.

There is very little difference in the kind of jobs done by the women in each group. Many of the younger women have moved around, trying various types of work, often travelling abroad and generally not settling to any specific career. Only those who went into library work or nursing show any continuity.

The same variety of experience characterises the older women, although interrupted by the arrival of children. Again, few show any continuity.
even prior to having children, with the exception of one in nursing and one in personnel management. Clerical work of all kinds features prominently in both groups although job changes are frequent even when the type of work remains the same.

The only clear difference between the groups is determined by the birth of children, when almost every woman in the older group gave up paid work for a time. A few returned full-time, others part-time, and some in this group had not been in paid employment for many years. In the younger group, there were periods of unemployment listed but generally of a short-term nature or whilst travelling.

Returning to education.

Any discussion of the 'adult' educational experiences of the groups has to take account of the difference in initial schooling and qualification level attained. The numbers gaining further 'A' level passes as adults are shown in table 6.9. As a general guide to their entry qualifications, having two or more 'A' level passes, obtained at school or subsequently, are considered to fulfil the 'General Entrance Requirements' (GER) for university, although technically the combination of 'O' and 'A' level subject passes is critical. Remembering that 16 of the under 30s and 7 of the over 30s had left school with two or more 'A' level passes, (subjects and grades not considered here), by entry to university 18/25 (72.0%) of the younger group and 23/43 (53.5%) of the older women had obtained GER. Thus far more of the older group were admitted to university as technically 'unqualified' entrants.

However, many women in each group had alternative qualifications which would be considered as appropriate. Most of those who had gained the GER, including those who had attempted a higher education course previously, would be acceptable without further qualifications. The grades of all the 'A' levels are not known but these do not seem to be significant, especially when passes were gained as an adult. A small number of women in the older group had just one 'A' level pass. Women in both age groups also had Open University credits, and these were accepted regardless of GCE performance. One woman in each group had spent two years at one of the adult residential colleges and this is normally a recognised route into university. Other qualifications held
included DipHEs, again a recognised route in, and various vocational qualifications. This type of certification was more prevalent in the younger group – BEC diplomas, an HNC, an OND and various City and Guild awards. Many of the women in this younger group with vocational qualifications, also had GER. In the older group two women were accepted with evidence of recent study, having gained part-time university certificates, in industrial archaeology and social studies.

No women under 30 were admitted without either GER and/or other recognised qualifications. Two women over 30 had no 'A' levels, only 'O' levels from school but no other qualifications (Both completed their degrees, one with a 2/1 the other a 2/2). Two women over 30 without qualifications were admitted to part-time degree courses; their results are not yet known.

Overall, the younger group can be described as both better qualified from school and with more recognised qualifications overall, on admission to university. Admission tutors may expect younger 'mature' applicants to have better qualifications than older ones. Work experience and other types of relevant activity may be recognised instead. For example, for older applicants, one good 'A' level grade may be taken as evidence of recent study, instead of two as required by GER. This study did not allow for any formal investigation of the criteria used by admissions tutors when considering mature applicants, but there is a strong suggestion that unofficial 'experiential' credits are awarded to some older applicants who have few, if any, paper qualifications.

The Questionnaire Sample - the results.

The initial intention of this study was to explore the retrospective educational histories of the mature women undergraduates in the sample. No reference was made to their experiences once they had entered university, although in the interview sample several did discuss their experiences and progress.

However, to put their previous educational experiences into perspective, it is important to discover how the women fared academically on their undergraduate courses. The only simple measure of this was to record the success rate in terms of the completion of
Table 6.10 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire sample (n=64)

Degree Results by age and school type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Degree</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Women OVER 30 (n=39)</th>
<th>Women UNDER 30 (n=25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sec. Modern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sec. Modern</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sec. Modern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sec. Modern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or u/f</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.11 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire sample (n=64)

Degree Results by age and qualifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women OVER 30 (n=39)</th>
<th>Women UNDER 30 (n=25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class of Degree</td>
<td>GER at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GER at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F or u/f</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
their degrees and their classification.

It was possible to obtain results for each of the five years, although four of the part-time women admitted in 1983 had not had time to complete their degrees. Of the other 64 women, only four appeared not to have graduated; two had withdrawn and two, both 1983 admissions had yet to complete.

The results are analysed in terms of the classification of the degree against the age of the women (over or under 30 years on admission); the type of school attended; and qualifications gained both at school and after school. The results are shown in Table 6.10. The usual classifications of 1, 2/1, 2/2 and 3 are used; 1 and 2/1 are described as 'good' degrees.

Overall, the results of the whole sample are good in comparison with students of the conventional age. 'Good degrees' as a percentage of all degrees obtained (35/60) gives a rate of 58.3%. Even if the non-completed students are included, (35/64) a rate of 54.6% is above average. If the results are divided into those aged over 30 and those under 30, the older women have done even better. Table 6.11 gives the numbers and percentages of each age group obtaining 'good' as opposed to other degrees. The highest quarter are women over 30 of whom 61.5% (24/39) gained 'good' degrees. In terms of completion and classification, women over 30 are likely to do better than younger women, even when their paper qualifications are less.

In terms of previous educational histories, of the 35 gaining good degrees, 25 had attended grammar or private schools. Of these 35, 12 had left with at least 2 'A' levels, another 11 had gained 2 or more as adults and one had improved her results. Thus 23 of the 35 'good' degrees had reached GER, whilst 12 of those gaining them were 'unqualified' mature entrants. Of the other degrees, 12/25 had been to grammar or private schools, only 5/25 had gained GER at school, 10 had added 'A' levels as adults and 10/25 were 'unqualified'.

When the figures are broken down into the two age groupings, of the over 30s 13/24 had GER, though 11/24 had not. For the younger group, under 30s, 10 out of 11 with good degrees had come in with GER, 8 of whom had gained their 'A' levels at school. As suggested earlier,
Table 6.12 Undergraduate Study: Questionnaire sample (n=68)

Age, school and post-school qualifications and results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. in group</th>
<th>GER school</th>
<th>GER post school</th>
<th>No GER 'Good' Results</th>
<th>No. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>00.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
there is some evidence to suggest that admissions tutors expect 'A' levels from younger applicants but are more prepared to accept alternative qualifications from the older women. That 'A' levels are not necessarily a good predictor for older women is shown by the fact that almost half of those who gained good results had no or only one 'A' level, but they did have a wide range of experience and alternative qualifications.

All but one of the women who were awarded third class degrees or who did not complete their course were technically unqualified but all had recent study experience and alternative qualifications. It was not possible to pursue the reasons for their poor performance or non-completion, although two of them were known to have withdrawn with personal problems.

Overall, the results compare very favourably with those of the other women students at the university and nationally; unfortunately there are few other detailed studies of women mature students with whom they can be compared and statistics giving results are rarely classified by sex or age.

The results gained by women in this sample suggest that overall the older women tend to do better than the younger ones. These results are summarised in Table 6.12. In both the categories B and C, proportionally more women over 30 gained 'good degrees'. Only in category A, where more younger women left school with 'A' levels, did this younger group do better. It is striking that the percentage of older women doing well is similar for each of the three categories and, in all cases, above 50% gained good degrees.

The second significant difference between the results of the under and over 30 groups is in relation to having gained GER, either at or after school.

(Table 6.12 summarises the results.)

In the under 30s, 18 were admitted with GER and of these 10 gained good degrees. Only one in this group without GER was awarded a good degree. Both the women who failed to complete the course were unqualified. In the older group, 23 entered with GER and of these 13 gained good degrees but in addition, 11 of those 20 without GER were
also awarded good classifications. Thus as suggested earlier, the gaining of GER might seem a good predictor of success for younger women but not for those in the older group, where over 50% of the older unqualified entrants gained a 2/1 degree.

Of those with GER, it is useful to distinguish between those gaining it at school and those obtaining it as adults. In the younger group, only 6/18 GER holders obtained this after school of whom only 2 got good degrees. Again school performance seems a better predictor of success for younger women. For the older group, 4/7 with GER at school and 9/16 with GER after school had good results - which is not surprising since the school attainment of this group was poor.

Thus for older women whether or not they have GER and whether this is gained at school or after is not critical. As long as they have some recent qualification or relevant experience, they are likely to be successful. Of the two women in the older group who failed to complete both had GER, one from school and one after.

Overall this suggests that admission tutors who may be considering the school attainment or post-school qualifications of younger applicants can expect reasonable success but we cannot know if younger unqualified women are also capable of doing well since fewer are accepted - or maybe are not applying. Of those very few who are admitted and who feature in this study, their results are not impressive. However, the results for the older women suggest that school performance or subsequent 'A' level passes are not necessarily the best predictors and that a more flexible and perceptive admissions policy might be more appropriate.

MATURE WOMEN UNDERGRADUATES - THE INTERVIEW SAMPLE

Of the 40 women students admitted in 1979, 1980 and 1981 who replied to my initial questionnaire, I invited 30 women to an interview to discuss their responses in more detail. Of these 30, all agreed but only 27 could be fitted into an interview schedule before the end of term. Each interview lasted about an hour and was taped. Most of the women in this interview sample were over 30, married and with children.
Table 6.13 Undergraduate Study: Interview Sample (n=27)

Selective examination results and type of school attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Selection process</th>
<th>Total for school type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Passed entrance exam</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No selective exam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Passed 11 plus exam</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passed 13 plus exam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Allocated on 11 plus exam</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Took and failed 11 plus</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Took and passed 11 plus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>No selective exam</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.14 Undergraduate Study: Interview Sample (n=27)

Type of school and highest qualifications obtained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>CSE/RSA</th>
<th>GCE O level</th>
<th>GCE A level</th>
<th>Total (school FE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the wealth of material collected, the following section concentrates on their retrospective educational histories. It follows the same format as the questionnaire but includes more details and an amplification of their responses. The quotations are taken from the taped interviews.

Academic qualifications at school and after school.

Only three of the 27 women had not taken some form of selective examination at the age of either 11 plus or 13 plus. These three included two of the younger women who went to comprehensive schools and one older woman who was educated privately. Of the others, two women took and passed entrance examinations to private day schools of an academic kind. The remaining 24 of the 27 were educated in the state system.

The selective examination results are shown in Table 6.13. Excluding those educated privately and the two at comprehensive schools, one half of the remainder (11) went to grammar schools and the other half (10) to secondary modern or intermediate schools. A minority of this sample were 'reshuffled' at 13 plus, having failed 11 plus examinations earlier. Thus by the age of 13 the sample had been 'sorted' and one half selected as potentially academic pupils.

If one half had been selected out at 13, many more had been sifted out by 16. Table 6.14 gives the type of school attended and the qualifications obtained by the time they left.

Of the 11 women who had attended grammar schools and the 3 at 'academic' private schools, only 4 gained GCE 'A' level passes whilst at school. Two more of the grammar school group transferred to local FE colleges to take their 'A' levels instead of staying on into the sixth form at school. Therefore by the age of 18 only six of the sample had come anywhere near the standard required for entry to degree courses. In most cases, their low grades or choice of subject (practical rather than academic) made it unlikely that any university or polytechnic would have accepted them, even if they had applied at this stage. For various reasons only one did apply and she did not want to go, even if offered a place. By the age of 18, all of the
Table 6.15 Undergraduate Study: Interview Sample (n=27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>School type</th>
<th>At school</th>
<th>Post school</th>
<th>Other qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GCE 0 GCE A</td>
<td>GCE 0 GCE A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar/FE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.5 OU credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>FE Teaching Cert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 OU credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ad Ed College Dipl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5 OU credits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.5 OU credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>FE Teaching Cert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Cert. in Soc.Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 OU credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ad Ed College Dipl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dip. HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Management Dipl.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sample except one, who went to a domestic science college, had left education altogether or chosen alternative paths through a variety of vocational courses.

Of the remaining private and grammar school girls, six had left after '0' levels and two had left with no qualifications at all. Of those selected for 'intermediate' schools, two had '0' levels, one had RSA passes and two had nothing at all. Of the comprehensive school pupils, one left with CSE and the other with nothing. Finally, of those at secondary modern schools, two completed this phase of their education with '0' levels, one had CSE and RSA passes and three left without any paper qualification at all.

In all, nine of the 27 left school with no GCE or equivalent; 12 left with at least some '0' level passes; and the six already listed, left with two 'A' levels. It is useful to use these three groupings as a baseline for comparing their subsequent attainments. Thus their achievements from their years of initial schooling can be summarised thus -

Group A: (two or more 'A' levels) = 6
Group B: (one or more '0' levels) = 12
Group C: (no GCE passes) = 9

By the time these three groups of women entered university some years later their qualification profiles had changed considerably. Table 6.15 summarises this change.

Group A (n=6): Of the six, only one had retaken 'A' levels as an adult, in different subjects and had attained good grades. The rest had obtained vocational qualifications of various kinds but did not attempt further 'A' levels. Technically all this group had fulfilled the General Entrance Requirements (GER) for university although most of their grades were poor.
Group B (n=12): These present a mixed picture. Four of the 12 had gained at least two 'A' level passes and thus officially fulfilled the GER for university, while three had passed one 'A' level. Three of the group had Open University credits, one an FE teaching certificate and another had spent the previous two years at an Adult Education College. Although these do not count as GER, all are recognised as acceptable alternative entrance qualifications. One student in this group had left school with six 'O' levels and was admitted with no further academic qualifications, although she did have considerable relevant experience.

Group C (n=9): These 'unqualified' school leavers present the most startling change. One woman now had four good 'A' level passes, another two women had three each. Four others in the group had two passes but not such good grades. Nevertheless, seven out of the nine in this group of school 'failures' had gained the recognised qualification for university entrance. Of the remaining two, one had one 'A' level and the other a Dip.HE. This latter was the only student to enter university without a single GCE pass at either level.

In summary, the entrance qualifications of the 27 women in the sample were -

17 with two or more 'A' level passes  
4 with Open University credits  
1 Teaching Certificate  
1 FE Teaching Certificate  
1 Adult Education Diploma  
1 Certificate in Social Studies  
1 Diploma of Higher Education  
1 with six 'O' levels from school

All the students in this sample successfully completed their course and graduated. One gained a First, 17 gained 2/1 degrees. Nine were awarded 2/2s and one a Third. Thus 18 out of the 27 women in this sample gained 'good' degrees. When these results are compared by groups, it becomes apparent that school performance does not predict
subsequent attainment. In terms of gaining 'good' degrees, the score for each group was -

Group A: 5/6  
Group B: 9/12  
Group C: 5/9

Looking back at their school attainment and their subsequent achievements led me to explore two questions -
why were these women not high achievers at school?  
what had motivated them to return to education and to work their way up the ladder to attain a university degree?

Family background and attitudes to education

One of the main problems with attempting to explore family background and parental attitudes to education is that, looking back several years later, their memories and perceptions may have changed. Indeed, several women said that they had not understood, at the time, the significance of what was happening to them but that later experiences, and particularly sociology courses, had put their earlier experiences into perspective. I asked about their parents' attitudes in an indirect way, mainly when discussing their reactions to passing or failing the 11 plus examination.

"I did pass the 11 plus but I wasn't allowed to go to grammar school." (Why was that?) "I've never really worked it out ... lots of superficial reasons like couldn't afford the school uniform and it was on two buses across town ... I think they were just not the sort of people who valued education really ... I very much wanted to go ... I did yes ... I was very upset about it but there's not much you can do at that age."

"I should have passed it and didn't and had a second try. My headmaster wanted to push me through to grammar school but my parents really couldn't afford it ... had I got through the first time they would have let me go ... I didn't hear about it till afterwards ... a lot of years afterwards, that the headmaster had wanted to push me through ... but they didn't see that education was
that important for a girl."

Some women described their parents’ attitudes to school as one of ignorance; of not understanding the importance of such things as choosing schools.

"My mum didn’t go much on the education thing and didn’t really mind what school I went to. After moving, the next door neighbour said there was a school down the road ....".

Some were a bitter that their parents had not shown interest but most felt they were just out of their depth.

"They never said a lot ... they weren’t interested in my education anyway ... they never stopped me or stood in my way, but they were never interested in any of our education. They never came to open days ... wouldn’t have dreamt of going to open days .... I do feel very bitter about it in lots of ways ... they might have been proud of me in their own way but I never knew."

"I think by then they felt perhaps a bit out of their depth by that time ... I mean because I’d gone to grammar school and that."

"Their attitude to me was ‘you do your best love’ .... there was never any push ... of course since then you read all about how middle class parents would have pushed ..."

"... they were just kind and loving and no, they didn’t understand the value of education and still don’t ... but I think they’re quite proud now, in their way."

Another decision point at which parental attitudes became important was about leaving school and finding a job. Whilst many said that their parents didn’t mind or gave them a choice, several felt, at this point, that being a girl made a difference and some had had no choice at all.

"When I actually did leave I was very upset, all my friends were staying on and my father made sort of noises like ‘well, it’s pointless educating a girl as you’ll only get married’ ...." (She
Table 6.16 Undergraduate Study: Interview Sample (n=27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family background, type of school and attitude to school</th>
<th>Private and Grammar</th>
<th>Intermediate, Secondary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Working Class&quot;</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Middle Class&quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"My father's ideas were that women should be teachers ...."

"She (mother) comes from a respectable working-class family and I think, although she denies it, she didn't really expect me as a girl to do well and after I dropped out of school she really pushed me to go and do a secretarial course .... she thought that was success ... if I could go and get this office job and become a secretary then I'd done really well and she'd be proud of me."

