

"THE CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF YOUNG BLACK WOMEN:  
THE MAINTENANCE OF INEQUALITY"

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**ABSTRACT**

This study is an investigation into the career aspirations and expectations of 62 second generation, Afro-Caribbean, young women. The belief that, in a meritocratic society, the occupational outcomes of the pupils should be a reflection of their educational achievements, regardless of class, race, or gender, is subject to critical appraisal.

Investigations conducted in two South London Schools, over a period of 18 months, explored the occupational choice processes of 198 male and female pupils aged between 15-18 years. The results of the investigation suggest that the higher (in terms of social class) and distinct aspirations of young black women can be explained by their historically specific and culturally unique experience of the labour market.

Young black womens' particular expectations of the labour market are characterised, in the main, by a cultural disposition that supports female labour market participation. This participation, however, takes place within the limited opportunities afforded by a racially and sexually segregated labour market. The subjective rationalising of labour market limitations explains, in part, the distinct qualities that characterise young black womens' career choices.

Other evidence suggested that these distinct qualities also owed much to the West Indian female experience of schooling. Schools were seen to play a crucial part in both structuring and

restricting black female occupational aspirations and expectations. Access to vital career information, active discouragement and discrimination, poor educational standards, leading to poor qualifications, were some of the material obstacles encountered by young black working class women when making their career choices.

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that, whatever the educational level or labour market disposition of these young black women, their occupational location is subject to a variety of factors, in particular, labour market structures and educational resources. Inequalities based on race, gender, and class remain an integral feature of this society inspite of its ideology of meritocracy.

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## CHAPTER 1

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND YOUNG BLACK WOMEN: A HISTORY OF NEGLECT

Research investigating the educational experience of young black people has persistently failed to integrate into its findings the evident differential achievement of black girls.<sup>1</sup> If this failure to acknowledge black females is considered in the light of the fact that almost half the West Indian population between the ages of 16-19 years are female,<sup>2</sup> it becomes obvious that this neglect is not just an oversight but a significant omission. In this chapter, I argue that the failure to recognise the differential educational performance of black girls has implications for research on issues of race and education. In order to assess the effect that this omission has had on established explanations concerning the nature of black educational disadvantage, it is necessary to investigate the origins of this tradition of neglect. It is a revealing exercise to chart the historical development of the debate on race and educational achievement. From such an exercise it becomes clear that the marginalisation of the gender issue is a consequence of the political undercurrents that have shaped research on race and education.

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<sup>1</sup> See Mirza 1986a.

<sup>2</sup> For example, females aged 16-19 make up 12% of the West Indian population in the U.K.: males of the same age make up 15%. See Brown (1984:30) Table 8.

### 1958-1970 : Laying the Ground Work For Neglect

The current neglect of black girls in educational research had its foundation some thirty years ago, in 1958. The racial unrest of 1958 was a significant watershed, not only in terms of its generally recognised political implications, but also for an influential but much less widely acknowledged reason. These race riots set in motion the wheels of what Hall (1978) describes as the, "new and indigenous racism of the post-war period." (p.25). A consequence of this "structured antagonism between 'colony' blacks and sections of the indigenous white working class" (p.28) was that race became the issue and black people a 'problem' to be contained.<sup>3</sup> The nature of this new British racism, characterised by white fear and hostility towards the newly arrived Commonwealth immigrants, had the effect of determining the terms of reference that have since shaped the debate on race and education; the key concepts within this perspective being race and culture.<sup>4</sup> This overwhelming emphasis on race and culture meant that right from the start gender was not considered to be a major area of concern. Gender, it was believed, could not lend any valuable or illuminating insights to a debate whose underlying premise was about racial differences.

<sup>3</sup> Carby (1982:183) describes in detail the climate of hostility and the early educational response.

<sup>4</sup> See Parekh (DES 1985, 1986) on the politics of multi-racial education in Britain and the historical determination of these terms of reference.

(1) Politics, Policy and the Terms of Reference

From the early to mid 1960s policy initiatives in the field of race relations were directed toward the goal of assimilation.<sup>5</sup> With little or no academic research on black pupils available, 'commonsense' racist assumptions about the inherent inferiority of non-European languages, family structures and life-styles, determined the content of the educational developments during this period.<sup>6</sup> In 1964 the Commonwealth Immigrant Advisory Committee<sup>7</sup> advocated that:

"A national system of education must aim at producing citizens who can take their place in a society properly equipped to exercise rights and perform duties the same as those of other citizens ..... a national system cannot be expected to perpetuate the different values of immigrant groups".

The role of the education system was made clear, to bring about the cultural assimilation of immigrant children into the 'British way of life'. From the very start the black child's presence was perceived to be negative. The Commonwealth Immigrant Advisory Committee recommended that if the number of immigrant children was not restricted the whole character and ethos of the school would be altered.

" The presence of a high proportion of immigrant children in one class slows down the general routine and hampers the progress of the whole class."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Mullard (1982:121) for an analysis of the stages of racial integration into the U.K.: Assimilation, Integration, and Cultural Pluralism. A further stage that has been identified is that of anti-racism (see Troyna 1987).

<sup>6</sup> See Lawrence (1982a) who writes on how the 'pathologising' of the black family has come about through the development of a 'commonsense' ideology relating to black life-styles.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Kirp (1979:45-6).

<sup>8</sup> CIAC 1964: para. 26; quoted in Tomlinson (1983a:17)

Thus began the exclusive focus on the black child as responsible for his (and not her) educational failure.<sup>9</sup> What mattered was not whether they were male or female, but that they were black and not white.

That little or no academic research had yet been undertaken to qualify or quantify the nature of immigrant educational needs, did not inhibit the DES from producing Circular 7/65 in 1965. This controversial programme aimed at 'thinning out' the Asian and West Indian presence was guided largely by uninformed opinion as to the nature of the perceived 'immigrant problem'. The DES Circular instructed local authorities to disperse the immigrant pupil population. This dispersal policy, commonly known as 'bussing' was racist both in philosophy and in consequence. The Circular reinforced the general and pervasive view that all Asians and West Indians, regardless of class and sex, and solely by virtue of their race, presented a problem for the education system. Thus, even before any informed academic research had been undertaken, race and culture were already firmly established as the terms of reference, and as such was responsible for shaping the debate on educational research for the ensuing three decades. Gender became submerged in the highly charged political exchanges that characterised this early period.

With regard to educational policy and the black child, the late 1960s, unlike the preceding era, saw a refinement of strategy. The crude, assimilationist approach of the early 1960s was now

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<sup>9</sup> 'His' during this and indeed later periods of research on the black child referred to an undifferentiated sex group: 'his' in these contexts are commonly used to mean 'all'.

replaced by the more politically sophisticated phase of 'cultural pluralism'.

The birth of multi-cultural education was heralded by Roy Jenkins' pronouncement in 1966 that education should not be:

"a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance ...."<sup>10</sup>

With the inception of multi-cultural education (later to be called multi-racial education), the fine tuning of racial and cultural explanations for underachievement commenced.<sup>11</sup> However, Jenkins' idealistic vision of a culturally tolerant society was not to be realised. From 1966 onwards there was a further escalation of anti-immigrant hostility exacerbated by Enoch Powell's speeches on race in 1967 and 1968.

## (2) Educational Testing and the Marginalisation of Gender

In the overall climate of hostility towards black migrants that existed in the mid-sixties, educational testing was called upon to measure scientifically the relative educational inferiority of the black child. During these early days, crude and simplistic notions of genetic intellectual inferiority were fuelled by Jensen in the Britain and Eysenk in America.<sup>12</sup> As Eysenk wrote:

"All evidence to date ...suggests the strong and indeed overwhelming importance of genetic factors in producing the great variety of intellectual differences which we observe in our culture and much of the difference between certain racial groups". (Eysenck 1971, quoted in DES 1985:126)

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Rose et al (1969:11-25).

<sup>11</sup> This period, 1965-70, has been described as the 'integrationist phase' (Mullard 1982:125)

<sup>12</sup> See Mackintosh and Mascie-Taylor (DES 1985:126) for a review of the arguments of the scientific racists.

Measuring differences between groups was clearly the order of the day in academic research on race, and not, it would seem, measuring differences within groups. The motivation and orientation of IQ studies, in the context of the race and education debate, precluded, by their very nature, the recognition of gender differences.

This early tradition in academic research, emphasising IQ and intellectual ability by race, has been an influential undercurrent in the debate on race and education <sup>13</sup> despite being publicly discredited as "repugnant and insulting to many people." (Parekh: DES 1985:68). Dr Parekh further observes:

"The low attainment of West Indian children is according to some commentators, easily and adequately explained in terms of their genetic intellectual inferiority. This view of Eysenck and others is far more widely held than is often realised". (Parekh: DES 1985:68)

Academic research that addressed the specific issue of the educational performance of the black child in the Britain began to emerge in the mid-1960s.<sup>14</sup> Houghton (1966) wrote one of the earliest studies to acknowledge the existence of a gender difference among West Indian children. This research, was, however, very much in the the educational testing tradition that characterised this era. He carried out his research in eleven infant schools in English local authorities and focused on possible racial differences in IQ. The different scores he attempted to explain in cultural and environmental terms. Ironically, in this early academic attempt to quantify and

<sup>13</sup> Swann (DES 1985), for example, still found it important to investigate the issue.

<sup>14</sup> See Taylor (1981,1985) and Tomlinson (1983a) for a review of the literature of this period.

qualify the nature of black underachievement, the author did divide his sample into male and female groupings. Houghton tested 71 matched pairs of white and Jamaican children, 36 girl pairs and 35 boy pairs using an individual IQ test. The results showed a mean IQ score of 90 for the Jamaican children and 92 for the English, not a significant difference. However, for the first time his study did show that Jamaican girls were performing slightly better than boys on reasoning tests. Houghton noted that gender differences did exist but never explored this finding as having any significance in itself.

This was not an altogether surprising omission given the political and social context of research on race during this time. Nevertheless, what marks out Houghton's rather modest work <sup>15</sup> is that it unconsciously set the trend that ensured the repetition of this oversight evident in so many contemporary sociological studies.<sup>16</sup> The omission by Houghton is understandable too, given the limitations of IQ studies. To recognise girls as doing well would upset the well-defined parameters of research into racial performance. The study, like those which followed and similar to research in the U.S.A., was concerned with measuring the comparative ability and performance of minority group children and indigenous children, and little else. Houghton's study was based on the assumption that racial differences do exist and evidence that suggested otherwise was

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<sup>15</sup> Swann (1985:133) refers to the research as 'modest'.

<sup>16</sup> Allen (1982:115) writes : " It is now a sociological cliché to state that the theory methods and ethnographic material 'neglected', 'could not find' or simply 'forgot' the gender element".

simply overlooked as not being of any significance. The failure to incorporate the gender issue into the analysis cannot be regarded as a calculated omission. It is, rather, the outcome of the intellectual poverty and assumptions inherent in IQ studies.

The most recent research in Britain to address the issue of IQ, is a study by Mascie-Taylor and Mackintosh (DES 1985). Written over twenty years after the Houghton study, it still ignores the issue of gender differences in educational attainment. In a rigorous and careful consideration of data from the National Child Development Study (NDCS) and the Child Health and Education Study (CHES), Mascie-Taylor and Mackintosh continue with the conventional methodology of comparing West Indian children to indigenous children. They show that much of the discrepancies in IQ scores between West Indian and indigenous children appears to be related to social and economic differences between them, and point to such factors as parental occupation, income, size of family, degree of overcrowding, and type of neighbourhood. The matter of differential achievement between the sexes is never mentioned. Gender, it appears, was simply overlooked in what was otherwise seen as a "lucid and cogent exposition of the different arguments involved in the (IQ) controversy." (Swann:DES 1985:71).

In my discussion so far, I am not suggesting that intelligence testing can be made acceptable if black girls are included in the research. What I am proposing is that by recognising that there is a distinct lack of homogeneity within the black experience, is in itself an important consideration in educational research on race and underachievement. As such it points to the need for

researchers to explore and find alternative explanations for black underachievement, other than those which traditional 'gender blind' analyses have put forward.