"My parents were very disciplined and they dictated our lives .. my father had got to support two boys, women got married so there was no point going on ... I went to a part-time shorthand-typing course. It was a matter of course ... you worked for a few years and then got married - and that's exactly what I did!"

Significantly, only one woman was made to stay on at school against her will - she was at a private school and had not passed enough 'O' levels so had to stay and take more!

But it would be wrong to suggest that the family were always the main influence during this period. Many deliberately rebelled and made their own decisions; others followed the example of their friends.

"My friends were all leaving ... so I left too."

Secondary school experiences

In the light of what is known about their home backgrounds and family circumstances, we can assess their accounts of their experiences at secondary school. I did not ask the women to classify their own families of origin in terms of socio-economic class but encouraged them to make comments on this if it seemed important to them. In every case some clues were given about the occupation of their father and/or mother; the extent of their parents' education; the education of siblings etc. Table 6.16 uses these criteria as a guide in allocating a general social class group, together with the type of school attended and their own retrospective perceptions of their school
experience. In this table, the description 'positive' indicates that their secondary schooling was described as enjoyable, uneventful or in basically 'good' terms. 'Negative' implies that their school experience was seen as an unhappy, unbearable or a generally 'bad' one.

"I hated it ... I hated those last three years. I wasn't interested in school .. I hated it. Every day was awful ..."

Those reporting a negative experience at school seemed to fit into one of four categories -

i) Middle-class girls at grammar or private schools who did not fit into the highly academic atmosphere of these all-girl institutions.

"It was a girls grammar school that up until five years before had been partially a boarding school ... very strict ... very Victorian ... very repressive ... totally female staff and I hated it and they hated me."

"I think basically this whole atmosphere of academic snobbery which I couldn't stand ... it was just the whole atmosphere of the place."

"I hated school ... it was an all-girls school and I wasn't into all girls .. I was into all boys!"

ii) Working-class girls who felt 'misfits' in selective grammar schools.

"Having passed the 13 plus I went to the girl's grammar school ... it was a fatal choice. It had been a boarding school .. very traditional with a heavy class bias ... I tended not to associate with them (middle class girls) .. I couldn't compete in social terms anyway ... so I associated with all the 'bums' ..."

"I suppose in the class structure I was at the lower end in this grammar school ... my mother used to feel that an awful lot when they had open evenings, because the teachers used to naturally gravitate to the other parents."
"I think it was a kind of accident (being selected for grammar school) ... because some of the teachers there, and certainly the headmistress, just didn't know what I was doing there ... I was aware that I didn't fit in but I just didn't understand the difference ... except an awareness that some people could be different ... some seemed to have money and speak with a posh accent ... I honestly didn't know what it was ..."

iii) Middle-class girls who hated their secondary modern or comprehensive schools and felt that their potential was not recognised.

"I remember getting into a stream in the comprehensive school and none of my friends were in this stream and it really did affect me ... I just dropped out; I rebelled against the whole thing. I wanted to make new friends and the only way I could do that was by being a trouble maker ... and so that's what I was ..."

"It was the most violent thing I'd ever come across ... I learnt very quickly how to be quiet, how to hide ..." (on entry to secondary school)

iv) Working-class girls who found their whole school experience was either unhappy or meaningless.

"The main thing is that I felt that I was threatened all the time ... there was never any physical punishment but we had some very straight-laced teachers who could crumble a kid by just looking at them ... I just went to pieces ... I didn't do any good at school from then on .."

It is interesting to note that one of the reasons for disliking school was the single-sex nature of the institution. In all, 21 of the sample went to single-sex schools for the main part of their secondary education, including nine of the ten in the 'negative' group. Reactions to school by the 'negatives' seemed to take one of two forms. Several of the women, especially those who had been to grammar or comprehensive schools, described themselves as "trouble makers" and became the ringleaders of deviant groups. These can be described as overtly rejecting the system, but it is possible that these
characteristics which had led to trouble in school proved advantageous later in other spheres — confidence, rebellion, determination and individuality. The other reaction to an intolerable situation at school was to retreat and keep a low profile but these women also spoke of their certainty that they were capable of doing better and decided that they would show their true merit one day. Again this 'negative' school experience may have been an advantage in later years, when they were determined to overcome the experience and achieve academically as adults, to compensate for their earlier failure.

I asked each woman to explain why they had left school when they did, whether they had had the chance to stay on longer or if they had had the opportunity to go on to higher education. Because leaving ages and further opportunities vary according to the type of school attended, the responses are best classified on that basis.

Private schools.

Two women had stayed on and gained 'A' levels but did not go to university, one due to ill-health and the other did not wish to go and was not pressurised by her family or school to do so. One student at a highly selective academic girls' school was made to stay on until she had gained six 'O' levels but left as soon as possible after that.

"I did the first batch of 'O' levels as normal ... got three ... and I was told that I couldn't possibly leave school with only three 'O' levels so I had to stay on for another year ... I got another three ... and left. My mother didn't like it much and the school had given up on me."

Grammar schools.

Two middle-class students 'escaped' from intolerable girls' schools to take 'A' levels at a local FE college. One of them eventually went to a college of education to do domestic science, the other had plans for drama school curtailed by pregnancy.

"I think I would have been thrown out if I hadn't left anyway ... "

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"In the end I got an appointment with the headmistress, walked in and told her exactly what I thought of her and her school and left... there were great ructions... so I went to a local FE college... I couldn't have stood it any longer."

Two others took 'A' levels at school but described themselves as 'less able'. They did not see themselves, nor were they seen by the school, as university material. Both these students, and several others from similar types of school, deplored the lack of interest in the less academic pupil and the lack of guidance in planning their future.

"I did like school but I was a little confused in the sixth form because I didn't know what to do... I applied (to university) half-heartedly because I didn't know what else to do... they just channel you towards that at school."

Five more of the grammar school women left after '0' levels - only one had wanted to stay on and had not been allowed to. The other four wanted jobs or felt that they were "not good enough" for the sixth form. They spoke of rejecting the 'conveyor belt' or being written off because of their wish to leave.

"I remember we had a little careers talk and I went along and told them that I wanted to get a job and that was it... like... they didn't want to know... so I went and got the job myself."

"Well, it just wasn't expected (staying on), again I think this class thing. I always remember we had a career advice person round... the term we left school... and they said 'Now I want all of you who are leaving school this summer to go into that corner of the room and all those taking 'A' levels into the other corner of the room'... we separated out and they said 'All those leaving this summer, you may go now...'... and that was the careers advice!... they were only interested in those taking 'A' levels."

Finally, two students left grammar school by special permission before taking '0' levels, one to get a job before getting married and the other to start hairdressing.
"I mean I left at 15 ... I had my parents write a letter and there was no problem, they couldn't wait to get rid of me ... nobody ever said, for instance, that you'll need 'O' levels to get a good job ... nobody ever said that, neither parents nor teachers ... parents because they didn't understand and the teachers had written me off anyway ... I'm quite sure they had."

Intermediate schools.

All five of the women who had attended these had the chance to stay on or transfer to the sixth form of a grammar school but were not allowed to or were forced by family circumstances to get a job and earn money. The two at comprehensive schools had similar experiences.

"I wanted to be a doctor and was being pressurised into being a nurse. I was taken to an 'expert' (ie friend of the family) who said I was very silly and of course I couldn't go to university and of course I couldn't do what I wanted to ... I was expected to go out and earn money."

"I would have actually ... had my parents been able to afford it ... I would have carried on ... we weren't very well off and it would have meant a lot of extra ... they really couldn't afford it."

"My parents wouldn't have taken much interest anyway ... girls don't need an education they felt ... I could have stayed on ... they just wanted me to be happy ... but everyone else was leaving so I thought it the best thing to do."

Secondary modern schools.

These students had various experiences. Three were able to do 'O' levels but had little choice of anything other than leaving - they had reached the end of the line as far as education was concerned. The other three left as soon as possible because of family pressure or because of their own dislike of school.

"I thought the only thing to do at the time was to leave and get a job ... the idea was to stay on and do 'O' levels but with the
family circumstances, even with the offer of a grant, it wasn't possible."

"I'd like to have gone to art college ... that's what I really would have liked to have done - but I had to go to work, no two ways about it."

From these examples several reasons emerge as to why the women in this sample did not remain at school or go on to further education -

i) they found school intolerable and could not wait to escape;

ii) they felt that further education was not for them because they were of the 'wrong' social class;

iii) they saw no point in staying on or felt they had no ability to benefit from it;

iv) they had come to the end of what their particular school had to offer and the possibility of continuing did not arise;

v) they were pressurised by their family to leave or forced by circumstances to get a job.

As well as these general reasons, I tried to identify any specific event or circumstance in their personal history that might have influenced their school career. Ten women reported what can only be described as a 'traumatic' event or exceptional circumstance - death or divorce of parents; admission of parent to mental hospital; wartime evacuation; family moving abroad; their own ill-health, disability or pregnancy. It is not suggested that these events are the main cause of their failure to achieve more at school, nor did the women themselves suggest this, but quite a high number did mention such circumstance when discussing their initial schooling. It is interesting to note that other studies of adults returning to education also report this (Hopper and Osborne 1975). What is clear from examining these personal histories is that a set of circumstances combined to make academic attainment impossible at that point in their lives. The reason - or 'fault' - may have been in the school, the family or in themselves -
but the majority of women in this sample did not have the chance to proceed further.

Thus 27 women left school with no hope of receiving a university education and no indication that they were even capable of achieving it. Yet some years later all had graduated. The next section considers what happened to them between leaving school and entering university.

From school to university: the years between.

The difference in the ages of the women in the sample and the different ages at which they left school means that the years between range from 6 to 31.

Only eight women went on to some form of further education immediately after leaving school and two others followed a year or two later. Their courses and qualifications were for secretarial or teaching jobs. All 27 then spent some years in full-time employment, representing the whole range of traditional 'women's work' — teaching, nursing, secretarial and clerical, banking, retail, hairdressing, library assistants, personnel, pharmacy technician, factory work and a period in the women's services.

During this working phase, 22 of the 27 women married, five of whom had separated or divorced before entering university. Subsequently, 19 of the women had children and for them a second phase began, that of full-time child care. In the subsequent discussion, the childless women are considered as a group, followed by the group with children.

Women without children. (n=8)

All this group were under 35 on entry and six of them were under 30. Three of them had married and two of these were now separated. On the whole they were more qualified than the women with children, reflecting the trend identified in the questionnaire sample for the younger women to be more qualified than the older. Three of the eight had left school with 'A' levels, four with 'O' levels and only one had left with no GCE passes at all. Six of the women had taken some full or part-time course before or during their working years. Two had
collected 'A' levels by part-time study as adults, two had Open University credits and one had spent two years at an adult college before coming to university.

Most women in this group had re-entered education because they felt dissatisfied with their jobs and possible future prospects, particularly if marriage or children did not seem an immediate possibility. The two women whose marriages had ended spoke of their new found independence and the opportunity to follow their own inclinations, as well as the need to take responsibility for their futures.

"I got promoted as far as I was going to and it was stay here until I retire or do something different ... I went back to looking through the prospectuses."

"No, I didn't really aim for anything right until a year before I came here and that was only because then my marriage broke up and I had to start thinking about what to do ..."

While most of these women had been in paid work since leaving school or college, in every case this involved a succession of different jobs, in some cases broken by unemployment and periods working or travelling abroad. The overall impression is that these were restless years in which the women, often unsatisfied with their careers, were looking around for something more challenging. Some had tried other courses but the decision to re-enter education as a full-time undergraduate appeared one way of making a new start.

"I think all through it's been this thing, like, I've been trying to get into higher education but I haven't realised it really ... it's only now that I can see what I was trying to get on to ... eventually, I just felt that, well, I can't keep myself down all the time, this is getting ridiculous ... then I'd left my husband ... trying to come to terms with it all ... and I thought, well, I want to do something .."
Women with children. (n=19)

The ages of this group ranged from 30 to 46 on entry; four women had one child, twelve had two, two had three and one had four. Three of the group were single parents, all with fairly young children.

Because of the wide age range and different circumstances, the profiles of these women varied considerably. Very few had received any full-time education or training after school, although several had taken part-time or day release courses. All 19 had worked, mostly full-time, until the birth of their first child, which ranged from four to twelve years after leaving school. Seven of this group have never returned to paid work at all, so for them the child rearing phase ended with university entrance. For one woman this amounted to 21 years and, not surprisingly, it was the older women who had spent longest in this phase.

Only four of the group, on the other hand, had returned to work full-time after having children. Two of these had a very short break, the other two returned more recently. For most, the pattern was for full-time child care, interspersed with or followed by, periods of part-time work before coming to university.

Alongside their child care and/or work, all but three of the 19 had found time to return to study. Of the three who did not, two already had 'A' levels. Most of the group studied part-time but three had managed to get on to full-time 'A' level courses at local FE colleges. Part-time study included 'O' and 'A' level courses, OU courses, a DipHE, an FE teaching certificate, and a social studies certificate, as well as a range of uncertified and interest courses.

These were the women who were also active in local groups and involved in a variety of organisations. This ranged from demanding voluntary commitments in a range of national organisations, to participation with local play groups and schools, adult literacy and church work or projects initiated for themselves. These women were occupied during their child rearing years, either in study or otherwise, which suggests that they were not satisfied with just the demands of house and family.
"I didn’t want to be a cabbage ... home isn’t enough, it just isn’t ... I went to night school to get an ‘0’ level English when I had K (daughter)."

"Being at home wasn’t sufficiently demanding ... being a full-time mother ... so I found myself a part-time job ...

"I must say I was bored out of my mind ... I really couldn’t ... I just can’t take domestic minutiae ... I never did like housework and things like that."

"I didn’t realise how bored I’d become ... I was thinking ‘what can I do? what can I do?’ I would have to do something ..."

"I felt a bit cabbagey ... you know it’s all very well doing the housework and washing nappies but there’s not much satisfaction in it and I thought something like that would give me an interest ..."

This need for outside stimulation led to the first step on the re-entrant route - doing an ‘0’ or ‘A’ level evening class or an OU Foundation course.

"I’d just had him (son) and I decided - I think the thing came through the door from (local school) ... all the courses they were doing so I decided to do something ..."

"I went to do ‘0’ levels, not with the view of doing anything with them, just for the pleasure of it."

"I did one ‘A’ level when I’d just had my fourth child ... you see that was just for interest ... I don’t seem to have planned anything ... I saw an advert in the (local paper) for sociology ‘A’ level and I thought ‘that looks interesting’ ... so I went and did it .."

Few women had made any long-term plans at this stage and the decisions were spontaneous. No-one spoke of starting with the intention that it could lead to higher education or a full-time course. For many it was ‘testing the water’, trying to discover if they could go further than they had at school. Then for some, and particularly those whose marriages were ending, it became essential.
"Yes, I gradually added to them ... until my own marriage started to break up and I realised that I was going to have to find some way of earning a living ... and then I started to do 'A' levels."

"My marriage broke up in 1976 and then I was thinking along the lines of a full-time career ... the sort of thing I wanted needed a full-time degree ... "

The full extent of this use of education, especially the 'O' and 'A' level 'ladder' will be explored in more detail in the next section because, for many, it emerged as one of the most important experiences during these school to university years.

The use of the General Certificate of Education as a re-entry route.

In this section I am reverting to the three groups A, B and C which classify the students according to their school leaving qualifications. This is essential since the starting point for re-entry depends mainly on what qualifications have been obtained previously (Table 6.15).

Of the women in Group A, (n=6) who had left school with two or more 'A' levels, only one had taken more as an adult. She had passed three more with grades of ABB (UCCA score=13), the highest scoring entrant in the sample. With these results she competed very favourably with conventional applicants. No others in Group A used the GCE re-entry route but were accepted on their qualifications gained at school, plus subsequent vocational courses, experience and maturity. The student who had re-taken 'A' levels saw these as essential -

"... as a breaking-in period to see if I could cope, to see if I'd still got it in my head ... to see if I'd still got the intellectual capacity ... the first essay I wrote I was terrified, I thought I hadn't got the capacity to put down thoughts ... and somebody actually thought it was fairly good!"

Group B had all left school with some 'O' levels or CSEs but no 'A' level passes. Of this group (n=12) seven used the GCE 'ladder' to gain
entry. Four of them, already holding some 'O' levels from school, took 'A' level English as their point of re-entry, two of them went on to further 'A' levels, while the other two were accepted with just the one 'A' level pass. Three others in the group re-entered with an 'O' level and, having regained their confidence, proceeded to 'A' levels – English and Sociology being the most popular choice.

Group C (n=9), having left school with no GCE passes, show the most obvious use of this 'ladder'. In most cases the first 'O' level was the crucial experience that opened up the possibility of returning to serious study. Remember that this group can be considered the most extreme 'failures' of the formal education system and the importance of this should be noted.

"She (a friend) said 'Come and do some evening classes with me' ... oh no, I said, I can't do 'O' levels, I failed them at school ... so she said 'well, just try'. We went along ... and it was just fine! I passed those two, so the next year I thought 'Right, OK, I'll do an 'A' level' ... I was terrified and I found it a bit of a struggle but I persevered and took them ... I passed them both!"

" ... so I went to do English Language in the November revision class, six weeks then took the exam – and it was easy and I thought 'cor! these are 'O' levels' and when I got a B, I was over the moon ... I was really over the moon with that and then I went and did Social and Economic History the following June and got a B for that and I thought 'these are too easy, I'll go and do an 'A' level' ... and all the time I couldn't believe it because I'd always thought that people who could do 'O' levels, 'A' levels and got to university were geniuses ...."

" ... and this 'O' level Sociology came up and this neighbour wanted to go so I went with her ... and they were marvellous ... ... I didn't believe that I'd do it, I was frightened to death, just everybody seemed so much cleverer than me ... and I remember thinking 'oh well, I may as well go in for the exam and just see' ... Yes, I got a grade 'A' at 'O' level and I couldn't believe it ... I mean I felt so good ... I was so surprised .. and I enjoyed working."
And having regained some confidence, they all proceeded to 'A' level study, again English and Sociology being the most popular choices. It was usually at this point that the possibility of further study became a reality, although the suggestion was initially rejected.

"There was no question that I'd stop ... I learned so much. I didn't think ahead, I certainly didn't think to university level ... it was a case of knowing that I wanted to do something ... again it's all down to the tutors, they were marvellous. One of them said once 'I hate to see intelligence wasted, you should apply to university ... just a casual remark ..."

"No, I'd been there (on an 'A' level course) all of six weeks and he (the tutor) said 'When are you sending in your UCCA form? I said 'What?' ... and he didn't exactly say 'you can't afford to waste any time at your age' but what he said was 'If you decide at the end of the year that it's not your thing you haven't lost anything' ... so I sent it in."

Despite the debate on the suitability of GCE for adult students, for 16 in this sample it proved an essential step on the ladder. Time and again women stressed how important it had been to discover that they were capable of gaining a recognised qualification and of how each success raised their confidence. Several spoke of the skills they had developed and the study patterns they had formed.

" ... the two years doing 'A' levels were a very good background run ... got me back into it ... you feel prepared ... it get's you into study."

Perhaps not surprisingly, no-one regretted the time spent gaining 'A' levels, even when they discovered later that it might have been possible to have got in without them. Several insisted on their need to be on 'equal terms' with the younger students.

"Oh no, I think getting 'A' levels makes you realise that you have a certain amount of ability and that you're competing on more of a level with the youngsters .. "
"I felt I had to come here every bit as academically capable on paper as everyone else .. oh yes, I had to do it ... I had to go through the '0' and 'A' level hurdle before that .. I'm not a very confident person .."

"She said 'If you don't get them ('A' levels) ring me up - we've got a place for you ... but I decided that if I didn't get them, I wouldn't come ... yes, because I was working like mad and thought that if I can't get them, I'm not going to manage at university ... I was glad that I did it that way."

Their choice of 'O' and 'A' level subjects reflects two constraints. First, they must choose from what is currently available in their area and this, to some extent, reflects demand, since under-subscribed courses are cancelled. Some subjects are much cheaper to provide than others. Secondly, those whose school attainment was limited and who lacked confidence in their academic ability, tended to choose something they felt they could cope with or a subject where no previous knowledge is required. Thus English Language is by far the most popular 'O' level and often used as a trial starter. At 'A' level too, English is popular, followed by sociology, since women feel that it is a subject where maturity and their adult knowledge of society may be an advantage. The subject selected does not always relate to the one studied eventually at university. For mature students, any academic 'A' level subject can be used for entry and as evidence of recent study, although some departments do look for a pass in a specified subject.

The significance of the GCE re-entry route has to be recognised, although there are some problems with its use as selection criteria. In some subjects, it may not be the best preparation for undergraduate study and the grades obtained by adult students may not reflect their eventual attainment. Indeed, as discussed earlier, the resulting degrees gained by the whole questionnaire sample show little correlation with 'A' level passes. But for those whose 'failure' at school was marked by their inability to gain any recognised qualification, the achievement of the first pass was often a crucial turning point. Gaining more passes not only opened the door to higher education but convinced them, that once the door was open, they were capable of entering.
One further point about the use of the GCE route concerns the availability of classes. Although the range of subjects offered may be limited and further cuts have reduced the number of courses running, it was possible for the majority of women to find a class within reach. Most schools and colleges offer an evening programme which includes several GCE courses.

Four of this sample were able to enrol on a full-time 'A' level course at a College of FE and, in every case their fees were paid, although no grants were available. One college ran a course specifically for mature students. (See appendix II for a further discussion on this provision). The majority of the sample took part-time evening classes to fit in with their work or family commitments. These were provided by various LEAs as part of the normal adult provision. Two women attended daytime classes alongside the conventional sixth form students in a local community college. For women who are at home with children, and who live near to a school which offers this facility, this is a particularly convenient way of studying. The provision of a creche and timetabling within school hours made it possible for those with young children to attend. The main problem these women encountered was accessibility, since the structure of the school timetable means that lessons in a subject can be held on several days a week. Nevertheless, the women who had used these facilities were full of praise for the system and the encouragement of the staff.

"They accepted me very well ... I'd use the staff room for coffee and lunch, I joined the Community College committee ... it was hard at times but I did enjoy it. They were very good, very keen ... I didn't know whether I could do it but they encouraged me a lot."

For these women, too, the experience of working alongside younger pupils proved a useful preparation for studying with younger undergraduates.

The whole debate about the entry of adults to HE and alternative admissions criteria is reviewed elsewhere in this study. While most women in this sample used the traditional GCE 'ladder', a few had obtained other qualifications and used alternative routes. It is these other re-entry routes that are considered next.
Other re-entry routes

One of the main problems with examining the alternative qualifications of the sample is that individual admission tutors in different departments may apply various criteria when deciding whether to accept an 'unqualified' mature student. In addition, seven of the sample were very late applicants who were really making enquiries for the following year. In such cases, where departments were full, they were asked to wait a further year but in four cases students had only a few days to prepare before term started.

"A phone call came and said 'come tomorrow' ... and I nearly didn't come."

"I had an interview and I wasn't due to start until a year later as it was October and ... er, they said ... they pushed me through for that year ... term had actually started."

Certainly if departments were topping up their numbers at the last minute, the qualifications accepted might not have been so welcome earlier in the year. However, in the two cases quoted, the women both had two 'A' levels.

Four women had come into this conventional university via the Open University, although some of these had 'A' level passes as well. Not only were the OU credits accepted as alternative admissions criteria and evidence of recent study, but their experiences in the OU had been important preparation for these women. Emphasis on study skills and independent learning were useful preparation in themselves, but growing confidence and enthusiasm gained from their OU experience made the thought of full-time study seem attractive. In every case, the OU residential summer school was a decisive event.

"It was summer school, actually, that was the turning point ... I was so immersed in it for an entire week ... this was marvellous. I managed to cope with it, actually managed to open my mouth in class
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>B (n=12) 2As post</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No As</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (n=9) 2As post</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1A post</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No As</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
which is another thing ... so I thought that if I can do this, I can cope with full-time."

"I'd been to summer school and I'd loved it ... just didn't want to come back home ... and I believed that university would be one long summer school!"

"I saw an advert for the OU and got a place on that and that's how it started ... and I really thrived on that ... I started to feel I was getting somewhere."

Encouraged and guided by OU tutors and counsellors, these students came to see that full-time study was a possibility that could become a reality.

Other qualifications held by the 'unqualified' applicants included an Adult Education Diploma, gained after two years study at an adult residential college; a university Certificate in Social Studies, gained after three years part-time study; a Diploma in HE, after one year part-time and a full-time FE Teaching Certificate.

There was only one student who had no other qualification other than her six 'O' levels gained at school. With extensive experience in adult literacy, but no proof of recent study, she had been asked to write a letter of application - and she was successful.

"I had this initial interview and he said 'Write a letter saying what your background is, what you've done and why you don't need to take 'A' levels ... so I did that and the next thing I heard was that I'd got an unconditional place.' (and subsequently a 2/1 degree)

Several other students were asked for evidence of their recent academic work - an 'A' level essay or OU assignment. It is not the policy of this particular university to set an examination for mature applicants and, from the results of this sample, it seems that admission tutors are recognising potential fairly accurately. The school and post-school qualifications of the sample are summarised in Table 6.17, together with the subject and class of degree gained.
The decision to come to university.

Having asked all 27 women in this sample what made them decide to apply to university, their answers initially suggest that an element of chance was involved. At their points of re-entry to education, hardly any of them saw HE as an ultimate goal. Many of them did not know that mature students could go to university and most of them thought that three good 'A' levels were the minimum requirements.

"I imagined you wanted qualifications ... something to show before you got in and I was amazed how happy people were to welcome me."

"It was a shock. I was still locked in the past when you had to get three good 'A' levels to go to university. I really thought she (tutor) was crazy. I said 'you can't go to university with one 'A' level' and she said 'yes you can, if you can prove to them that your capable, they can waive 'A' levels.'"

"I thought mature students were between 25 and 30 ... I mean, I was 40 the year I started my 'A' levels ... I'd just never considered it ..."

Only four of the sample knew people at this particular university, though those that did had been encouraged by them to apply. Others knew someone who had been a mature student at another university. By far the most significant enabling or encouraging person for most students had been their 'A' level teacher, an FE or community college tutor or an OU person. Throughout various branches of 'adult education' there are obviously a number of teachers who, not only recognise talent, but inspire and encourage their students to continue. Often to the amazement of the women concerned, it had been suggested to them that they should apply.

"I'd only been there, not even a term, and she (tutor) said 'you want to apply to university - apply now'. I just looked at her ... and she said 'obviously' she said, 'you're just made to study English', she said 'I can't believe you left school at 15.'"

"She (tutor) said 'of course you can apply, what are you being so silly about' ... and that made me apply."
Other influences came from colleagues and friends or from members of their family.

"I was wondering what I was tackling ... and my husband said 'of course you can do it' ... so I more or less got pushed into it by my family despite my own doubts."

"I got my second 'A' level and then my husband said 'well now, the logical thing to do is to apply to university' ... he'd been pushing me for years ... I had to be persuaded ... 'well' he said, 'if you apply it doesn't commit you to anything' - so I did."

"He said 'you're going to regret it for the rest of your life if you don't do it - I'm not standing in your way; you go and do it if you want to' - and so I did."

But not all the women in the sample had such understanding from their families or the support of their husbands. Several had battled through despite considerable opposition and resentment and, as recounted earlier, for some the end of a marriage was a spur to study.

Very few women seem to have had 'official' guidance or advice. Some careers offices and libraries had provided information when asked but most women had gathered it bit by bit from various sources. Two women did pay for vocational guidance from private agencies in London; the results had led them to a choice of subject that they had not previously considered but only one of the two felt the money had been well spent.

One motive for applying to a conventional university was to escape the frustration of part-time study. It is often assumed that adult students prefer the chance to study part-time, and for many it is the only option possible. However, there are advantages in full-time study and these women had found it possible to fit in the demands of a full-time programme. Several women commented that they preferred this to their previous part-time experience.

"It's so nice to be able to do it full-time and not split yourself off into numerous fragments."
"I suddenly got very resentful - everyone else is allowed to study and no-one bothers them. There's got to be an easier way of studying. So I decided I'd send in an UCCA form ... but I didn't take it seriously, it was really a protest about the difficulties of trying to study part-time."

Having decided to apply, most chose this university because it was the nearest to their home, because it offered the course they wanted or because it had a reputation of accepting mature students.

The current prospectus states quite clearly - "The University welcomes applications from mature students and is anxious to offer all possible help in the process of deciding to read for a degree." Many women spoke of the encouraging response they had received sometimes after other universities had been discouraging to the point of rudeness. Several said that they had only been making preliminary enquiries and were amazed at the helpful reception they got.

"I think they're keen on mature students here - I got that feeling."

"Because of the distance I chose it .. and I've been so glad I did - oh, I love it here ... it's a super department, everybody's nice, everybody's helpful ..."

"So I thought I will ring the university and see what's on offer ... and he said 'will you come in and we'll talk about it'. So I went in and I was still making enquiries as opposed to an application .. and he sort of said 'come on, you can get a form in' ... and so I did. I thought - 'yes, I will apply' ..."

Even after making enquiries, being interviewed and being offered a place, many of the women still could not believe it was happening to them.

"I thought if I'm going to do anything, I'd got to do it now - so that's why I applied to university. I didn't expect to hear anything, never thought I'd get an answer."

"No, when I applied and they accepted me I couldn't believe it. I've
still got the letter ... because, I mean, from nothing to that ... I
couldn't take it in .. I had to re-read it about six times ... I
thought 'they've misprinted this' .. it was still very much ...
gosh, is this me?"

"Frightened to death! I don't think really deep down I really
expected to be accepted ... I'm still not convinced ... you have
this idea of university students being so highbrow and on a
different plane.."

Some felt so overwhelmed by what they had done that they deferred
their place for a year before summoning up enough courage to re-apply.

"I postponed it for a year. I got a place for the year before and
started getting cold feet ... I rang up and told them and they said
they'd change it to next year."

"I applied here and got a place but I chickened out.... I daren't do
it ... but desperation got the better of me and a year later I
thought ' I'll take the risk ' ...

Not all the women felt so reticent but time and again small remarks
showed that a large number of them still could not believe that they
were actually going to be admitted. Their own lack of confidence,
coupled with a feeling that a university was a pinnacle of learning to
which they could never aspire, suggested that some women needed real
courage to take this final step.

"I questioned my ability all the way through ... all the way through
I questioned it .. I always thought it was beyond my ability to get
a degree ... I've never considered myself particularly clever."

"It was always at the back of my mind ... this big thing that it's
for other people. It took me ever such a long time to work out that
I actually could do it and that it wasn't something I was banned
from completely."

"Viewed from the outside, if you have nothing to do with university,
very much from the outside this 'ivory towers' bit ... right up to
the moment I came knocking on the gates and they were going to swing
open and let me in!"

"I think I always used to hold up graduates as being something special ... I was a bit intimidated ... I doubted my ability to do a degree ... I'm quite surprised really ... I've thoroughly enjoyed it, I did quite well really and it's been really good."

The distribution of the sample between departments and main subjects reflects both the traditional choice of subject by all female undergraduates, as well as the feeling that maturity may be an advantage in some subjects. Social and human sciences take the largest number of mature women students, which may reflect their admissions policy. Certainly the prospectus encourages mature students to apply for these subjects - "In addition the Department recognises the valuable contribution that can be made to the academic experience of both students and staff by candidates who do not come to university directly from school; thus it is especially pleased to consider applications ... from mature candidates with many years experience since leaving school."

A course in Library and Information studies is seen as a good choice by many mature students since it combines both academic and vocational preparation, which is an important consideration for an older student. The same was formerly true for courses in the education department but the cut backs in teacher training have not only reduced the places available, but also deterred older women from applying. In the interviews, several women said they had originally intended to teach but changed their minds since jobs had become increasingly difficult to find.

It was not the purpose of the study to examine the experiences of the women once they had entered university, nor to explore their plans for the future. Suffice to say that at the time of the interviews, almost without exception, they considered their decision to apply as the wisest thing they had done and their years at university as possibly the best time of their lives.

"Even when I came I felt a bit doubtful and then, when I'd been here a week, I realised I had made the right decision and it was
wonderful straight away ... I was euphoric for about six months!"

"It's marvellous ... I'm just worried that it's going so quickly."

"It's been the most super three years of my life ... of my whole life ... yes, it's been the happiest three years of my whole life."

And, although it was an hypothetical exercise, I asked each woman to look back and comment on what had happened to them educationally. A few felt some resentment that their earlier experiences had been unhappy or unsuccessful but most felt they now understood what had happened and that, given the circumstances, nothing could have changed. Not surprisingly, since most were so happy with their present experience, they said how glad they were that they had done it later and not straight after school.

"No, I don't think that for me personally, I have any regrets. I think I'm just a late developer and I'd just got to the age when it suits me."

"I think that I'm getting more out of it now than I would at 18. I'm appreciating it much more and I'm working much harder ... intellectually ... and what it's doing for my self-esteem. It's come at a very good time in my life ..."

"Social science - I think it's an advantage to do it when you're older. You know I've seen it with the young ones in my class, they sort of 'drink in' everything that's said - very idealistic ... and don't see the ifs and buts ..."

"It's been very much tied up with this personal identity thing so I think I had to do it as I got older and grown up, so I don't regret it ..."

"I think education is much more than just what you learn at school ... it's the building thing and I think you've got to be at the right stage to do it and I just wasn't before."
Some conclusions.

All the women in this interview sample failed to reach university after school for a whole variety of reasons. Most had been sorted out of the academic system at an early age and very few had been given any chance of proceeding to higher education. At the time, only a few were even aware of the opportunities offered or how limited their own choices were. Many of them felt that they had done as well as they could, given their own particular circumstances. Most of them did not imagine that they had the ability to progress any further, although a few knew that they had not had the chance to test their potential. Yet we now find these women, not only coping with university study and with other commitments, but, in some cases, doing very well indeed. Either the school system failed them by not selecting and educating them to their potential or, in fact, they were not capable of realising that potential at that age. Or, as seems most likely from this evidence, a combination of circumstances and conditions prevented these women from progressing any further at that time. Only in later years, when those circumstances had changed, could they now demonstrate their ability. In one sense, we need not seek an explanation for their previous 'failures' but note, only, that even those who appear to have 'failed' are still capable of considerable achievement. Their success endorses the demand for more places to be available for mature women students at university.
Chapter Seven

A study of re-entry routes
A STUDY OF RE-ENTRY ROUTES

In my study of mature women undergraduates, it was found that of the 68 who replied to the questionnaire only 19 had left school with 2 'A' levels. A further 35 had left with some GCE passes ('O' levels or one 'A' level) whilst 14 had left with no academic qualifications at all. On entry to university some years later, 22 of the previously 'unqualified' leavers had obtained two 'A' levels, making a total of 41/68 who entered as mature students with the General Entrance Requirements (GER). Of the remaining 27 without GER most had alternative qualifications (OU credits, one 'A' level, HNC etc.). Only 4 women entered university without any recognised 'paper' qualifications.