Lomax (1980), for example, illustrates the shortcomings of research that attempts to combine the IQ perspective, albeit inadvertently, with an analysis of black females. In her study of West Indian pupils in an Inner London, girls' secondary school, she observed that while black girls in her study were strongly motivated, had a clear belief in the value of schooling and had positive conceptions of themselves, they were nevertheless, "...quite definitely intellectually more disadvantaged than other young girls. " (p.36)

Recent trends in the study of black educational performance have, at their origins, the ideological perspectives established in the 1960s. This is no more evident than in the effect of the 1968 report of the ILEA Research and Statistics Group.<sup>17</sup> As Tomlinson (1983a) remarked, it is this research which:

"... probably had most impact on practitioners and on general beliefs about the under performance of some minority groups in general " (p.29)

The findings of the ILEA working party published in the journal Race, considered gender sufficiently unimportant to omit it from

<sup>17</sup> See Tomlinson (1983a:29). The Research and Statistics report was published in 1968 in Race (9,4) by its authors Little, Mabey and Whitaker.

a summary of its major conclusions.<sup>18</sup> The focus of the report was clearly to investigate the difference in educational achievement between ethnic groups, the assumption being that racial origins affect educational outcomes.

Taken from 52 London primary schools, the sample was organised according to racial criteria. The pupils were categorised into West Indian, Indian, Pakistani, Greek Cypriot, Turkish and Others. This is not surprising, given that the brief of the ILEA working party, set up in 1966 under the direction of Alan Little, was to enquire into the educational performance of immigrant children. They write:

"The main object of the study was to examine the problems of and effect on schools with a high proportion of immigrant pupils ." (Little et al 1968:440)

The terms of reference of the report were thus clearly defined. The immigrant presence was considered problem in itself. Racial and cultural explanations were underlying assumptions which determined the conclusions of the report, which suggested that:

"The overall performance of the immigrant child was found to be significantly lower than that of all authority pupils". (p.443)

Poor immigrant school performance was attributed to language problems, cultural and family differences, the 'shock' of

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<sup>18</sup> It is not known if the unedited report entitled "The Technical Appendix to the Report of a Working Party of Members of the ILEA Inspectorate and School Psychological Service", makes reference to gender. Tomlinson (1983a) does refer to the report as recognising that black girls did marginally better than boys except in maths. However, the summary of its conclusions in Race makes no reference to gender.

immigration and poor contacts between the home and the school.<sup>19</sup> The working party observed a marked improvement in the performance of immigrant children with increased length of schooling in Britain, but found the, "low attainment of West Indian children compared with other groups"(p.446). This they suggested was :

"somewhat surprising in view of the fact that a greater proportion of West Indians were English-speaking, and might have been thought to have an advantage on that account."  
(p.444)

Such a conclusion could be regarded as divisive and leads to a reappraisal of what 'English-speaking' really means to the authors. The overall outcome of the study was, as Bagley (1968, quoted in Tomlinson 1983:29) observes, to "..bolster the ideology that coloured children are intellectually inferior."

Thus, in conclusion, the recognition of gender differentiation had no place in the analytical framework employed by Little et al. While females inevitably found their way into the sample by virtue of their existence in the population, a separate analysis of their attainment was not considered to be of any value to a research study that set out to quantify black underachievement.

Following on from the 1968 ILEA Report, was a study by Payne (1969) which reported that West Indian girls were doing well. Payne's study on the mental ability of seven and eight year old indigenous and West Indian children was designed, "to investigate

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<sup>19</sup> The fact that second generation black pupils still continue to experience educational difficulties throws, with hindsight, some shadows of doubt on the validity of ILEA's thesis that the immigrant status of the pupils accounts for educational disadvantage.

the differences that may exist in the performance of two racial groups." (p326). With the emphasis on racial differentiation, Payne, like Houghton before him, failed to credit the measured differences in attainment between the sexes with an significant value. The author's discussion of his findings , in the context of his hypothesis, clearly illustrates the way in which women are deemed invisible, regardless of the weight of evidence suggesting their importance.

Payne's hypothesis was that West Indian immigrant children of 7-8 years would show significantly poorer performances on the vocabulary test, the non-verbal intelligence test and the word reading test, compared with indigenous British children of the same chronological age and socio-economic status. He concluded:

"as anticipated, significant racial differences were to be found between the two racial groups ..... there was no significant differences between the sexes within either racial group.....but on the word reading test the British and West Indian girls were significantly better than their male counterparts." (p. 326)

This finding, that West Indian girls perform better than their black and white male peers is completely ignored in Payne's analysis. While such an observation could have initiated and encouraged new avenues of enquiry in the study of differential academic performance, it was lost in an analysis, whose premise was the poorer performance of immigrant children, and thus only concerned with investigating cross-cultural variations.

### 1970-1980: A Decade of Consolidation and the Invisibility of Gender

Gender, having been conveniently and consistently overlooked every time it emerged in the 1960s, suffered, in the 1970s a blanket disregard. Gender differences in attainment among West Indians, previously recorded and now known to exist, were swept aside during this era in the political undercurrents that determined the nature of the debate on race and education. Research in the 1970s continued to refine the idea, already established in the 1960s, that poor home background, particularly adverse socio-economic circumstances, contributed greatly to low achievement among West Indian children.

#### (1) Government Policy and the National Trend

In response to the increasing inner city unrest during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Labour government launched a number of projects aimed at tackling the problem of urban deprivation. Both the Urban Aid Programme and the Educational Priority Projects (Halsey 1972) marked a new era in the discussion of race and underachievement. The emphasis moved away from racial inferiority towards social and cultural inadequacy. The government's Community Education Programmes of the early 1970s were not directed at alleviating racial inequality, but focused on the disadvantaged in general. Class now became the central issue on the research agenda, not race, and least of all gender.

That the value of a gender analysis was to be overlooked in the 1970s was, therefore, apparent from the start of the decade. This is clearly illustrated by the National E.P.A. (Educational

Priority Area) Action Research Projects, which completely ignored the fact, with regard to data collection and data analysis, that children are not only black or white, rich or poor, but also male and female. Tomlinson (1983a:31) observes that while the sample was large enough for immigrant groups' test scores to be examined separately, no attempt was made to note differences between boys and girls. The E.P.A project, carried out in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, the West-Riding of Yorkshire and Dundee, explained the lower test scores of the West Indian children in the language of the Plowden Report (1967) that highlighted social class deprivation. The reasons advanced for the lower test scores include the larger family size of immigrants and the use of creole by West Indian children.