Thus it becomes apparent that a number of women who left school unqualified are re-entering the education system via various routes. To some extent, the route used by a particular woman will depend partly on her circumstances - whether full-time or part-time, day or evening classes are possible; whether geographically mobile - and partly on her past educational history. A woman with 'A' levels from school is less likely to re-start with an 'O' level course. Overall, the most important factor for most women is what is available in their locality.

By far the most favoured route for my sample was by taking GCE 'O' and 'A' levels, which seem to many to be the 'obvious' route for anyone wishing to continue into higher education. Also, GCE 'O' and 'A' level classes are widely available, even though the choice of subject may be limited. However, the 'alternative' routes cannot be ignored, particularly since 'A' levels, although fulfilling the GER, are by no means a certain way of gaining entrance unless the grade score is exceptionally high.

As a result of these findings from the undergraduate sample, I decided to conduct a small scale investigation into the possible re-entrant routes used by mature women.
The aims of the study were two fold -

(i) to see if it is possible to identify women at this stage who might be at the point of re-entry;

(ii) to see if any women at this stage have themselves formulated plans for the future.

Obtaining suitable samples of such women is a major problem. Whilst GCE 'O' and 'A' level evening classes can be identified, the numbers, sexes and ages of students cannot easily be obtained. Nor is there any record of which students have actually taken or passed specific GCE examinations. In addition, some mature women attending GCE classes may not be 're-entering' education as such but just taking a single course in a subject which interests them.

In addition to evening classes, some community colleges (senior schools for 14-18 year olds) encourage adults to join day-time classes, alongside the full-time pupils, and to take the appropriate 'O' or 'A' level exam if they wish. Again, not all women studying in this way do take the exam, although many who enrol under this scheme do intend to gain further qualifications.

By approaching one large community college in the area it was possible to obtain the names and addresses of women students in both day and evening GCE classes. Two day and five evening students from another college were added. In the case of the evening classes, students were in the current year so that their results were not known. For the daytime students, it was possible to cover a period over the past three years, including women who had taken and passed courses as well as those currently studying.

After eliminating those younger students who were re-taking subjects failed at school, a total of 22 evening students and 17 day students were contacted and sent a questionnaire by post. Replies were received from 12 day and 11 evening students. Details as follows:

Daytime students: 12 taking 'A' level subjects
2 taking 'O' level subjects
'A' levels: Sociology (4) Maths (2) Design (2) German, English,
Table 7.1 Re-entry Sample from GCE and WEA classes (n=47)

Initial schooling and qualifications gained.

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Statistics, Physics, Business Studies, Computer Studies (1).

'O/A' levels: Human Biology, General Studies (1).

'O' levels: English (2) Social Science, Maths, Biology, History, Computer Studies (1).

Evening students: 16 students, all taking one 'O' level course each.

English (11) Computer Studies (2) History (2) Human Biology (1).

To provide a contrast with the GCE route, an alternative re-entry provision was also investigated. Six women on a 24 week Workers Educational Association (WEA) New Opportunities for Women (NOW) course and 12 women attending a WEA day-school were also asked to complete the same questionnaire as the GCE sample. Both these groups were attending women-only provision and many of the day-school women had also completed a NOW course. In addition to their current course, of these 18, 3 had completed OU degrees, 8 had taken 'A' levels and 2 had taken 'O' levels as adults. Most had attended a variety of WEA courses; only 3 had no other adult education experience at all.

The essential difference between the GCE and WEA sub-samples is that GCE courses lead to one definite end, whereas the WEA provision is designed for women who are exploring various possibilities about their future. In terms of methodology, the GCE questionnaires were sent and returned by post; the WEA subjects filled in their questionnaires at the end of a session where I had been talking about my research.

Summary tables 7.1 and 7.2 give the details of the 47 women in this subsidiary study.

Personal details: age, marital status and family.

These details are summarised in Table 7.1. Of the re-entry sample 11/47 women fall into the 20-30 year age band with rather more - 19/47 - in their thirties. Of these women, 31 are currently married, 8 are separated or divorced. 37 women have one or more children, so that 6 are single mothers. Several of the older women have children who have
Table 7.2 Re-entry Sample from GCE and WEA classes (n=47)

Post-school education, jobs and personal details

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left home. Given that over half the sample are attending day-time classes and therefore not in full-time employment these figures are not surprising.

School experience.

Out of the 47 in the sample, 22 had passed a selective exam at 11 or 13. Twenty women had attended private or grammar schools and 4 others placed in the intermediate sector. Given the re-entry points being examined here, it is quite surprising to find such a high proportion selected at 11 as potentially academic.

Of the women 18 left school at the earliest age possible - 14 or 15 - and 18 more left at 16. So only 11 remained at school after the fifth year.

The qualifications gained by the women at school reflect both the types of school attended and the age of leaving. Only three women, all in the WEA group, left school with two or more 'A' levels; one went on to university and two to teacher training college. A further three left with one 'A' level. Very few, then, had fulfilled at school the potential identified earlier by the selective exam. 21 women left with one or more 'O' levels but 20 others had no GCE passes at all. There were a number of CSE passes (below grade one) among the younger women and a couple of RSA typing certificates. The rest had no recognised qualification as a result of their schooling, including three who had attended grammar schools. Indeed those that left at 14 or 15 would not have had the opportunity to take any external exams. Of the sub-groups, the evening class students were the least well qualified, and, since these were all 'O' level groups, this is not surprising.

Reasons for leaving school.

The questionnaire gave the women two opportunities to comment on this, first by asking if there was any particular reason for leaving when they did and, later in the questionnaire, asking for any further comment on their schooling that they wished to make. Together their replies to these questions produced a range of reasons and reactions.
The most common reason (9/47) for leaving was connected with family circumstances. This may have been financial or due to the death or illness of a parent.

"Parents couldn't afford to keep me at school ..."

"Mother died, had to leave school to look after younger brothers and sisters."

Three women said they had no choice due to the system.

"No-one stayed on at all at this all-age school."

Thus external circumstances were a major factor for many women. But others said quite clearly that they did not like school or that they preferred to leave and get a job.

"I didn't really enjoy school - I wanted to get out into the big wide world!"

"Wanted to leave at the end of the Fifth year but persuaded to stay on for the Sixth. Was not learning anything useful in my opinion so got a job and left."

"Fed up of school; wanted to earn some money."

Feelings about school were often strong and many expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the system, as well as dislike for the school. This was amplified in their further comments, where many described the unfairness of the system and the limitations of their schooling.

"Felt cheated as I was phased out at 11 years."

"Grammar school for girls was not like the outside world and appeared irrelevant."

"I had set my heart on going to grammar school and I was bitterly disappointed at failing the 11 plus ... I did not like the tech."
school because some of the teachers were useless and the boys messed around and disrupted class. A bad atmosphere, I lost confidence."

"Felt no motivation in doing well at school. Teachers only interested in the brightest."

"My schooling was mostly religious instruction, needlework, cookery and country dancing, we were taught by nuns and the parish priests mostly, the end object being to make us into good catholic wives and mothers."

Dislike for school and lack of encouragement often featured in these comments and the social class issue was mentioned several times.

"I loved it but I struggled with the social class difference I found. I felt people like me did not go into the sixth form. I was 'mongrel' - working class father and middle class mother."

"A total waste of time. Very poor - nobody cared. I don’t blame my parents, they were trapped themselves by circumstances."

"... I knew there was no point in studying anymore because my parents said they couldn’t afford to keep me at school. My father was a miner and I have four sisters and three brothers, I was seventh in line. They were not very interested in my education, I think they believed it was a waste of time."

"No-one stimulated us girls to develop ourselves. Working class home did not offer encouragement."

Although many condemned the system or the school, others blamed themselves for wasting it and regretted their decision to leave.

"I wish I never left school."
"I enjoyed it and wished I’d stayed on at school."
"I wasted it and could have gained better qualifications."
"I wasted my opportunities through not working to the best of my ability."
After leaving school.

Having left, the majority with few or no qualifications, the first destination for many was further education. Of the 47, 27 went straight into full or part-time FE courses, leaving 16 who did not continue their education at this stage in any way.

The FE courses taken are reflected in the types of job listed, almost all of which fall into one of the traditional 'female' categories. Clerical jobs of all kinds are mentioned most, followed by those in the caring role (nursing, residential care,) the service sector (hairdressing, catering, cleaning, retail), with a teacher, the women's services, police and a library assistant. Whilst many jobs listed are unskilled, few manual jobs or manufacturing occupations appear. Three women mentioned factory work and one was an outworker. In an area where the hosiery trade employs many women in full-time, part-time and outworking - this was an obvious under-representation.

Apart from the paid work, voluntary activities figure prominently. In all 27/47 mentioned involvement in some kind of organisation - church, political, child or youth centred (playgroups and Guides) and in various types of provision for the elderly or disabled. The WEA sub-groups were most active in this way, 16/19 mentioning at least one, and often several, involvements. The daytime GCE group were also active but evening class students, where most were currently in paid employment, had little involvement in voluntary activities. Once again, as with the undergraduate women, many of those who return to education are also those who have filled their time with many other commitments.

Returning to education

Since one of the objectives of this part of the study was to see if it is possible to identify potential 'returners' at the point of entry, it was anticipated that the women in this sample would have little prior involvement in adult education.
For the women in the GCE groups this was true. While some of the day students had taken previous 'O' and 'A' level courses, for almost all the evening students it was their first experience of study. The WEA students, however, had attended a range of courses. As well as other WEA provision, several had taken GCE 'O' and 'A' levels, OU degree courses and many were currently studying or planning to do so in the immediate future.

In the questionnaire, the women were asked how they heard of their current course, why they had decided to attend and what plans, if any, they had for future study.

Most women heard about their courses through publicity - in newspapers, from the library or through obtaining prospectuses (21/47). The most effective medium was through the local newspapers, especially the 'free' papers. The other source was through previous tutors or previous classes (6/47). It is easier for those already in the adult education system to learn what is on offer. Four women made their own enquiries, one phoned County Hall and another contacted the principal of a local FE college. Two women on the daytime provision heard about it from friends and one knew what was possible from previous contact with the college.

Many women did not answer the first part of the question but went straight into the second part and gave an explanation of why they had applied. In many cases, their answers are linked to their plans for the future so that, in the examples given, these two replies will be combined.

For many women, the reasons they give are mixed. Instrumental plans for the future - "to get a better job" - combine with personal challenges - "to see if I could" or "to compensate for poor schooling". A brief summary of their reasons and plans is shown below.
Reasons:

Using the break 5
Get a better job 9
Gain qualifications for HE 8
Advised to do it 3
Bored; needing stimulus 9
Personal wish 4
To compensate 2
Family events 2
Children studying 2

Plans for the future:

Intending to study more 26
Wanting a job 3
Unsure 2
No more study 9
Left blank 4

For those women at home with dependent children or currently out of paid work, day-time provision meets their need. This includes the nine women who said they were using the 'break' from work to combine study with their years of child rearing, as well as most of those who were 'bored'. Several specifically mentioned the creche facilities as essential.

Age 33; no qualifications.

"I felt the need to do something and to achieve something for myself, during the time I was at home bringing up my daughter. Also I was curious to know if I was able to pass exams and of course hoped it would help me to get a better job later on."

"I hope to train as a dental technician, which is a three year course or a five year apprenticeship."
Age 28; one 'A' level. (OU degree and 'A' levels as adult)

"I was bored at home with a 1 year old and .. (the college) offered German which interested me and a lovely creche."

"I am now in full time employment as a bi-lingual secretary."

Age 21; one 'A' level.

"Because I was at home during the day and thought I would put some use to my time and studying an 'A' level. I was able to do this since I could put my son in the creche and attend the lessons."

"I wouldn't mind doing another 'A' level - Human Biology. Then when my son attends school at 5 years old I hope to train as an SRN."

Age 30; four 'O' levels.

"I have always been interested in English and the creche made it possible for me to join the Sixth form. An interest outside the home with the added bonus of further qualifications persuaded me to attempt the course."

(No plans.)

The motive to gain qualifications either for entry to higher education and/or for a better job is common reason for returning, given both by day and evening GCE students.

Age 50; no qualifications.

"I want to obtain five passes with a view to applying for a degree course eventually. (Better late than never.)"

"I would like to study 'O' level psychology. I wish to acquire 3 'O' levels and 2 'A' levels."
Age 35; two 'O' levels.

"Took one year's social studies course first (CEE) and my teacher suggested I do an 'A' level. Decided to take it so I could continue my career in caring for the mentally handicapped and to see if I could study at that level."

"Thinking of a full-time education course, either university or polytechnic, to do CQSW."

Age 23; two 'O' levels.

"Really my main interest in doing this course is in the hope of gaining an 'O' level to enable me to take more training courses at a later date (in nursing.)"

"I hope to do sociology next year."

For some the need to compensate combines with pragmatic plans for the future.

Age 35; no qualifications.

"I felt I had missed out at school. Possibly was a prelude to doing a degree. I feel there is more to gain by doing this than merely entering into a dead-end job which is the only possibility at the moment."

Age 33; no qualifications.

"I suddenly found myself dissatisfied with my lot and decided that only I could change what looked like a bleak future of forever doing dead-end jobs in manufacturing."
"I hope eventually to go on to higher education and become a school teacher."

External circumstances sometimes provided the incentive for women to return to study.

Age 28; six 'O' levels.

"After my husband left me two years ago I decided then to take further education as I would have liked to train as an occupational therapist."

"I only have plans now for obtaining a first-aid certificate but when I do try to apply for occupational therapy and I find my qualifications not enough I will then try to obtain another 'A' level."

Age 30; no qualifications.

"Have thought about it for a long time. Took the plunge when marriage broke down."
(No plans)

Age 49; no qualifications.

"My eldest son is doing 'O' levels and I thought he might like to keep up with mum!"
(No plans)

Age 40; no qualifications.

"Decided to take it as youngest son is taking it in his curriculum and thought it would be advantageous for both of us."
Of the women who had no plans for further study, four left that section blank. Some had shown that this was quite clearly a one-off event for a particular reason. But others had found this first attempt dispiriting – perhaps through attempting too much or perhaps through an unhappy experience.

Age 32; one 'A' level.

"The course covers an insight into computers and is an area obviously not covered when I was at school."
(No plans)

Age 26; seven 'O' levels.

"Was thinking of doing full-time occupational therapy course; thought human biology 'A' level would help indicate my ability to cope with that area of study."

"Not now; found course uninspiring."

Age 41; no qualifications.

"I had been thinking about further education for years. The reason I decided to take my present course was to catch up on the education I missed."

"None at the moment plus I have no hope of gaining anything on this course as I started four weeks late because of a mix up of dates. I have not been able to attend apart from three times because of an allergy."

But one women on the WEA course had a very clear idea of what she wanted to do and the reason why.

Age 32; seven 'O' levels.
"Read the Woman's Room by Marilyn French and was disgusted by the way the raped girl was treated by the legal system. Decided we need more women lawyers so had to do a law degree. Careers Advice Officers useless, library very helpful. (Taking Law degree currently)

"To do Law Society finals then two years articles to qualify as a solicitor. I hope to practise in a law centre or practice concerned with women and the law."

And finally, a woman, studying by day at the local community college, whose circumstances, motivation and response typifies many.

"A friend took 'A' levels .. and all it took was a phone call. Their enthusiasm carried it on. I had already taken an 'O' level in SMP Maths at the college at night, after my 5 year old daughter had come home talking about sets."

"At the moment the driving force necessary has faded a little. I have concentrated on getting my youngest daughter settled in school but at some stage in the not too distant future I shall continue. My biggest problem is WHAT shall I do when I return to work. I shall have 20 years of it ahead of me, it will have to be something I enjoy!"

Future plans for education.

The direct response by 26 out of the 47 saying that they do intend to continue studying has to be treated with caution. Whilst there are those, as illustrated above, who clearly do intend to continue and know exactly what they want, there were many, especially in the GCE 'O' level groups, who just said yes, they wished to continue but without any indication of what subject or level this would be. Some actually admitted that they had no idea what would follow and a couple of replies asked directly for help or advice. (These two requests were answered by me, by letter, giving a list of relevant books and
suggesting who they might contact for further advice. I met one of them two years later — she was then a part-time undergraduate.)

Most of those who had fairly definite plans for further study saw themselves taking the 'traditional' route. Some were aiming for the standard GER of 5 'O' levels and 2/3 'A' levels. Either no-one had told them that this was not necessary for mature applicants to higher education or, if they knew, they had decided to be 'qualified' anyway. But time and again, both explicitly and by indication, women showed that they needed both information and advice. Those on the NOW course and some of the WEA group would receive this as part of their course. Those taking GCE courses might be helped by a sympathetic tutor — as indeed some of the undergraduate sample had been.

Several in the WEA group spoke of their intention to study for a degree part-time, either through the Open University or at a conventional university. At this time some departments in local universities are trying to recruit part-time students. These students have to pay their own fees and do not qualify for a grant. The GCE group on the other hand seemed to imply that any future study would be full-time, which may explain why they felt it necessary to gain the recognised qualifications. In fact, several in both GCE and WEA groups already had sufficient qualifications and evidence of recent study that would probably have enabled them to gain entry to a full-time higher education course without further qualifications. Some of the women in this re-entry sample were already better qualified than some of the women in the undergraduate sample.

Final comments.

This section of the questionnaire, unlike the one used in the undergraduate survey, encouraged the respondents to comment more fully, and in an unstructured way, on their educational experiences — previous, present or future. Almost all the GCE day students wrote something (4/12 blanks) and many were lengthy replies about themselves, their views on education and their plans for the future. Contributions from the GCE evening students were sparse; 10/16 wrote nothing. Those who did reply wrote more about the system and the provision than about themselves. Responses from the WEA groups were mixed but this may have been due to lack of time at the end of the
sessions; having to complete the questionnaires in my presence may have affected their responses (6/19 left blanks). Those of this group that did complete the question wrote exclusively about themselves and their schooling. Noticeable, too, about this group was their enthusiasm, excitement and optimism about their educational futures. This may possibly be due to the fact that these WEA students were in all-women groups and the purpose of the session was to focus on the education of women.

Although comparisons between these sub-groups may not be valid, the wealth of comments on women and their education made this final section of the questionnaire very interesting in its own right. It provides a fitting conclusion to this study.

The most frequent response was one which expressed either regret at earlier lost or wasted opportunities and the need to compensate for this. Fifteen women commented in this way, plus others who regretted having made wrong choices. (The letters after each quotation show the type of school attended.)

"Wish I'd worked harder at school. Although there weren't always the opportunities for children then that there are today, I do think the basic grounding was usually excellent." (TS)

"I would have liked to work harder at school and have been able to have taken more exams. Also I would have liked to have gone to a school which was smaller and paid more attention to the individual pupil." (CS)

"I regret wasting so much time." (GS)

"I felt I was a failure at school and although I would have liked to have carried on at FE college didn't feel I could ask my parents to support me." (GS)

"My initial education suffered as a result of the death of my father soon after commencing grammar school, only child with my mother (rather a vague person). Chose nursing rather than art for security, resulting in being termed 'failure' of the grammar school education. Notice a great change although feel there should be some
categorization of student abilities to enable teachers to teach rather than keep order? Perhaps schools trying to be too comprehensive preparing students for all eventualities rather than concentrating on basics and leaving higher education to carry on."
  
  (GS)

"I feel that perhaps if my education had been completed at school after 15 years of age a lot of mistakes would have been avoided because I would possibly have had independence and a satisfying career of my own without having to depend on someone else." (SM)

"Was always in an A stream at school but lost a lot of time. Very much regret and would love to go back. We had some great teachers in those days." (SM)

"Although I was encouraged by very rare teachers I mainly felt put down and inferior and never had the courage to try again." (TS)

"Went to a grammar school but my mother thought that was where education finished. Girls get married so no stress put on qualifications until too late. Now feel it most stimulating but no regrets about not having done it earlier." (GS)

"It has taken me a lot of time to build up confidence in by abilities and to extend the horizons of my expectations." (GS)

"I felt that my parents expected too much of me - my mum was a schoolteacher (very good job) though my dad - he left school at 14 - not very interested in schooling - all he wanted was for me to earn lots of money." (C)

"I feel that my education has been wasted hence my desire to come back to it." (GS)

Other women blamed the system or the restricted choices offered.

"Thought the 11 plus system in particular in our area was bad. The one who passed in our class was never in the top six in class during year. We were surprised she got through and we didn't. At least two
others and myself should have got through on a continual assessment system. At no time were we offered the chance to do 'O' levels. We would have needed another year at college." (SM)

"I went into science at school partly due to interest, partly because my sister did arts subjects, was older, went to same school and I was compared to her. She went to university and I was expected to go too but being a rebel (at home and at school) didn't. I certainly wouldn't have been channelled into a legal career anyway and don't regret not going to university at 18. It would probably have been a waste of my time then." (GS)

"Choice of 'A' levels at school very limited, couldn't afford to take them elsewhere as we live right out in the country - couldn't get - altogether a disappointment." (C)

"Did not know what I wanted to be so took general subjects throughout education. Lack of direction has led me nowhere!" (PS)

Moving from past to present experience, some chose to comment on adult educational facilities and others to praise the provision.

"I enjoy being back at 'school'. I just regret that I didn't do it earlier, instead of taking the TOPS course, but no-one offered me the chance." (SM)

"I started my education 'Mark II' after a building inspector informed me that certain forms "were very complicated and better left to my husband". I resented being classed as an uneducated housewife. The staff, both at (the school) office and creche were absolutely superb and the teaching staff coped with me admirably. I found mixing with the sixth form revealing. I could well remember thinking and acting as they were doing and yet having a parent's reaction to such comments and deeds. It helped that I was in the 'middle' of the class mark-wise, the Sixth form students initially expected me to be top of everything because I was an adult. It took sometime to convince them that I was there to learn. Sometimes it would have been nice or helpful to have had a fellow student to work out the homework with. Above all I was lucky to have such good staff available, a reliable creche and a husband who would wash up whilst
I did my homework." (GS)

"I enjoyed the (school) course but would have welcomed more opportunity for discussions etc that I might have experienced in an adult setting rather than school based. Very grateful to some of the excellent teachers I met there." (GS)

"I found that when looking for an 'O' level course in L-- there wasn't a lot to choose from so have to travel to --. The course I am doing at the moment is far too short for an 'O' level being only 2 hrs a week. Also comparing my courses with friends at Tech college etc (these) are more expensive." (CS)

"When I went to enrol at (school) I wanted a basic Maths and English refresher course, not having been to school since I was 15, I practically needed to start at the beginning again, they only had 'O' level courses, I couldn't manage the 'O' level Maths, how can I learn advanced maths when I don't know much more than the basic add and subtract, I liked the English, I could grasp that better, the typing was a waste of time, but really the teachers don't teach which is what I needed they seem to think you should know it because one is an adult, I think in my case what tutoring I was receiving I can do as well from books." (RC)

"I would like to see more academic subjects taught day/evening classes as opposed to the many "home extension" subjects eg cookery, dressmaking etc. Many nearby schools run classes catering for the latter subjects. For academic subjects one must travel further afield. For non-drivers like myself this presents two problems - possibility of attack when walking alone at night and bus fares are a problem for non-workers and not being pensionable age. The latter of course enables concessionary rates with courses and fares." (SM)

"I personally am overwhelmed by the encouragement given; being a late developer, although I wonder if I would feel the same if I were doing scientific rather than artistic subjects." (GS)

Others are still looking for guidance.
"I wrote off to the colleges concerned for OT training giving my qualifications at the time, asking for their advice for obtaining 'recent' education to obviously help me get a place, as my qualifications were minimum and each college varies - but I've had to decide for myself. I feel as though a good chat with a careers adviser would be beneficial for considering options and where to go for help etc because of the serious number of people who are qualified but do not obtain success and are not employed." (C)

"After a lifetime caring for my family I feel the need for something for myself. I was cheated out of my education through misfortune and have always felt the loss. I now have the time to make up for this loss and hopefully this will be possible. Perhaps you could help please?" (GS)

And finally the optimism and excitement -

"WEA courses and particularly the NOW course has altered my perception of myself, so we shall have to see where it leads." (TS)

"I'm very excited now and feel at last I might fulfill the potential which I have always felt I had. Nursing I now realise was the one way up the ladder at the time." (TS)

"I did not develop at school to my full potential. I found I was just studying to pass exams and took subjects that bored me. Little stimulation or encouragement to develop a career. No career guidance except nurse, teacher or secretary? I am very excited by WEA courses and absorb easily their content. I cannot get enough education now." (SM)

Discussion of results

This discussion will seek to amplify and explore the results summarised in the previous section but also to draw out the similarities and differences between the re-entry study women and the original undergraduate sample. One of the main objectives is to see if
Table 7.3  Summary of Undergraduate and Re-entry Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Undergraduate (n=68)</th>
<th>Re-entry (n=47)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>25 36.8</td>
<td>11 23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>29 42.6</td>
<td>19 40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-40</td>
<td>11 16.2</td>
<td>7 14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>3 4.4</td>
<td>7 14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>37 54.4</td>
<td>31 66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>16 23.5</td>
<td>8 17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or sep.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>15 22.1</td>
<td>8 17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29 42.6</td>
<td>10 21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>39 57.4</td>
<td>37 78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+ pass</td>
<td>39 57.3</td>
<td>22 46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+ fail</td>
<td>22 32.4</td>
<td>18 38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>10 14.7</td>
<td>3 6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>36 52.9</td>
<td>17 36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>5 7.4</td>
<td>4 8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec Modern</td>
<td>14 20.6</td>
<td>12 25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>3 4.4</td>
<td>8 17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>31 45.6</td>
<td>36 76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>37 54.4</td>
<td>11 23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL Quals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A levels</td>
<td>19 27.9</td>
<td>3 6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O levels</td>
<td>34 50.0</td>
<td>24 51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>15 22.1</td>
<td>20 42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-HE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE(F-T)</td>
<td>17 25.0</td>
<td>14 29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE(P-T)</td>
<td>11 16.1</td>
<td>13 27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>35 51.4</td>
<td>16 34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>19 27.9</td>
<td>27 57.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
it is possible to identify women at the re-entry point who might subsequently continue into higher education. It is also important to note the perceived plans of the re-entry women and the educational needs they express.

With reference to the re-entry sample, it is useful to differentiate between those women who are actually at the point of re-entry - i.e. having done no recent study of any kind - and those who may have re-entered sometime prior to the study and are engaged in an early phase of their return but have already got some idea of their potential - i.e. have obtained one or more good 'O' level passes. This is not to suggest that there is always some clearly defined 'point' which must be identified as the re-entry decision but in the early stages it is impossible to predict which individual women will continue. If the initial step is unsuccessful, giving up or failing the first 'O' level for example, then no further educational attempts may be made and a sense of failure reinforced. In the GCE evening group there are already two possible failures.

The small size of the re-entry sample and the disparate groups within it make meaningful comparisons difficult, both within the sample and with the undergraduate women. However certain similarities and patterns emerge. The characteristics of the two samples are summarised in Table 7.3.

Age, marital state and children.

Apart from two women under 21 who were retaking 'O' levels failed at school, the average age of the re-entry sample was older. There were proportionally fewer in the 20-29 range. Those women in this age band in the undergraduate sample tended to be the better qualified and therefore less likely to be taking 'O' level courses; they are more often unmarried and without children, therefore would be working full-time and not attending daytime classes. In the re-entry sample, one would expect to find them only in the evening class. It is in the 30-50 age range that most similarities are likely to occur and the percentages of each sample in this range were similar. There were proportionally more of the older range, (age 50 plus) in the re-entry sample (7/47) than in the undergraduate sample (3/68).
There were few unmarried women in the re-entry sample (8/47) and as anticipated, all but one of these were in the evening classes. In the undergraduate sample there were more unmarried women, younger and better qualified than the older women, most of whom were or had been married. The proportion of separated and divorced women in both samples seems high—20% of the ever-married in the re-entry; 30% of the ever-married in the undergraduate group.

In the re-entry sample, 37/39 of the ever-married women had children, although, again the daytime provision would largely exclude childless women who were in paid work. In the undergraduate sample 39/53 of the ever-married had children, leaving a fairly high proportion of once married but childless, several of whom were now divorced.

Not only are younger, unmarried and childless women more likely to be in paid employment and therefore excluded from the re-entry sample but also, full-time higher education entitles most women to a grant covering fees and some subsistence, therefore making it a possible alternative to paid work, even if on a reduced income. Unsupported women with children also receive an allowance for them when they are studying full-time. However, all part-time study, at whatever level, is unfunded and entails paying fees. Unless women are earning, receiving benefit or supported by a partner willing to pay those fees, the part-time mode of study is unsuitable.

Initial schooling.

The undergraduate sample show a marked superiority over the re-entry sample in terms of their initial school attainment. 39/68 (57.3%) of undergraduate women passed an 11+/13+ examination, compared to 22/47 (46.8%) of the re-entry women. This means that in both samples, around half of the women had been selected for a potentially academic schooling, the other half having been selected out. A higher proportion of undergraduate women went on to private or grammar schools 46/68 (67.6%) compared to 20/47 (42.5%) for the re-entry sample. This suggests that there were a higher proportion of women from middle-class homes in the undergraduate group, particularly since
10 women in that group had attended private schools.

In terms of secondary school attainment, the undergraduate women were more successful. A greater proportion of re-entry women left at age 14-16; 36/47 (76.6%) compared to 31/68 (45.6%). Thus a higher proportion of the undergraduate sample stayed on beyond 'O' levels and into the sixth form. This is reflected in their school leaving qualifications - 19/68 (27.9%) gained 2 or more 'A' level passes, whilst only 3/47 (6.4%) re-entry women had 2 plus 'A' levels. Note however, that only 5 women in the undergraduate sample and 4 women in the re-entry sample had gone from school into higher education. There was less of a discrepancy between the 'O' level passes obtained by each sample - see Table 7.3 - but 20/47 (42.5%) of the re-entry as opposed to 15/68 (22.0%) of the undergraduates left school with no GCE passes at all.

Given the samples studied, it is not surprising that more of the re-entry should have no GCE passes, since most were re-entering at that level. But almost half of both samples had reached up to GCE 'O' level standard at school. Even more noticeable was the wastage at 'A' levels, leaving a potential group of women (in the undergraduate sample) who returned to education later, but not, as yet, in the re-entry group. These 2 plus 'A' level women are the 'missing' group of girls who show potential at school, stay on past the minimum school leaving age, gain further qualifications but fail to utilize these in higher education. They disappear into nursing, secretarial, personnel and catering courses. So, whilst the re-entry women attained less, both groups do show evidence of wasted potential and lost opportunities at and after school.

In terms of likely re-entry potential, it is possible to identify those who took 'A' levels at school but did not continue into higher education and those who left with some 'O' levels. But it is important to remember that 22% of the eventual graduates left school without any GCE passes at all.

Reasons for leaving school.

If it is possible to identify a difference between the two samples in
terms of school leaving attainment, the reasons they gave for leaving school are remarkably similar. Even allowing for retrospective responses to have rationalised reflections and for the fact that the undergraduate women had to some extent compensated for earlier failure by actually getting into university, many reasons and reactions are shared by both samples.

A substantial number of women in both samples give a family circumstance as the reason for leaving — finance, parental pressure or a serious event (e.g. the death or illness of a mother or father). Added to these were those who felt that there was no alternative but to leave — the school had nothing more to offer or staying on was not a realistic option. In both samples, these ‘external’ circumstances were the major reason for leaving. In both samples the effect of social class can be detected. Reasons reflecting more ‘self’ determined responses were also shared by both groups — leaving because school was disliked or unsatisfactory; leaving because the alternative — a job or marriage — seemed more attractive.

Even allowing for retrospective rationalisations, it is surprising how many women felt that family intervention had interrupted their education, whilst others blamed the school itself or the system of which it was part. Others clearly blame themselves, for wasted time or not working hard enough, and regret their foolishness. Thus ‘compensating’ for lost opportunities becomes a very real motive prompting women to re-enter and to persevere. The need to test themselves and see what they can achieve emerges in both groups. Since many women, indeed many adults, may feel like this about their schooling, what makes these women different is that, whatever their early experience, they are motivated enough to attempt a second try, and for some, to attain levels far above their schooling indicated might be possible.

After school.

After school both groups went into the traditional range of ‘women’s’ jobs. Although the undergraduate sample had obtained more qualifications before leaving, their participation in both higher
education and further education was not much more proportionally than that of the less qualified re-entry sample. The same range of courses leading to the same range of jobs appears in both lists, with clerical as the most common category but caring, catering, cleaning and retail - and hairdressing - featuring in both lists. FE teachers, library assistants, police and service women also appear in both. Factory workers are a minority, although in both samples there is at least one woman who had spent all her life in manufacturing.

Marriage, children and voluntary work filled the time for many in both samples; and, common to all, by definition, was a return at some point to education.

Returning to education.

The adult educational experiences of the re-entry sample are largely defined by the groups studied - GCE 'O' and 'A' level daytime classes; 'O' level evening classes; NOW and other WEA courses, with a few of the latter also having gained GCE passes and OU credits.

Of the undergraduate sample, 24/68 had re-entered education via one or more GCE 'O' level courses, most continuing on to 'A' levels afterwards; 11 of these had left school with no GCE qualifications at all. These women, mainly, but not exclusively, from intermediate, comprehensive or secondary modern schools, were using 'O' levels as a 'test' to see if they could proceed further. These are the undergraduate women most similar to the majority of the re-entry women, 25 of whom were taking, or had taken an 'O' level course as their initial re-entry route. Of these 25, 17 had left school with nothing, but had already as adults gained one or more 'O' level pass, thus suggesting that these could be the returners who would continue. Also in the re-entry group were 9 women who were taking their first 'O' level course. As the questionnaire was sent to them in November and they had been willing to reply, it suggests that they intended to continue the course but there was no way of predicting whether they would actually take the exam at the end or if so, whether they would pass. However, my earlier discussion of their reasons for returning and plans for the future suggests that most intend to continue.
Two final points emerge from this comparison of the samples. Many of the undergraduate women who were subsequently interviewed admitted that their first 'O' level was a trial run and that a good pass in that became the turning point. At the time they had no definite plans or aims for the future but passing increased their confidence and motivated them to continue. The responses from the re-entry sample suggest that many do have hopes and plans for further study, even if some are rather vague at this stage.