In America the 1966 Coleman Report (Coleman 1969) was influential in bringing about this apparent shift toward social and cultural inadequacy as an explanation for the underachievement of the black child. The Report blamed poor families, particularly poor black families, for the failure of the school system, because, as Coleman argued, parental influence and pupil self-concept, confidence in their own ability and achievement, enables students to win through and succeed despite all odds.

The Coleman Report pointed towards social psychological factors as the mechanism for producing working class and black underachievement in schools. The implications of Coleman's Report with its emphasis on these social psychological factors, were far reaching. It gave impetus to the notion of negative self-esteem and negative ethnic identity that has since

dominated the educational research on the black child, a notion that further established the invisibility of gender.

The conclusions of Coleman were found to be generally acceptable in Britain, and in 1967 the Plowden Report made similar observations. Plowden reported that it was families, and in particular parental expectations, that ultimately exerted the most influence on whether or not children succeed in schools. Those children who lacked parental support and encouragement were, Plowden argued, deprived. Their parents were also assumed to be deprived as well. Because they lived in slums, it was argued that their cultural environment was not the type to encourage them to take an interest in their children's schooling. In this thesis put forward by Plowden, can be found the origins of the subsequent trend in educational research to 'pathologise' the black family (Lawrence 1982a, 1982b).

The idea that black children were failing for psychological reasons relative, not only to middle class but also to working class children, became a popular myth in the 1970s (See: Little 1975). It was a widely held belief that black children did not merely share the disadvantage of the indigenous working class children but also suffered discrimination, prejudice and rejection by the dominant group. The 'commonsense' argument, therefore, was that they must adopt this view of themselves and as a result, regardless of whether they were male or female, come to see themselves as failures and non-achievers in schools.

Thus, by 1970 the terms of reference established in the late 1950s, race and culture, were still dominant in the debate on underachievement; only now the emphasis was less on race and inherent genetic ability, and more on culture and its presumed negative effects. Gender was buried under the mass of research on self-concept and ethnic self-esteem that characterised the 1970s. Females, if discussed at all, were only referred to in terms of their contribution to the pathology of the black family.

Carby (1982a) comments on the unsatisfactory way in which women, when included, were presented in educational research. She writes:

" The black family, it is argued, is unable to provide the conditions for or acts as an inhibitor to, the successful educational progress of the black child. Most frequently, in educational reports, the focus is placed upon the black mother... it has been around black women that pathological notions of the black family and the responsibility for the failure, or inability, to integrate have been secured . Commonsense constructions of the .....dominating Afro-Caribbean wife and mother, who is always out working and therefore never at home (have been elaborated) into ideologies that justify increased state intervention into school and home. Black children were labelled 'disadvantaged' or 'disabled' either because their mothers worked or because they did not." (p.190)

A study by Graham and Meadows (1967) is an example of just such a pathological perspective. They argue that the poor performance of the 'maladjusted' black girls in their sample can be explained by their greater domestic and child-minding responsibilities.

During this period the ability of black girls to consistently do well, despite the racial disadvantages they encountered at school, was completely overlooked. This was clearly made possible by the acceptable and unchallenged tradition within

educational research to make pathological references to the black female's role in the family.

(2) Lessons From America: Black Women and the Tradition of Cultural Pathology:

The trend to pathologise the black female in educational research in Britain was influenced by the conclusions of the 1965 Moynihan Report (Moynihan 1965, in Rainwater and Yancey 1967). In America the Moynihan Report, The Negro Family : The Case for National Action had at the core of its thesis the detrimental effect of the matriarchal black female within the black family.<sup>20</sup> In his report Moynihan stresses this point. He writes:

" .....social pathology afflicting the negro community can be traced to the weakness of family structure, "

That weakness, Moynihan informs us, is:

" matriarchy.....the reversed roles of the husband and wife." (Moynihan 1965, in Rainwater and Yancey 1967:76)

The overt pathological explanation presented by Moynihan was based on an unqualified and subjective assumption about the relative cultural deprivation of the black community vis-a-vis the hitherto undefined 'rest of American society'. Moynihan explains how in his judgment the notion of relative cultural deprivation operates in the lives of the black people to bring about what he calls a 'tangle of pathology':

"In essence, the negro community has been forced into a matriarchal a structure which, because it is so out of line with the rest of American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the negro male and, in consequence, on a great

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<sup>20</sup> Moynihan recently presented evidence that his thesis on the black family has been vindicated by the current demise of the black family in America: See THES 20/2/87. See also his most recent publication: Family and the Nation (1986).

many negro women as well". (Moynihan 1965 in Rainwater and Yancey 1967:75)

It was not only Moynihan who sought to account for the perpetuation of black disadvantage in an 'ideologically egalitarian' America within the pathological framework; it was a popular and convenient concept and so other writers easily adopted a similar paradigm. For example, Thomas Pettigrew (in Rainwater and Yancey 1967) writes :

"The negro wife .....can easily become disgusted with her financially dependent husband, and in her rejection of him further alienates the male from family life. Embittered by their experience with men, many negro mothers often act to perpetuate the mother-centred pattern by taking a greater interest in their daughters than their sons." (p.80)

In these clearly ethnocentric accounts that victimised the black woman, structural black male unemployment in America was overlooked. By failing to acknowledge the true significance of racial discrimination in the American labour market, education took on a special meaning in the Moynihan analysis.

If blacks are perceived to be culturally inferior, then how could black female academic success be explained? This did not appear to present much of a dilemma for the cultural pathologists.

Education for Moynihan was the mechanism through which matriarchy was perpetuated, as he explains:

"The matriarchal pattern of so many negro families reinforces itself over the generations. This process begins with education .....for a long while, negro females were better educated than negro males, and this is true today for the negro population as a whole:" (p. 77)

Even though Moynihan, unlike any other political or academic study to date, is prepared to openly recognise and document the obvious academic success of black women, it is clear why he is prepared to do this. For Moynihan, black academic success is

regarded as a negative rather than a positive phenomenon. Black female achievement, which so often contradicts and upsets the established tradition of overall black underachievement, does not, in this case, detract from the argument. On the contrary, the recognition of black female academic success appears to support Moynihan's thesis. The presence of a dominant female is seen to undermine the social fabric. Thus in this context the recognition of black female academic achievement is far from enlightened. It is unfortunate that in one of the few instances where black women are highlighted as a central force, their success should be manipulated to undermine the position of the black male.

The Moynihan Report had the effect of changing the United States Government's thinking with regard to the Civil Rights Movement. It shifted the emphasis away from law to living conditions (Rainwater and Yancey 1967). In all the controversy and the debate that the report aroused, the recognition of the importance of black female academic success became sacrificed to the wider political debate on the status of the black American family. As an outcome of the Coleman Report, The Compensatory Education Programmes established in America, such as 'Headstart', ignored black female achievement and aimed at redressing black underachievement. In America, as in Britain, policy makers failed to see black female academic success as offering a new direction in the understanding of black educational issues.

The pathological tradition with regard to black women, however, is neither confined to the U.S.A. nor to the past. It is a

belief that remains a clear characteristic of contemporary educational research in Britain. In both its overt form, and in a less obvious manner, it has found its way into present-day studies.

In its more subtle version it is present in research perspectives that stress the centrality of the matriarchal or matrifocal black family. This approach characterises much of the more 'progressive' studies on black girls that have been undertaken in the 1980s.<sup>21</sup>

Other studies, however, have uncritically accepted the conclusions of Moynihan. As recently as 1986, a study entitled, 'Unequal Stuggle' (Gibson 1986)<sup>22</sup> not only illustrates the endemic nature of this causal explanation, but also epitomises the inadequacies of the cultural pathologists' arguments. They suggest that the origins of black underachievement can be found in the nature of West Indian culture. They claim:<sup>23</sup>

"A sense of cultural identity is generally lacking in the people from the Caribbean ....Most West Indians ....see themselves as culture-less. This amounts to an identity crisis which has undermined the confidence of West Indian adults, and they in turn have found themselves unable to inspire confidence and a sense of identity in the young, who

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Fuller 1982; Dex 1983; Eggleston et al 1986. These studies are discussed in more detail later in Chapter 2.

<sup>22</sup> The author was black and as such the book received a great deal of press publicity: See Guardian 23/6/86, 'West Indians Devalued by Society'; 'Racism in the Classroom', Hackney Gazette 24/6/86.

<sup>23</sup> Gibson also argues that 'stress' is also a major cause of underachievement. Rather than examine economic and social effects of racial discrimination he emphasises " the stress of living in a society that devalues them because of the colour of their skin." (p.93)

badly need it to help them in their development-especially in Britain." (p.19-20)

Women, as the guardians of family life, are seen as playing a central role in damaging the child's self esteem. West Indian women's relationships with men (see their Chapter: 'The Unmarried Mother') and child-rearing practices (see their Chapter: 'A Legacy of Slavery'), when measured by the yardstick of the indigenous culture, are seen by Gibson to "...hamper the development of sound principles and good habits" (p.23)

### (3) The Notion of Negative Self-Esteem In The Development of Multi-Cultural Education

There was other work going on in the field of educational research during this decade, which, like the reports by Coleman, Plowden and Halsey, also assisted in steering research away from a recognition of gender. This body of research belonged to the now well-established and growing multi-cultural education debate <sup>24</sup>.

In 1971, Bernard Coard published his influential polemic, How the West Indian is made ESN in the British School System. In this short book Coard, himself West Indian, in an effort to respond to the disproportionate numbers of West Indian pupils in ESN institutions, described the process of the 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy implicated for the first time in Britain. the role of the teacher in explaining black underachievement. Coard argued that the

<sup>24</sup> For a comprehensive review of the literature on the multi-racial education debate, see: Tomlinson (1983a) and Swann (DES 1985)

teachers' expectations and attitudes toward black children caused them to seriously underestimate the ability of black pupils. The reason why he explains is because:

"Most teachers absorb the brainwashing that everybody else in society has absorbed, that black people are inferior, less intelligent than whites.....low and negative expectations bring about in the child a low self image of himself and his abilities - If the system expects you to fail - the chances are you will fail too. If you expect to fail, the chances are you will."(Coard 1971:32)

Coard's thesis had an important impact on educational research and practice. Unintentionally, however, Coard's analysis sanctioned, and gave impetus to the work of the self-concept theorists such as Milner (1975,1983). Milner typifies the beliefs of this school of thought in the following statement:

"there is overwhelming evidence that minority group children in England have internalised the racial values of the society and the accompanying pecking order. As a consequence they respond to tests in a way that is highly favourable to the dominant white majority and derogatory to their own group." (p.137)

In a similar manner, Little (1978) related the underachievement of black pupils in London to their self-concepts. He suggested that the low economic and social status which New Commonwealth immigrants are frequently accorded in this society affect the identity of these groups themselves.

The self-concept theorists were influential in the shaping of the multi-cultural education debate. As a consequence of their input, MCE (multi-cultural education) policy and practice took on a 'remedial' emphasis. The function of MCE policy and practice falls within the scope of the compensatory education model, which

attempts to offset educational disadvantage among children through the development of special educational initiatives.<sup>25</sup>

The exclusion of gender during this phase was complete. 'Black identity' for Coard and the self-concept theorists was an all-embracing and convenient idea. It was never questioned that male identity may not be the same as female identity among the West Indian population. To have probed this issue and to have found otherwise would have clearly undermined the validity and basis of their argument.<sup>26</sup> The tendency to refer to black pupils as a sexually undifferentiated group, was in itself evidence of a reluctance to see otherwise. Boys and girls were considered one and the same, and in most cases as male, as Coard's language in the following passage illustrates:

" 'He' is told 'he' is dirty and ugly, and sexually unreliable and also intellectually inferior....'he' is told on entering school 'his' language, 'his' only means of communication, is second rate. Therefore 'he' is made to realise 'he' and 'his' kind are only fit for manual jobs." (Coard 1971:35, My emphasis)

Here Coard is clearly describing the male experience. The assumption is clear, black identity is black male identity. Young women were therefore rendered invisible in both theory and policy during this era. The prescribed curriculum changes that

<sup>25</sup> Mc Neal and Rogers (1971), Willey (1984), Stone (1985), present examples of the range of critiques against the policy aims and direction of multi-cultural education. From different starting points, they all, however, point to the poverty and futility of MCE. Lynch (1981) and Twitchin (1981) both handbooks for teachers, describe recommended MCE classroom teaching practice, which illustrate the limitations of classroom strategies.