Secondly, the re-entry replies suggested that many would welcome information and advice. While one or two mentioned the encouragement and enthusiasm of their teachers, others needed help. Intervention at this stage would clearly be appropriate, particularly once the first course had been passed. In the undergraduate interviews, only two women had sought professional guidance, paid for privately; no-one approached a specialised advisory agency but, at this time, there are none available for adults in this area. Several of the undergraduate women spoke of helpful and encouraging adult tutors, who suggested various possible routes for them, and some used libraries for information.

The women in the WEA groups, particularly those on NOW courses which have a counselling and advice component as part of the course, are more likely to receive assistance. It is the GCE 'O' and 'A' level groups who most need help. If the experience of my undergraduate sample is typical, only chance factors will determine which few are advised. Since GCE openings for adults are widespread, this would seem an important point of intervention.

Conclusions.

The re-entry study has shown that there are a number of women who have, or who may be, re-entering education via traditional routes, whose experiences are very similar to those who now are mature undergraduates. There are also those using alternative provision (WEA, NOW, the OU) who also hope to progress to higher education. There is every reason to suggest that such a path may well be possible for them.
Whilst there are clearly other younger, single, better qualified women who were not identified in this particular re-entry sample and who subsequently enter higher education, this limited study at re-entry points has been useful. Greater resources of time and finance would make a larger scale survey possible, particularly if combined with an advisory input.
Chapter Eight

Summary and conclusions
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this thesis I set out the main aim of this research as -

"to explore the educational life-histories of a group of women, both through initial schooling and during their re-entry to education, to discover what factors affected their decision to participate in education as adults."

In Chapters Two, Three Four and Five I have discussed the background to the empirical study, which is recounted in Chapters Six and Seven. These last two chapters explain how the women in the samples were identified, explore their educational life-histories and attempt to locate the decisive factors in their experience which made them real or potential "women returners".

Chapters Six and Seven also demonstrate how the objectives of the research were operationalised and fulfilled.

"The research was designed with the following objectives -

1. to identify a sample of women who had successfully re-entered education as adults;

2. to explore the initial educational histories of these women who had returned;

3. to identify the re-entry points used by these women and the subsequent routes they followed;

4. to discover the reasons why these women decided to return and how they selected both starting point and subsequent route;

5. to discover how they viewed their retrospective educational histories now that they were nearing the completion of their re-entered education;
6. to investigate a further sample of women who appeared to be at possible points of re-entry;

7. to compare the educational histories of the women who had successfully returned with those who might potentially be returners;

8. to discover if it is possible to identify which women among the potential returners might proceed further and what intervention might be appropriate at each stage."

The results of the research can best be summarised by taking each objective in turn.

1. To identify a sample of women who had successfully re-entered education as adults.

Success in this context was defined as having achieved entry into higher education and having gained a degree. In all, 68 mature women students were identified in one Midlands university; 60 had graduated, four were still studying as part-time students and four others had withdrawn or failed to complete the course.

2. To explore the initial educational histories of these women who had returned.

These histories were explored by questionnaire (all 68 women) and by interview (27 of the 68). Their initial schooling experiences were mixed, with critical points emerging at the selection examination (age 11 or possibly 13), at the legal school leaving age (age 15 for most of the sample), at GCE 'O' level examinations (age 16) and at GCE 'A' level examinations (aged 18).

Although the first point - selection at 11-plus - was seen as very significant for those who "failed", those who "passed" did not necessarily go on to fulfil their assumed academic potential. For the older women (aged 30 and above), type of schooling was not significant in terms of academic attainment and 11-plus failures did as well
ultimately as those selected for intermediate or grammar schools.

3. To identify the re-entry points used by these women and the subsequent routes they followed.

This information was obtained from questionnaires and amplified in interviews.

The younger women were better qualified on leaving school and were therefore less likely to re-enter education as adults before applying for university. Those who did had used a variety of re-entry routes, mainly GCE, BTEC or other conventional qualifications. For the older women, the GCE '0' or 'A' level was the most common re-entry point, reinforcing the widespread recognition of this qualification as a prerequisite for higher education, plus the fact that courses leading to GCE qualifications are widely available. The second most common re-entry route was through the Open University, although this was often accompanied by GCE passes. Most noticeable was that no woman in the undergraduate sample used the alternative provision of the newer access or preparatory courses, possibly because they were, at the time, not widely available in this particular locality.

What is apparent from this study is that the younger women appear to have better GCE qualifications from school. This may reflect a policy decision by admission tutors to look for better traditional academic qualifications from younger "mature" applicants.

4. To discover the reasons why these women decided to return and how they selected both starting point and subsequent route.

Although the women themselves tended to present their reasons for returning to education, and particularly for applying to university, as a matter of "chance" this cannot be accepted as the total explanation. Others might have had similar "chances" and yet not taken them.

One factor that stands out above all others is that many of these women came from family backgrounds which they themselves describe as
"working class", or as not recognising the importance of education or of not considering it appropriate for girls. Yet, almost without exception, the women in the undergraduate sample now appear "middle class" in their lifestyle and attitudes. Quite clearly, many of the married women have achieved upward social mobility through marriage, by marrying an educated or middle-class man or by marrying a man who himself was upwardly mobile. Even the woman who left school at 15 to marry a motor mechanic now finds herself wife to (the same) man who owns his own business and sends their children to private schools. The never-married women, most of whom were younger, were not only better qualified on leaving school but appear generally to have come from middle-class homes. By the time they reached university, several were in fairly high status jobs and had bought their own homes.

One other consideration that must be addressed is that views on the importance of education have changed over time. Although the parents of some of these women may not have realised the importance of education and qualifications for a girl, they themselves, as mothers, now appreciate its importance for their own children. It is possible that this increased awareness also affects the way they see themselves in relation to educational opportunities and qualifications.

Another very strong reason for returning to education can be described as compensatory. Many women in the undergraduate sample reflected on their initial schooling with regret, knowing that they were capable of achieving far more academically. Some expressed resentment that they had "failed" at 11-plus selection, had not been allowed to continue beyond the minimum school leaving age or had made an unwise decision that they later regretted. Re-entry to education as an adult, for them, was a way of proving that they had the ability but had been prevented from realising it.

Other women, particularly in interview, expressed reservations about their ability, lacked self-confidence and were "grateful" for this opportunity. Most were gradually realising that they had been mis-classified or wrongly labelled much earlier in their educational history. This proved a strong motivation to the women to achieve now that the opportunity was there.

Finally, for many women with young children, the main motive for
re-entering education might be described as desperation. For women who give up paid work to have and raise children the reality of motherhood does not coincide with its idealised projection. For intelligent women with lively minds, the mundane routine of domesticity is not satisfying. This realisation, both personal and through encounter with others, was one of my starting points for this research. Some women turn to education as an escape from the monotony of motherhood.

5. To discover how they viewed their retrospective educational histories now that they were nearing the completion of their re-entered education.

Retrospective reactions are always suspect if the aim is to arrive at some kind of "truth". In this research I was concerned to discover how previous educational experiences were viewed, but accepted that these would be presented in the light of subsequent events.

Much of what has already been referred to in the section above helps to indicate the views women had of their earlier experiences. For example, the importance of 11-plus selection was one common theme.

References to gender were rare in questionnaire answers but often emerged in interviews. It is clear that some of the older women had been subject to strong parental attitudes about gender appropriate behaviour, particularly from their fathers.

Once again, however, the significance of social class must be noted. Both in questionnaires and interviews, women made reference to the class-based assumptions of their families. In interviews particularly, the disjunction of the working-class girl at grammar school was mentioned.

Family and friends played a major part in retrospective educational histories. Where the family was dominant, their expectations prevailed. In other cases, the importance of friends emerged, leaving family as compliant. This was particularly evident with school leaving decisions - "All my friends were leaving, so I left too."

Another factor of considerable importance for certain women was the
occurrence of what I have termed a "traumatic" event at a crucial point in their initial education. For girls particularly, there were and possibly still are, expectations that affect their decisions. If the mother is incapacitated or removed, they must take her place; if finance is a problem, their education can be forfeited since their futures are not so important.

For these and for many other reasons described in detail, the main theme to emerge from the educational histories is one of wasted potential. Women of ability were "cooled out" of education at 11, 15, 16 and 18. All, with one partial exception, failed to enter or complete any course in higher education - until, that is, their subsequent return.

For these "successful" women, however, it was possible to rationalise their earlier experiences. Resentment had been modified by understanding as they came to realise the reasons for their initial failure. Most were now so elated and proud of their present attainment that they had few regrets and could actually express some kind of preference for having delayed their educational achievement. Many were grateful for the opportunity.

6. To investigate a further sample of women who appeared to be at possible points of re-entry.

This proved to be more difficult to achieve than the earlier objectives and was hampered by lack of time and resources. The sample of potential "re-entry women" was determined more by convenience than design and yet the study of this sub-sample yielded valuable findings. To be effective this sort of study needs to cover more than one year so that initial re-entry women can be followed up. Those for whom more than one year's details were available (ie the day students in a community college), there was a much clearer indication of which women might be re-entering and continuing, rather than taking a one-off course. The successful completion of the first 'O' level course would appear to be the most appropriate point at which to identify potential returners who are using the 'traditional' route.

7. To compare the educational histories of the women who had
successfully returned with those who might potentially be returners.

The reservations applicable in the comment on the objective above apply here also. If genuine returners could be identified, then comparison with the undergraduate group would be more valuable. What was very clear from this limited study was that there were several women in the re-entry group who were already as well qualified as the undergraduate applicants and who would quite probably have gained entry to a course in higher education had they applied. Clearly, from their replies, some did intend to apply.

8. To discover if it is possible to identify which women among the potential returners might proceed further and what intervention might be appropriate at each stage.

From the re-entry group it would be presumptuous to indicate exactly which individual women might be potential returners and which might decide not to engage in any further educational activity as an adult. Clearly, initial school performance is not an adequate predictor.

Expressed intentions have to be treated with caution. While some do know what they wish to do and how to go about it, most others express vague intentions or indicate confused ideas. Some actually asked for advice.

From both the undergraduate sample and the re-entry group this emerges as the most common need. No universal easily available source of information, advice and guidance is available for those adults who wish to re-enter education. Individuals may be aided by a knowledgeable and perceptive tutor but for most, it is a haphazard combination of what is seen to be available and what they have the confidence to attempt. This I identify as one of the most important findings of the study.

Looking back at the stated objectives for the research enables the findings to be summarised and their implications noted. Looking back at the methodology employed makes it possible to assess its appropriateness for the task.
With the undergraduate sample, both methods—the questionnaire and the interview—allowed relevant material to be collected. Although there was a slight ambiguity identified in the questionnaire, the content enabled a range of details about the women to be listed and then discussed. The questionnaire was particularly appropriate for the collection of factual material. The subjective components are more difficult to interpret, particularly since they are retrospective. For example, the age of leaving school as opposed to the reason for leaving school.

However, the most useful tool for this research was the interview. In this, the answers on the questionnaire could be explored and extended, as well as drawing on other information and ideas. If more resources and time could have been made available, it would have been useful to have interviewed all the questionnaire sample. Given the restraints, however, the questionnaire was important in its own right and despite its limitations, it yielded a great deal of information about the women. Most importantly, the responses raised further issues that needed to be explored.

The responses of the undergraduate sample were enhanced by the willingness of the women concerned to write or talk at length about their experiences. I have already noted the difference between the views of these women who have now achieved considerable success in their return to education and those of the re-entry sample who are more tentative and less confident. Within the re-entry sample, it was possible to detect a difference between those who had already made some progress since re-entry, who had a clearer view of their ability and potential, and those who were just beginning to feel their way. It is impossible to tell if educational attainment, however modest at first, increases and reinforces confidence or if it is the more confident women who proceed further anyway. This in itself would be worth further investigation. Reports of women-only provision, such as New Opportunities for Women courses, suggest that confidence can be increased through appropriate educational experiences.

Another variable that needs to be explored concerns the age of the women in the samples. It might be suggested that the study is already 'dated' in its implications. Girls leaving school today may be more aware of the possibilities open to them, of their potential, and
therefore make more informed decisions. The increase in the number of young women entering higher education suggests that this may be true for some of them, particularly for those from middle-class homes. Other studies of young women, and the decisions of the younger women in this sample, indicate that the picture has not changed much for girls from less privileged backgrounds. Decision points are still critical, particularly option choices, the age of leaving school, the choice of course in further education or which employment or youth training scheme is entered.

The continuing prevalence of marriage and relatively small families suggest that many women in future might find themselves in similar positions to the women in these samples.

Having summarised and commented on the objectives and the methodology of the research, it is important to consider the findings against the background of the discussion in chapters two, three, four and five of this thesis.

Chapter Two: A historical perspective on the education of women and girls.

In this chapter I identified various patterns within education which, I argue, still exist and are still influential. The different provision within schools for girls, and the different expectations of girls themselves, lead them to opt for a different range of subjects to boys and, eventually, to different post-school education and training. In some ways this pattern has changed little since the 1923 Report described in the chapter.

Although schools may no longer overtly encourage girls to select subjects which provide domestic skills, nevertheless, many of the less-able girl pupils end up taking courses in 'domestic' science, 'child care' and 'family studies'. The very existence of these subjects in the curriculum suggests a historical legacy that prioritised the importance of preparing for marriage and motherhood - for girls. The women in my samples, educated during the 1950s and 1960s, were all influenced by this legacy.
The other tradition that is clearly reflected in the histories recounted by the women is the legacy of selection at, or around, the age of eleven. Although this was officially disguised as selection according to 'age, ability and aptitude', it carried implications of 'pass' or 'fail' that had irrevocable effects both on the women's self-image and on their subsequent careers. The irony is that it appears to have had very little direct effect on their eventual academic attainment as adults.

According to the design of the system which operated when many of these women were at the secondary stage, those selected for grammar school were expected to pursue an academic career and there was little alternative advice or provision for those who did not conform to this expectation. Most of the women in the sample who attended grammar schools did not attain academic success and many were 'misfits' within the system.

But the same was true for the others who were initially allocated to intermediate or secondary modern schools. Here girls were prepared for traditional, low paid and low status jobs, to fill in the time until they decided on marriage and motherhood. Many women in the sample felt cheated by this allocation and frustrated by the limitations imposed upon them.

So while the initial schooling experienced by the women reflected the historical legacy outlined in chapter two, they were not willing conformists to a system which supposedly had been designed for them.

Chapter Three: Socialisation and schooling - its effects on women.

The material discussed here is intended as a background to the development of the women from birth, through childhood to maturity. The progress of girls through pre-school socialisation, through infant and junior schooling and finally through the secondary stage, is explored. The women in the samples were white, had been socialised in British society and educated, with two short exceptions, in the British education system.
Although I have suggested above that the historical legacy may have been inappropriate for some them in terms of their secondary schooling, nevertheless, most fulfilled the expectations for girls at the time and emerged as fairly 'conventional' women. They passed through school, taking the traditional gendered subjects, moving on to traditional gendered courses and subsequent employment after school. There were occasional 'rebels' who went abroad or took up unconventional occupations for a while, but the older women, particularly, followed the accepted patterns. Their socialisation appeared complete and their schooling led them through conventional paths. Chapter three explores why and how this process occurs and suggests that it may still be true for many young women today.

Chapter Four: Two significant issues - social class and the family.

As I have indicated above, one of the more significant findings of the research, particularly in the undergraduate sample, was the number of women who indicated that their family of origin could be classified as 'working-class'. This was surprising because their present circumstances suggested a middle-class position and life-style. This was particularly true of the married women, most of whom appeared to be owner-occupiers, with professional or semi-professional partners. Thus, on first encounter, they appeared to confirm the common assumption that women who participate in adult education are mainly middle-class and already quite well educated. Their retrospective histories, however, present a different picture and upward mobility, particularly through marriage, emerged as a significant factor. Against this must be set the change, over time, of the social class structure in society and the increase in 'white collar/blouse' occupations since the parents of these women were working.

On the other hand, there was a noticeable absence in both the undergraduate and the re-entry samples of women who had remained in the working-class. Even allowing for the difficulties of classification exposed in chapter four, very few of the women indicated that their own employment had been in manufacturing or other manual work. Nor, as far as information was available, were these women whose husbands were currently in manual trades. It is well documented that such women are least likely to return to education,
particularly using traditional routes.

As well as viewing the women in the sample in terms of social class, the other major issue that had to be discussed was the women's role within the family. Although any discussion of the family has to be linked to both educational level and social class, there are certain expectations, obligations and patterns of behaviour which are common to most women.

First and foremost is the expectation of marriage or of a long-term cohabiting partnership. This carries obligations to the partner, particularly in terms of responsibility for domestic tasks. More significant, however, is the effect of motherhood. Despite individual variations, the onus for the bearing of, and caring for, children still remains mainly with women. Most of the women in both samples who were over 30 were married and had children. Most had followed the majority pattern in leaving paid work at the birth of their first child. Many had not yet returned to work and most of those who had, were employed part-time. This supports my original proposition that one of the benefits of the child bearing/rearing 'break' for women is that it allows them to re-assess their future plans and, where appropriate, to prepare by re-entering education. These are the 'women returners'.

What is not always apparent is the complexity of the circumstances which lie behind this decision to re-enter and this was the main focus of the research. Marriage and motherhood are key issues here. For those who were not yet married, there is the incentive that they might need to consider life on their own or that they have the freedom at the time to give up paid work and re-enter education. For those whose marriages have ended, returning to education was a response to the added responsibility of being a 'single parent' or of having the opportunity to do as they wished. In both cases, the need to provide for themselves is important. For those who seem securely married at the time, returning to education, particularly full-time education, must involve considerable readjustment in the familial role and a reorganisation of obligations and responsibilities. For the few women who indicated that their marriage was under some stress, their return to education added an extra strain which, in at least three cases, led eventually to the end of the relationship.
For all women returning to education, the readjustment needed within
the family has two facets. On the one hand, there is a need for
practical changes - in the amount of time and energy that can be
devoted to each of the various demands. But there has also to be a
personal or psychological adjustment within the woman herself, which
allows her to feel confident in her decision and determined to
continue. This is likely to be associated with feelings of confusion
and guilt over the tension of resolving conflicting demands. It is
here that the discussion of chapter four on women in the family moves
close to the material presented in chapter five on adults as learners.

Chapter Five: The education of adults.

This chapter presents an extensive background to the empirical study
as a whole. In it, I attempted to describe the provision of
educational opportunities for adults, and particularly for women, with
reference to both the philosophy and the policies that lie behind and
inevitably affect that provision.

I attempted, too, to look at some aspects of adults as learners and
then to review their attainments, particularly in higher education.
Thus the experiences, characteristics and performance of the women in
my sample can be compared with those of other mature students. As
indicated, surprisingly little is recorded about the attainment of
women mature students - about their re-entry routes, their
experiences or performance. This research set out to make a
contribution to the topic and to reflect the renewed interest in
education for women.

The greater provision of educational openings for adults and
particularly the increasing number of new initiatives, access courses
and alternative routes and methods of re-entry, will hopefully widen
opportunities but this reinforces yet again the need for information,
advice and guidance in choosing the most appropriate path.

Overall there seems to be one very important finding from this study
which should be noted and that is that no person can ever be 'written
off' educationally. No matter how disastrous their initial schooling
performance may appear, it is possible to return as an adult and to achieve beyond any previous expectation. In addition, the slogan "Never too late" might be an appropriate one for some older women.

A further finding is that the traditional re-entry routes are appropriate, again for some women. The availability and the recognition associated with the standard entry qualifications means that some will prefer to use that route - indeed, some may have no other choice. This is not to argue against the need for wider provision or alternative arrangements.

Education can have a vital role to play in the lives of many adults and a variety of types of provision is needed. Both women and men may need to compensate for past deficiencies, to explore new possibilities, to re-orientate and change direction, for a number of personal and practical reasons. Initial educational attainment should not be read as a predictor of subsequent performance. In this study, sixty eight women returned to education and almost all succeeded; forty seven others may - or may not - be following on. This study records their experiences in the hope that others may be inspired and enabled to do likewise.

Conclusion.

Returning to the aims and objectives of this research, the factors affecting the decision of these women to return to education can be summarised in two ways. Firstly, all women share certain conditions in common -

- a socialisation pattern which differentiates them from boys and which produces distinctive patterns of behaviour in most girls;

- an education system which differentiates both experiences and expectations on grounds of gender and social class;

- an expectation that women's familial role will be a dominant commitment for a considerable number of years;

- educational opportunities for adults which are diverse, fragmented, confusing and complex.
In addition to these general conditions, the women in the undergraduate sample exhibit certain other characteristics -

potential academic ability which was not recognised or realised in initial schooling either because of inappropriate selection or unsuccessful experiences during the secondary stage;

a 'misfit' between their school and themselves, due either to external conditions or internal constraints;

a determination to compensate for, or to complete, their earlier unsuccessful or unfinished education;

a present socio-economic position that made returning to education both possible and appropriate for them;

a geographical location (or mobility) which provided certain opportunities;

a series of events, circumstances or individuals which encouraged them to take the initial and the subsequent steps to re-enter and to continue;

personal and family circumstances which encouraged or allowed the re-entry and progression to take place;

educational experiences as adults which encouraged them to continue and, eventually, to apply for university;

an institution which was willing to allow mature women to be admitted as undergraduate students and, in almost every case, to successfully obtain a degree.

Finally, it must be noted and acknowledged that the women in both samples were self-selected, in that they chose to reply to my original request, to complete a questionnaire and to be interviewed. It was not possible to compare their experiences with those of women who do not return. Nor could I compare their responses with those of men who become mature students. Nevertheless, those who did participate have
contributed much, not just towards my research, but towards to an ever increasing awareness of, and knowledge about, 'women returners' to education.
Appendix I

Letters and Questionnaires used in the study
Letters and questionnaires used in the study

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Dear

I am a research student in the Department of Education designing a project concerned with older women students who enter university full-time some years after completing their formal schooling. I am approaching you for help as I see from the Admissions list that you did not enter the university immediately on leaving school.

It would help me in my research if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me at the Education Department. An addressed envelope is enclosed for return through the internal mail but, if it is more convenient for you to use the external post, a stamp is provided.

I would be very grateful if you could return the questionnaire as soon as possible. All information will be treated as strictly confidential and used for my personal research purposes only.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Maggie Coats
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. NAME

2. UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT
   AND SUBJECT.

3. SECONDARY SCHOOLS ATTENDED
   (Please state if mixed
   or girls only; and if
   exam taken at 11+ or 13+
   passed or failed.)

4. AGE ON LEAVING SCHOOL

5. QUALIFICATIONS OBTAINED AT SCHOOL
   (CSEs, GCEs, etc. or equivalent).

6. REASON FOR LEAVING SCHOOL IF BEFORE AGE 18.
7. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES BETWEEN LEAVING SCHOOL AND ENTERING L.U.T. 
(Courses taken; jobs held; periods unemployed; time spent as full-time housewife, mother etc).


8. QUALIFICATIONS OBTAINED SINCE LEAVING SCHOOL 
(Please state if course was full or part-time and give name of college or other institution).


9. STATE BRIEFLY THE REASONS WHY YOU DECIDED TO STUDY FULL-TIME AT


10. IF APPLICABLE? WOULD YOU GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PRESENT FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES? (e.g. marital status; age of children etc.)


THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP

Please return to Maggie Coats
Dear

Thank you very much indeed for returning my questionnaire. Your answers were particularly interesting and helpful to me in my research.

I wonder if you would be willing to meet me sometime in the near future so that we could discuss your answers more fully? I know that you are busy with exams this term but I would be grateful if you could find time, even if you choose to wait until your exams are over.

I could arrange to see you in the Education Department, at a date and time to suit you. This could be any day this term, Monday to Friday, (excluding Wednesdays) between 9.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. Would you complete the slip below and return it to me? Even if you choose a date/time later in the term, could you return the slip as soon as possible? I think our meeting should not take more than an hour, possibly less.

When I receive your reply I will contact you again to confirm the arrangement and to give you details of how to find me.

I would be most grateful for your help in this and look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Maggie Coats

NAME

Dates and times in order of preference:

Day    Date    Time
1.      _______    _______    _______
2.      _______    _______    _______
3.      _______    _______    _______

Please return to Maggie Coats, Dept. of Education. (SAE enclosed)
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

November 1983

Dear

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to take part in a research project on Adults and Education. The purpose of this part of the project is to find out more information about women students who enrol for GCE courses, either alongside school students during the day or in evening classes.

I believe that you enrolled as an adult student at School, for the year(s) ..............

I wonder if you would be prepared to help me by completing the two items enclosed?

1) Would you fill in the Table on the front page of the form to show what subjects you studied and the result of the course. (Don't worry if you were unable to complete a course; just tick the appropriate boxes.)

ii) Complete the questionnaire about your schooling and other experience.

A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed for you to return these to me.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely

Maggie Coats
Please enter on the chart any G.C.E. O level or A level courses for which you enrolled for the years stated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Subject(s) studied</th>
<th>Ordinary or Advanced level</th>
<th>Day or Evening course taken</th>
<th>Exam completed</th>
<th>Exam passed</th>
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<td>1981-82</td>
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UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

WOMEN AND EDUCATION

1. NAME ___________________________ DATE OF BIRTH ___________________________

2. SECONDARY SCHOOLING
   a) Did you take a selective exam at 11+ (or 13+)? ___________________________
   b) Did you pass the exam? ___________________________
   c) What type of secondary school did you attend? ___________________________
   d) How old were you when you left school? ___________________________
   e) Were there any special reasons for you leaving then? ___________________________
   f) What qualifications did you gain whilst at school? ___________________________
   g) Did you take any courses or gain qualifications immediately after leaving school? (Please say if courses were full or part-time) ___________________________
   h) Would you like to make any general comment about your schooling? ___________________________
3. ACTIVITIES SINCE LEAVING SCHOOL
   a) Can you say briefly what paid jobs you have had between leaving school and now? (both full and part-time work)

   b) Please list any other activities (unpaid, voluntary, etc.) that you have done during those years. Include any time that you spent at home looking after children or other dependents.

4. ADULT EDUCATION
   Please give details of any courses you have taken or any qualifications you have gained since you completed your initial schooling or training.

5. PRESENT COURSE
   Can you explain how you came to hear about your present course and the reasons why you decided to take it?
6. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE
Do you have any plans for further courses when you have completed this one? Do you hope to gain any particular qualifications? __________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

7. FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES
Could you give brief details of your family? (marital status; number and ages of your children, etc.) __________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

8. ANY OTHER COMMENT you wish to make about your education or any other information that might be relevant? __________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP.

MAGGIE COATS
Appendix II

Educational and Training Opportunities for women:

the report of a research project
Introduction

The Women Returners Network (WRN) was set up in 1984 following a Conference sponsored by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) for providers of education for women under Section 47 provision. This is the section of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 which permits institutions or organisations to apply for special designation if they wish to provide 'women only' facilities for education or training. This clause allows for positive discrimination for women on courses that lead to work in non-traditional areas or for women who have been out of full-time employment because of family or domestic responsibilities. It is this second need that primarily concerns the WRN.

The Network is composed of representatives and providers from adult, higher and further education, the Open University, careers and educational advisory services the WEA, the EOC, the Industrial Society and various industrial training boards and organisations.

One of the stated aims of the WRN is to promote educational, training and employment opportunities for women returners and for this purpose, it applied to the EOC for a grant to compile and produce a national directory, listing all the educational and training opportunities available for women. In 1985 the EOC awarded a grant of £7893 for this purpose; this was to cover the salaries of two research assistants working on a half-time job share, their insurance, travel, clerical assistance etc. It was estimated originally that the project would be completed within eight months; in practice it took exactly one year. The project commenced in December 1985 and the material was handed to a commercial publisher at the beginning of December 1986. Longmans published the directory in March 1987 as a book entitled "Returning to Work: Educational and Training Opportunities for Women".
The scope of the project.

At the outset, it was envisaged that the directory should list the full details of courses, indicating named contacts whenever possible. In the process of obtaining information, the researchers were briefed to visit providers, attend and set up meetings for providers and encourage the establishment of local networks wherever practicable. The task was shared geographically; the whole of England was divided into north and south, the dividing line running just south of Birmingham. Wales was added at a later date and was similarly divided.

Who are 'women returners'?

Before discussing the methodology employed, the term 'women returners' needs to be clarified. WRN see such women as usually having had some years at home, out of full-time paid employment, and now wishing to return to the labour market. In many cases they will be unsure of how to do this, particularly if they do not wish to return to a job similar to the one(s) they held previously. They will probably have had little experience of further or higher education and a restricted experience of any post-school training. Even if they do wish to return to their former occupation, they will need refresher or updating courses. Women returners generally tend to lack confidence and information. Years at home in an undervalued role may lead them to feel unqualified and lacking in relevant experience. Those skills that are acquired in domestic roles are largely unrecognised in our society.

The specific needs of women returners will depend on several variables - their previous education and/or training; how long they have been out of the workforce; their current domestic responsibilities; the plans or ideas they have for the future. It is helpful to identify three categories of women returners, although individual women may move between these categories at any time.

(i) Women who need to get into paid work as soon as possible. For them a course which provides a marketable skill or acceptable
vocational qualification is most appropriate.

(ii) Women who wish to return to paid work but are able to spend a longer period preparing for this return and increasing their qualifications. For such women a course leading to higher education or longer vocational training may be needed.

(iii) Women who are at present out of paid work but will wish to return some time in the future. Their current need may be for stimulation, for a chance to re-orientate and make plans for the future; they may have little idea of what they want except a need to get out of the home.

For all these groups two basic requirements are paramount -

a) advice, information and guidance on what is available and what 'routes' are most appropriate;

b) courses that fit their particular circumstances at this time.

For most women this will mean that their education or training runs concurrent with responsibility for dependent children. Child care provision and timetabling within school hours are the two basic essentials for any course that can be considered appropriate for women returners.

Methodology

Four different methods were employed in the collating of material for the directory.

(i) An initial postal trawl of the whole country was made, including all education authorities, institutions and organisations; and all training provision, national and local. There were two reasons for doing this. On the one hand we wished to ensure that all the major providers had been asked, even if they chose not to reply. Thus any omissions in the directory were not attributable to our inefficiency.
On the other hand, we were interested to see how our request was received - what sort of courses were perceived by the providers as suitable for women returners; who was asked to collate and forward the information and what other provision was discovered from these sources.

(ii) A press release announcing the project and requesting contributions was placed in all the 'educational' journals, the popular women's magazines, the feminist publications and union and professional papers. Regional publications, such as those produced by FE advisory councils, were also approached.

(iii) A 'snowball' method of contacting individuals was employed. All members of the WRN and anyone else known to us were asked to supply information about their own provision and to send names of others known to them working in the same area. Thus contacts of contacts were approached until all the leads were exhausted or time prevented further investigation.

(iv) From contacts and from information we identified 'key' people working in each area and in most of the major towns. In some cases these people were visited as individuals or in the company of their colleagues. In some areas, these contacts arranged meetings for everyone known to them and to us in their area who might be interested in the topic and able to provide information. In some cases, as a result of these meetings, local networks were formed. In other cases, local networks already existed and we were able to collect information from all the members.

Using information gained by all these methods we compiled lists of courses on a county basis, including as much detail as possible about each course. We continued to accept entries right up to the time the material was being processed ready for typesetting. This meant that some of the earlier information might be out of date and the final tight deadline allowed no opportunity for the re-checking or completing of every entry.
Results

(i) The Postal Trawl

The response to the postal trawl of authorities and institutions was interesting, not only for the material it provided but also as an indication of how the needs of women returners were perceived.

Most, but not all, of the local education authorities acknowledged our request. The most useful response was when a department within the authority circulated all their HE and FE establishments, collated their responses and returned them to us. Others circulated their colleges but left them to reply individually. Some authorities forwarded our request to a local educational advisory service if one was available; others identified a department within the authority (e.g., community education or FE) and asked them to reply.

The response from individual institutions varied considerably. In many cases all we received was a copy of the current prospectus with a compliments slip. Sometimes this would be accompanied by a letter from the principal or a deputy saying that, while no specific provision was made for women, they were welcome to apply for any of the courses listed. Indeed, some were most anxious to emphasise the fact that mature women were encouraged to apply - though careful perusal of the prospectus revealed no mention of this, or of any form of childcare provision, school hours timetabling or any other arrangement that would make their courses available to women.

Another type of reply from institutions gave a list of the courses they provided that might be attractive to women. In some cases this was most helpful - listing women only provision, access and return to study courses, updating provision etc. However, by far the most common in replies of this kind was the letter that listed only secretarial, hairdressing, catering and caring courses as the most suitable for women returners.

In some cases requests to colleges, addressed to the principal, were passed to what was seen as the relevant department or individual. This was either the adult/continuing/general education department or a particular member of staff who was known to be interested in this type
of provision. What was revealing was that some colleges channelled our request into one department when we later discovered that there was, for example, a women in another department who had run courses specifically for women returners over a number of years and yet the our letter never reached her desk. In some institutions providing courses for women seems to be a marginalised, low status role that is not always recognised by those at the top of the hierarchy.

The various organisations we approached were, on the whole, most interested in the project even if they made no specific provision in this area. We felt that asking the question may have raised awareness of the needs of women returners in a variety of organisations. The best responses were from those that have taken on an educative role, like Pre-school Playgroups Association (PPA), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Women's Institutes and the various 'responsible bodies' like the Workers Educational Association (WEA). In addition we wrote to the central, regional and area offices of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), the Regional Adult Education Organisations, the FE Regional Advisory Councils and the REPLAN regional field officers. All these replied with lists of courses and other helpful information.

(ii) Press Releases.

Most of the journals, magazines and newsletters we approached carried our request for information and responses to these continued to arrive throughout the year. Some respondents did not say where they had seen our project mentioned and so we were unable to gauge the value of this particular method. What was interesting in this respect was that a number of the national women's magazines contacted us to ask for further details and implied that they were keen to carry a feature about women's education. Subsequently both Living magazine and Good Housekeeping did this. This was another opportunity to raise awareness about the needs of women returners.

(iii) and (iv) Personal contacts and visits

This was by far the most productive method employed by us in collecting detailed information. From our initial contacts, other names were obtained and they in turn gave us more. Eventually it
became apparent that we had reached the limits of many 'informal networks' when the same names kept appearing. More surprising, however, were the number of replies that said they knew no one in their area interested in or providing courses for women; often we knew of one or more very similar providers in a nearby institution. Indeed, in a few cases we found providers apparently unknown to each other within the same institution!