<sup>26</sup> Loudon (1978, 1981) did undertake such a study and found girls to have a different self-concept than boys. However, because he adopted the self-concept paradigm in his attempt to establish positive identity, his gender findings did not present any real challenge to the arguments of the conventional theorists.

provided the mainstay of policy initiatives aimed at alleviating black discontent, were aimed at enhancing self-esteem, identified to be source of 'the education problem'.<sup>27</sup>

Carby (1982a) explains that in reality generalisations cannot be made about the black experience. Young black women are subject to a very different type of stereotypical image than black men. This specific image has consequences for the way in which black females are treated by others and the opportunities available to them. She writes:

" Young adolescent West Indian women, for example, are frequently regarded by teachers as 'unfeminine'. Accused of being too 'loud', of 'flaunting' their sexuality as opposed to being demure but tempting, and of 'talking back' when they are being repressed, they fail to reach western standards of femininity. In practice, in relation to careers or job opportunities, West Indian girls are not regarded as suitable for work where an overt but malleable display of sexuality is required". (p.203)

The self concept theorists completely overlook this very different experience and hence misjudged their educational recommendations aimed at redressing cultural disadvantage and negative black self-image. What is fundamentally inaccurate about the self-concept theory is its assumptions about the underachievement of all West Indian pupils. If black female academic success was taken into account the basic assumption of negative self-esteem upon which the notion rests becomes questionable. Thus, in conclusion, we can say that the omission of gender renders this influential period of research focusing on negative self-esteem unreliable.

<sup>27</sup> As a 'special educational' concession to black girls to enhance their self-esteem was, as Stone (1985:69-70) observes, to have in addition to the home economics curriculum, 'Caribbean flavour cooking' and 'hair braiding.'

(4) Multi-Cultural Education and the Notion of 'Relative Cultural Deprivation'

An aspect of the race and education debate that contributed to the general tendency in the 1970s to overlook gender was the 'fashion' to compare West Indian academic performance with that of their Asian counterparts. Bhikhu Parekh (DES 1985) argues that, in general, this movement toward a comparative analysis had a detrimental effect. He points out:

"...the debate was lead astray by two false assumptions, namely that all West Indian children fail and Asian children succeed."(p.69)

The on-going ILEA studies, begun in the 1960s and reported in 1973 and 1975, <sup>28</sup> played a major part in fostering this doubtful assumption. Just how the issue of underachievement was perceived is illustrated by the following explanation offered by Little:

"The two main ethnic groups that we are concerned about in race relations are clearly the Asian Community on the one hand and the West Indian on the other .....there are clear distinctions in how well different groups are functioning in the existing school system....".(Little 1978:60)

Little juxtaposes the two different racial groups as follows:

"What the Asian child brings to school is in a very real sense an alternative culture, an alternative identity, an alternative sense of and source of personal well-being and personal strength to the majority culture....They know they are different : they have a different language, a different religion, a different culture and a different set of attitudes, which they think is better. And their response to indifference or to ethnic or racial hostility is less to question their own ethnic identity, than to be pushed back into that sense of identity and well-being, and to derive a strength from that.....The West Indian is not in that position ... His position represents a variant of the dominant culture, and the dominant culture is rejecting, and therefore there is a danger of community rejection being

<sup>28</sup> The reports were by Mabey in 1973 and Little in 1975 (Tomlinson 1983a:30).

transferred to self-rejection. There is no religion, no language, no different set of values to fall back on, there is a sense of cultural separateness as a minority" (Little 1978:62)

This type of pathological account, presented as an explanation for differential academic achievement, repeated 'commonsense' and indeed grossly simplified perceptions of Asian and West Indian cultural attributes. It presumed that there was no commonality of experience among various ethnic minority groups within the education system that could otherwise account for obvious underachievement, such as social class, or racism. It expressed an adherence to a 'divide and rule' philosophy by suggesting that there is a hierarchy of 'superior' and 'inferior' cultures. However, Little's thesis was nothing new. His explanations were not dissimilar to the pathological tradition already established in the U.S.A. since the mid-1960s by Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Gender, like social class and other 'non-cultural' variables, received minimal recognition by the cultural pathology advocates. The focus of those that supported this pathologically-orientated ideology was differential achievement between groups and by groups, and not within groups. The emphasis on differences between groups secured the absence of black girls from this type of research. However, these accounts, emphasising relative cultural deprivation of ethnic groups, became popular research

themes and played an important role in influencing multi-cultural policy initiatives in schools.<sup>29</sup>

The cultural pathological tradition in educational research also had other implications. It helped to shape the future discussion on black girls when they did re-emerge as a subject of interest in educational research the 1980s. The work of Fuller (1982), Eggleston (1986), while a far cry from the racism inherent in the Moynihan Report, still incorporated elements of the pathological approach. This aspect of black female research will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

#### References To Gender 1970-1980 : A Case of Enrichment or Consolidation?

The decade of the 1970s was not completely devoid of educational research acknowledging the presence of black females. Several studies did comment on the differential achievement of black girls.<sup>30</sup> However, none of the studies can be said to be particularly significant; for while they did acknowledge gender differences they failed to employ their findings to explore new directions in the race and education debate. The reason for this, it seems, is that none of these studies set out to specifically address the issue of black female academic

<sup>29</sup> The most recent policy initiatives still emphasise relative cultural deprivation. For example, Swann (DES 1985) suggests that there is still some validity in pursuing a 'cross cultural' comparison when they write, "Wherever the truth may lie, the reasons for different school performances of Asian and West Indians seems likely to lie deep within their respective cultures." (p.86-87)

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Allen and Smith 1975; McEwan 1975; Yule 1975; Sharpe 1976; Jones 1977; Phillips 1979.

achievement. Their references were purely observations of a general kind about variations in their data.

These studies began to emerge in 1975, after a period of almost six years during which there was a complete absence of gender from educational research; six years that were, in effect, dominated by the work of the self-concept theorists. It is not surprising, therefore to find that these post self-concept studies were characterised by a more informed analytical approach - a perspective that could thus allow for a recognition of gender. Being better informed did not, however, necessarily mean more enlightened. Many of these studies drew on the assumptions and perspectives of previous years.

An example of one such study is the 1975 report by Yule et al. Grounded in the social psychological tradition of research, the authors' concern was to:

"Investigate the probable presence of educational difficulties in many English children of West Indian parentage." (p.2)

However the authors were also at pains to stress that:

"...the study is in no way concerned with innate potential or possible genetic differences between races but rather with educational attainment" (p.2)

In trying to explain why children from immigrant families, and especially those born abroad, should score well below the level of children from indigenous families in intellectual performance and educational attainment, the authors moved away from the IQ emphasis (which they felt had been largely responsible for the questionable ESN selection procedures). Instead they looked to school-based factors. However, in this report, as in other

studies emphasising the role of the school,<sup>31</sup> there is only a brief and inconclusive reference to female educational performance. Commenting on their data that shows the main measurable differences between the indigenous 'control' and the West Indian groups (i.e. by age, height, IQ, reading and comprehension etc.), only a passing reference is made to the sex differences of the sample. They state:

" In all groups girls tend to score slightly above boys on both non-verbal test and the reading test. The children from immigrant families do not differ from the indigenous children in this respect" (p.7)

As to why this difference should occur, the authors fail to say. It appears they cannot account for this phenomenon within the context of a school-based analysis, nor do they show any inclination to do so. If, as the authors conclude:

"Children from immigrant families were particularly likely to attend schools of a kind known to be associated with a high rate of behavioural problems and reading difficulties". (p.11)

it seems obvious that the question that should arise is: how is it that girls are less affected than boys within the same environment? Yule and his colleagues overlook this crucial matter, a finding which again, given the proper attention it deserves, could only serve to increase our understanding of how schools operate to perpetuate inequality.

The tendency to make references to gender, while at the same time ignoring its value, is common to the other studies of this late 1970s period. For example, McEwan et al (1975:60-63), in their NFER study on language in the multi-ethnic context, make brief mention of sex differences. They found West Indian girls to be

<sup>31</sup> See studies by Rutter (1979) and Mortimore (1988).

performing better in reading and writing tests, especially as their age increased. Nevertheless like Yule et al, they also make no comment on the reason for, or recognise the significance of this finding.

Similarly, Allen and Smith (1975) noted that among the West Indian pupils in schools in Bradford and Sheffield the girls performed better than the boys in 'O'Levels, CSE, and 'A' levels. Failure to explore the unconventional directions that this finding suggests, leads Allen and Smith to conclude, that language problems and a lack of pupil application were the cause of overall West Indian lower attainment.

Sharpe (1976), in her study of teenage girls in four London schools, reported that she found that black girls placed a greater importance on the acquisition of qualifications and on education itself than either black boys or white girls. The ethnocentricity of her feminist analysis prevented her from discussing this observation beyond the understanding of a white female experience.

In a study on the sporting activities of West Indian children, Jones (1977) found, not only better reading ability among the girls, but also that they have an overall higher achievement rate at 'O' level and CSE. This aspect of Jones' study, once again, was not explored. There is a clear tendency in sporting studies to overlook the matter of differential experience and outcome between the sexes, which is a consequence of unqualified male bias evident in such work. The analysis offered by sporting

studies while mentioning female athletes,<sup>32</sup> adheres to an essentially androcentric discussion of stereotypes and how they are assumed to operate.

Research published in 1979 by Phillips exemplifies the gender blind perspective that characterises all of these studies so far mentioned. For even though Phillips observes that girls do better than boys in reading tests (p.122), he fails to attach any significance to this finding. Unlike any of the other previous studies, Phillips actually breaks new ground by presenting a table that contains a detailed breakdown of educational performance by ethnic group and sex. However, instead of exploring the notable differences between West Indian boys and girls, and the remarkable similarities of West Indian girls to indigenous boys,<sup>33</sup> Phillips comments only on the ethnic group differences.

A study by Rosen and Burgess (1980), was influenced by the 'language and dialect' school of thought. As a theory to explain black underachievement, studies that examined the use of non-standard English became increasingly popular in the late 1970s<sup>34</sup>. Testing was essential to establish the influence of language on educational performance. In administering such tests, Rosen and Burgess found black girls (who were less likely

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Carrington and Woods (1986) and Cashmore (1982).

<sup>33</sup> On the SGR test WI boys scored 78.4; WI girls 82.7; indigenous boys 84.3.

<sup>34</sup> In the wake of the Bullock Report on language, the work of Vivian Edwards (1979) established a link between dialect usage and underachievement.

to speak dialect instead of standard English), to be reading and writing marginally better than boys, who were more likely to use dialect. However, as the study's premise was that the use of dialect inhibits educational success, no value was attached to the role of gender in explaining differing performance.

Similarly, because of the inherent shortcomings in the starting point of dialect studies, Bagley and Verma (1980 - reported in Tomlinson 1983:42), who carried out reading tests on West Indian pupils, while finding that girls performed better than boys on the Brimmer-Wide Span Reading Test, failed to account for this distinctive performance.

### Conclusion

What has been illustrated in this review of the early literature on race and education in Britain, is that the terms of reference that shaped the debate on race and education since its beginnings in the 1950s, remain firmly established. These terms of reference, being politically defined as 'race and culture', encourage a perspective that has resulted in gender being marginalised in the educational analysis of underachievement. Comment on black female performance is either absent from, or if noted, simply ignored in such research areas as diverse as IQ, self-concept, cultural and socio-economic disadvantage. The consequence of this oversight is more far reaching than is often acknowledged. By failing to recognise the significance of differential achievement, research on racial and educational issues has confined itself to specific avenues of investigation. Avenues that often perpetuate ill-defined or unsubstantiated theoretical explanations for West Indian underachievement.