From our visits to individuals many further contacts were made. Where regional meetings had been organised, we gathered not only details for the directory but were able to initiate local networks. In some of the larger conurbations, active networks already existed and we were able to tap into these. A variety of local directories listing educational and/or training opportunities for women were collected and these were useful sources of information. Contact with 'Womens Units' and their staff in the larger authorities also provided much useful information. We visited many of the local agencies which offer educational guidance, advice and information and these gave us details about provision in their areas.

By the end of the project we were able to list almost 1400 courses for the directory and a large number of other relevant contacts. The numbers and types of courses are shown in Table 1.

Classification of courses

The courses listed in the directory cover a wide range of levels, types and subjects so that it is difficult to classify them in detail. The following categories were used in the directory but in this paper we give a further breakdown within each category where possible.

Linked access courses.

These are courses that have been designed to give adults an access
route into higher education (HE) without having to gain 'A' level qualifications. All the courses listed under this heading were 'validated' by an institution of HE - university, polytechnic or college of HE. While these institutions did not guarantee admission to those who completed the course, the 'qualifications' gained were recognised as acceptable for entry, usually subject to an interview. Some access courses are one year full-time; others involve the equivalent in part-time study. Also included were the various 'open college' schemes - eg Manchester Open College Federation (MOCF), Open College Federation of the North West (OCFNW) and many others. Some of these schemes had a very flexible pattern in which students could gain credits from a variety of courses at their own pace. For example, the MOCF grades a huge range of courses in many local colleges and adult education institutions and issues its students with a 'passport' which records those courses successfully completed by the student. A specific number of credits at a designated level then 'qualifies' the student to enter HE in one of the institutions participating in the scheme. This type of scheme is very common in the north of England and in London (nb the figures quoted for London in Table 1 do not include all the linked access courses since these were listed separately). In some areas, colleges of FE and local institutions of HE were in the process of developing this type of scheme; many of the access courses were full-time, thus qualifying for a grant, or scheduled with under 21 hours tutorial time, thus ensuring that DHSS claimants did not lose benefit.

Preparatory courses.

This was a generic title which included a whole range of courses suitable for women who were 'preparing' to return to education, training or employment. Initially we had hoped to classify these separately - return to study courses; return to work courses etc. - but it became apparent that there was considerable overlap in the provision and thus such a classification became impossible. This huge category, then, includes any course that provides women with a starting point - a chance to return to study; to prepare for another course; to give women 'tasters' of the kind of course they might choose; to assist the 'unemployed' in job hunting etc. Although no separate classification occurs in the directory, the various courses included under the 'preparatory' heading, fall into four particular
Whilst the return to study/return to work categories are difficult to disentangle, some idea can be gained of the provision of each. Return to study courses include preparatory courses for the OU as well as for other types of HE, 'second chance to learn' courses as well as those which prepare students for further courses in specific subjects. The main aim of such courses is to encourage or prepare participants for further study of some kind. On the other hand, the 'return to work' type of course is basically designed for those who are currently unemployed and wish to find work. While such courses may have a return to study component, their main aim is to assist job hunters in finding work. Most of the provision under this heading is funded by the MSC and is available only for those without paid employment. Very little provision of this kind is designed specifically for women.

Another category included under our 'preparatory' heading contains courses which lead to a GCE examination at either Ordinary or Advanced level. These are considered 'preparatory' in that they provide a nationally accepted admissions qualification for various HE courses. Since most colleges provide GCE courses, they are included in the directory only when they appeared to be specifically designed for mature students.

Finally in this 'preparatory' category there are a few courses designed to assist adults in a process of re-orientation - in finding out what options are available and in making plans for the future. In this group we have included some of the schemes implemented under REPLAN, as well as some 'women only' provision, but New Opportunities for Women and Wider Opportunities for Women courses are covered in the next two categories. There is a great deal of overlap between all this preparatory provision and the breakdown in Table 2 is given as a rough indicator of what type of course is available.

New Opportunities for Women (NOW) and Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) courses.

These courses, while also 'preparatory' in function, were categorised separately in the directory because they are specifically planned for
women and their content and intent are clear. NOW courses are usually part-time, one day a week and have a subject input, traditionally literature, sociology or psychology. We did find a few examples of NOW courses with an emphasis on maths, science, new technology or technical drawing. A guidance or counselling component features in all NOW courses, designed to help women re-orientate and re-plan their lives. Most courses are at least 10 or even 20 weeks in length and almost always provide childcare facilities. NOW courses may lead on to further or higher education, to vocational training or to any path that the woman decides is appropriate for her. Provided by colleges and organisations (like the WEA), such courses have to charge a fee, although local reduced rates may apply for some women.

WOW courses, however, are usually funded by the MSC and, as well as being free to the participants, may provide a travel or other expense allowance. The courses are usually shorter than NOW courses; many WOW courses, although part-time, are now only six weeks long. In every WOW course there is an element of 'work experience', since the aim of the course is to assist women to return to paid work. Creche facilities are rarely provided, at least not funded by the MSC, since they argue that women on WOW courses should have already made arrangements for the care of their children if they seriously intend to return to work. The fact that all child care costs money and women on WOW courses are not yet earning a wage to pay for the childcare, is not accepted as problematic by the MSC. The work content of most WOW courses covers traditional women's work, modified to meet the needs of the employment situation in the locality concerned.

Women's Studies

We included these courses in the Directory when they were a complete course in themselves but not when they were a component or option within another course. While Women's Studies courses are not designed as a potential 'returners' route, experience has shown that for some women they serve this purpose. Women's Studies courses are provided in a wide variety of locations, often quite remote, and for some women they may be the only option available. Such courses, which usually explore some aspect of women's lives, may provide an opportunity for
women to re-assess themselves and the tutors of such courses may provide useful information for their women students as to what alternative courses are available. Such courses are provided by colleges, by university extra-mural departments or their equivalents and by organisations like the WEA. From Table 1 it can be seen that the large number of courses listed in the south of the country is weighted heavily by the number provided in London alone.

Having looked at the more general 'entry points' for women returners, we now turn to the courses that have a specific subject content. In the directory these courses are listed by subject but here we consider firstly, the 'non-traditional' subjects for women (ie those normally provided for, and dominated by, men) and then the accepted 'womens' topics within the clerical and caring fields.

Non-traditional courses for women.

The figures for three particular categories have been collated in Table 1, although several others are listed in the directory. The three considered here are courses which encourage women into computing, into management and into 'non-traditional' trades.

Courses for women in computing fall into two types - those which are designed to make women more familiar with computing, aiming to 'de-mystify' the subject for them, and those which intend to prepare women for a job in some aspect of computing. There is a problem within this latter category, since what may appear to be a course for women in 'new technology' often turns out to be a course in word processing or updating of office skills. When we could identify such courses, they were categorised under office skills and not under computing.

Courses which aim to prepare women for management jobs are few, although several well-known providers have created the impression that this category is widespread. Only 17 'women into management' courses were found in the country as a whole and these were spread equally between the north, the south and London.

The final category in this section includes courses in manual and practical trades, as well as those provided by the numerous women's
workshops that have been set up in the past few years. The availability of European Social Fund (ESF) resources for training women over 25 years in 'non-traditional' areas led to the setting up of several projects all over the country. Most of these projects provide training in computing, electrical engineering and practical trades, such as carpentry or plumbing. Most of these projects prepare women to work in these trades, to set up on their own or to proceed to local FE colleges for further courses in these fields. Again the provision is equally distributed between the north, the south and London but most projects are found in major conurbations.

Traditional courses in clerical and caring skills.

The two final categories in the table are for traditional areas of women's training - in office skills of various kinds and in several types of community or 'caring' work. In the office category, both initial and updating courses are included but not all the mainstream 'secretarial' courses are listed, since details of these are readily available from any institution. In the directory we list those designed specifically for older women or with a prominent 'updating' function. Many of the latter are funded by the MSC and are free to participants, plus an allowance in some cases.

The 'caring' courses are diverse, but are included since many women returners feel confident and qualified to train in areas involving the care of children or the elderly etc. Pre-school playgroups for example, give many women an opportunity to be involved when their children are small and subsequently their play leadership courses arouse interest and opportunities for otherwise unqualified women. Such courses are often available in small colleges and rural areas where little else of interest to women is available. Although we are conscious that work in the 'caring' professions perpetuates the traditional role of women, is underpaid and lacks opportunities for promotion, we felt that these courses were attractive to many women and should be included. We could not list all such provision but we consciously decided to include those in some of the more rural areas where such courses may be the only ones available for women returners.
Other subjects.

The rest of the directory lists courses of a wide variety under subject headings. Again, we could not include all the mainstream provision (part-time degrees, DipHEs etc) but the criteria governing inclusion was that the provision welcomed mature women students and made some recognition of their needs (eg flexible entry, child care facilities, timetabling within school hours etc). The range of courses here include most of the major academic subjects, but courses in maths and in science subjects were rare. Courses which provide a 'foundation' in a certain subject for those without the required qualifications and lead on to a mainstream course in the same subject are included in the 'preparatory' section. We also discovered a few 'conversion' courses for women who have inappropriate qualifications but who wish to follow science or engineering courses. Some of these conversion courses are mainly for younger women but a few will accept older, less well qualified, applicants.

Courses for women only

In some of the categories described above, the courses listed in the directory are designed primarily for women. All the NOW and WOW courses, many women's studies courses and much of the non-traditional provision is intended for women. We did not differentiate between those courses which are designed for women and those which, under Section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, are designated for women only. The reason for this was that some providers were in the process of applying for exemption under the SDA and others had not been able to gain exemption. To list such courses as 'for women only' would leave the providers open to prosecution. On the other hand, many courses are, in theory, open to women and men but in practice, only women apply. Thus it is better for any women who wishes to attend a 'women only' course to ask the providers directly.

We have added up the numbers of courses which are designed for women (see Table 1) but this does NOT imply that such courses can accept only women. Women's studies courses are a particular case in point. Most Women's Studies provision is open to both women and men although
many Women's Studies courses are designed for, and attended by, women only. We have also given the figures for women's courses, excluding Women's Studies courses, since this gives a truer picture of the educational and training provision that is designed with women in mind. The exemption procedure and the designation of courses under the SDA has been debated and proposals for a change in the legislation are now in force. This was another reason for our decision not to indicate which courses were, legally, for women only.

Finally, we should perhaps comment on what categories were NOT included in the directory. As explained above, mainstream provision, available in most universities, colleges and other institutions was not listed - local prospectuses contain all these courses in detail. Recreational and leisure provision was also excluded. We could not list all the basic educational provision - adult literacy etc - nor English as a second language. Such provision is usually advertised locally. We decided not to list all the 'distance learning' systems, especially the Open Learning or Flexistudy networks. With MSC funding, this type of provision is now widely available. For women in very remote areas such a provision may be all that is available but, for many women, individual and isolated learning experiences are not always suitable and may do little to generate confidence or clarify directions.

Conclusion

Our research into the educational and training opportunities available for women in England and Wales at the present time show certain patterns that reflect the wider provision for adults generally and particularly for the unemployed. The most significant trends seem to be -

1. The move away from the 'traditional' GCE type of qualification towards alternative access routes for adult students. Both local and regional 'linked' access schemes, open college systems and courses recognised and validated by HE institutions were found all over the country but concentrated particularly in urban areas. Access routes which lead to one single institution or one particular subject area
lack the flexibility of the traditional GCE qualification and may force women to make decisions at an early stage. Some access routes do not provide any help with study skills and most have no advice and guidance component.

2. An opening up of HE provision through part-time degrees and diplomas but also through 'visiting' or 'associate student' schemes, whereby the public can listen in on mainstream provision. Some of this provision is assessed and receives certification; other schemes just provide 'tasters' based on which students may then decide to take up further study.

3. 'Return to study' provision is widespread. Many universities, colleges, institutions and organisations now provide a variety of opportunities for adults to gain or improve study skills in a variety of subjects. Whilst most of this type of provision does not include advice or guidance, courses of this nature enable adults to discover if further study is possible for them and to prepare themselves for it, if that is what they have decided on.

4. It has to be recognised that most of the 'Return to work' provision has been encouraged and financed by the MSC as part of their training responsibility. In some areas this can provide an opportunity for women to gain or update skills which may lead to paid employment. In other areas, any real prospect of a job is unlikely. While many MSC officers want to encourage women to participate and apply for all kinds of training, in reality most of the MSC provision for women is in traditional fields. In a few areas we gained the impression (unofficially) that the main role of MSC courses is to reduce the unemployment figures and thus women, most of whom do not register as unemployed, are not considered a priority and so very little provision is made for them.

5. NOW and WOW courses are clearly the most appropriate experience for most women returners. Given that many women wishing to re-enter employment want to improve their qualifications, to be made aware of what options are open to them, and need encouragement and increased confidence, courses which address all these requirements are ideal. All over the country we came across NOW and WOW courses which fulfilled this need in a committed and imaginative way. However,
although we have no time scale to guide us, what seems to be happening is that the emphasis has moved from the needs of women to the needs of adults, and particularly the unemployed. Many colleges are now using MSC funding for provision for the unemployed rather than for women, except where committed organisers are demanding WOW provision. With the cuts in adult educational provision generally and the need for courses to be self-financing, many NOW courses have become so expensive that their recruitment has dropped and the provision has ended. In the current political climate the needs of women are clearly not a priority.

6. The same change of emphasis can also be detected in the provision of non-traditional courses for women. Many of the workshops providing training in these fields (computing, electronics and manual trades) were initially funded by European Social Fund (ESF) money which at that time was available for such projects and for women over the age of 25. With the change of priority in ESF funding to women under 25, the future of this provision is threatened, unless individual projects have managed to get local authority mainstream finance. While we were collecting information, many providers intimated that they were hoping for ESF money for their proposed or current courses; others were struggling to find alternative funding. Only the follow up for the second edition of the directory will show what has happened.

7. For many women returners, particularly those living outside the major conurbations, the only training or work available will be in the traditional fields of office work or for some type of caring job. Most colleges provide day and/or evening courses in various aspects of office employment and the most common MSC provision aimed at women is in the updating of office skills. We have already mentioned the mis-leading appearance of some of this provision. Having said this, however, it must be accepted that many women returners prefer to train or re-train in a field where they feel competent and courses in office skills and in caring tasks are seen as suitable routes to take. With this in mind, we felt it important to list such courses, particularly in areas where little other provision exists. Research has shown that many women return to education and employment in the caring professions because of their involvement in voluntary organisations whilst at home having their children. Such involvement may lead them to other types of courses in related subjects.
Because the research was the result of a job share, divided between the north and south of the country, it is possible that some of the apparent differences between north and south may be due more to the criteria used by the individual researcher than to any difference in provision. Thus any apparent north-south comparisons have to be treated with caution. The geographical distribution of opportunity, whilst clearly important, is not the only factor which affects the options open to women. What is apparent is that the choice available to women living in large conurbations is much wider than that of women living in rural areas or small towns. However, even in this the importance of transport should not be ignored, since women who are mobile (ie have access to a car during the day), have far more options than those who must rely on public transport. Even in large cities, public transport may be difficult and costly.

The availability of childcare provision is another variable. Women with pre-school age children are far more tied than those whose children are at school, unless adequate creche facilities are provided. Childcare facilities which cover only part of the day may restrict the choice of women with children to certain courses. Institutions which do not recognise the length of the school day or the occurrence of school half-terms present another difficulty to women.

The other crucial determinant is finance. Many full-time courses of advanced standing carry entitlement to a grant and in some areas, other less advanced but full-time courses are exempt from fees. However, almost all part-time courses - much favoured by women with other responsibilities - charge large fees and no financial help is available. In many areas women who are claimants, or dependent on claimants, pay reduced fees. Women whose partners are in employment must pay the full cost. Women who have registered as unemployed can benefit from the 21 hour ruling and not lose benefit but far fewer women than men qualify under this ruling. Women who comply with the MSC conditions can qualify for free courses and for certain allowances; other women who work part-time or have worked recently may be ineligible. The financial criteria are complex and vary between local educational authorities. All this emphasises the need for accurate information, advice and guidance to be available for any
women who is considering a return to education or training.

In the course of our research we identified a number of excellent advisory services and local publications, some of which were designed specifically for women. The increasing number of women's units within local authorities have made more of these publications likely. The increasing network of educational advice and guidance services will make information available to more women and some careers services now take responsibility for advising adult clients. However, the vast majority of women, outside of the major cities, have no access to information or advice and are likely to take any course that they hear about. Local advertising then becomes a priority. A comparison between the publicity leaflets and prospectuses of various colleges etc is most marked. Some address themselves to adults and even to women as a target group; many others appear to provide only for the 16-19 age group and prioritise the provision of sports facilities rather than childcare.

The increased provision of educational and training opportunities for the 'unemployed' has benefited women if the providers are aware that many women can justifiably be included in that category. The increased attention paid to potential adult students by many colleges has also benefited women. But overall our survey seems to indicate that, with notable exceptions, the provision for women is by default rather than by design and that the specific needs of women, most of whom also have childcare responsibilities, are not recognised at all. If the directory by highlighting the good practice of the few, shows up the shortcomings of the many then one purpose will have been fulfilled. If women themselves, seeing what is available for some, demand more for themselves, then some improvement may occur. But most of all, if the dedicated providers for women, many of whom responded willingly to our enquiries, see others doing what they themselves wish to do, then perhaps the educational and training opportunities for women returners will have widened by the time the next edition of the directory is published.
APPENDIX II

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF COURSES IN DIRECTORY

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<th>COURSE TYPE</th>
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(* Does not include all access courses in London)

TABLE 2: PREPARATORY COURSES

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