## CHAPTER 2

### YOUNG BLACK WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: A REAPPRAISAL OF CURRENT TRENDS

When studies that actually considered the issue of black females in schools began to emerge in the 1980s, they were characterised by a range of distinct ideological approaches. Three trends stand out in this most recent period of educational research: the pathological, the indifferent, and the empirical. In this chapter I shall attempt to investigate the relative success or failure of the major studies that look at young black women's educational performance within the context of each of these perspectives. From such an analysis it is clear that the acknowledgment of gender in the 1980s represents a move out of the 'dark ages' of the previous decade into a new theoretical ghetto. This is because of the contradictions inherent in an investigation of academic success against a background dominated by a preoccupation with underachievement.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Bagley, Bart and Wong (1979) did attempt to account for the apparent existence of high levels of achievement among some West Indian children. They did not see it as a gender issue but attempted to explain it in terms of what they understood as social class differences. They suggested that 'high achievers' come from what they defined as materially and socially better off black families. In their account they suggested that it is only the more affluent West Indians who are well-educated, articulate and dissenting who can have a positive self-image. It is the positive self-image of these parents that they suggest influences their childrens' academic orientation. Such an analysis did not present any theoretical challenge to the established image of the black as an underachiever, as the recognition of gender could.

Opening Up the Debate: Driver, Rutter and the Liberal Tradition

The publication in 1980 of a highly controversial report <sup>2</sup> written by Geoffrey Driver entitled Beyond Underachievement, signalled the beginning of a new era for the recognition of gender in the debate on race and education. However, Beyond Underachievement, while focusing for the first time on black females, did not offer any new theoretical insights into the gender process and merely refined the thinking that characterised the previous two decades.

In setting out to investigate the relationship between sex roles, social structure and academic outcomes among West Indian boys and girls, Driver not only incorporated the notions of self-concept theory in his work, but also employed the models associated with the theoretical perspective of cultural pathology. This dependence on a simplistic notion of pathology is clearly illustrated in the following passage. He accounts for the 'phenomenon' of black female academic success as follows:

" ...in the Caribbean, there is a marked tendency for certain families to allocate major socio-economic roles in their households to women. Not surprisingly therefore this tendency is complemented by patterns in school performance in which girls are more successful than boys." (Driver 1980:13)

<sup>2</sup> The report was controversial in that it was considered to be methodologically unsound. (see Taylor 1981:113-122). It has been suggested that Driver sensationalised his findings in a New Society article (17th Jan.1980) and that the claims he made could not be substantiated in his study i.e. that blacks no longer underachieve. (see Carrington 1981:299)

To explain the apparent academic success of West Indian girls (and the relative failure of white girls),<sup>3</sup> Driver examines the respective position of the women in the West Indian and British social structure. From a brief consideration of the differences<sup>4</sup> he contends that in the West Indies women tend to have a higher social and economic status than men and as such are generally regarded as the 'guardians of their family's good name' and the providers of its stable income (pp.12-13).

His thesis appears deceptively simple. The success of black girls in British schools is attributed to the matriarchal structure of the West Indian family and their cultural life, which has been maintained by West Indians who have settled in Britain. He argues that in (white) British culture with its patriarchal structure, women have a lower status than men and are socialised to occupy subordinate social and economic roles. In West Indian culture, Driver claims that the opposite is true. It is the girls rather than the boys who are socialised to occupy superordinate positions and who are inculcated with values and expectations generally held to be conducive to educational success.

In the same way that academic achievement is explained by cultural factors, underachievement is simply explained away in terms of the social structure of the the West Indian family, in a

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<sup>3</sup> He suggests that, "West Indian girls are constrained to perform well in schools in a way English girls are not." (p.51)

<sup>4</sup> See Driver's introductory chapter p.4.

manner similar to Moynihan.<sup>5</sup> And what of the solution to underachievement? Driver does not deal with this question as he was preoccupied with establishing the presence of academic success. However, the prescription for such a pathological situation appears as logical as the diagnosis: to reform the life-style and values of the West Indian and, in particular, the role of the dominant female.

In spite of its inadequate and simplistic conception of West Indian culture, its crude methodology and unsubstantiated claims, Tomlinson (1983a:40) draws our attention to the one aspect of Driver's work that is worth mentioning. She writes that, because of all the publicity that the study received, attention was drawn for the first time to the fact that not all children of West Indian origin were failing or leaving school without qualifications.

In the wake of Driver and his conclusions came another important mile stone in the analysis of 'race' and underachievement. In 1982 Rutter and his team in their much publicised DES report<sup>6</sup> found that black pupils, and in particular black girls, were more likely to stay on at school after the fifth year in order to gain

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<sup>5</sup> The Moynihan report (See Rainwater and Yancey 1967) was discussed earlier in Chapter 1. The report suggested that the explanation of black disadvantage lay in the matriarchal structure of the black family; a structure that was presumed to be weak and disorganised.

<sup>6</sup> As a consequence of an address Rutter delivered at the first annual IBM/Westminster Community School lecture, the findings were reported in the Times Educational Supplement Oct 8th 1982 under the heading 'Staying on helps blacks to exam success'. However, the actual DES report (Rutter 1982) has remained unpublished.

qualifications equivalent to those of their white peers. The main reason for this they suggest was the greater commitment to education that they witnessed among West Indians. Rutter et al. argued that the parents' positive involvement in the education of their children was what helped the West Indian pupils to overcome the social deprivation and the negative schooling that they were more likely to experience.

Unlike Driver, Rutter et al. do not offer any explanation as to why black girls should be more persistent in gaining their educational qualifications compared to any of their peers. For Rutter and his colleagues the gender issue does not appear to merit any separate attention. The girls' persistence is seen only as an extension of the general West Indian commitment to education, as they indicate:

" A far higher proportion of black teenagers went on to some form of tertiary education - 17 per cent compared to 3 per cent of whites. The difference was slightly greater for girls than boys, but it applied to both." (TES 8.10.80)

Why is it that Rutter makes no attempt to account for the greater participation of black females in post-secondary education? The answer lies in an investigation of Rutter's general theoretical orientation, which appears to inhibit any satisfactory recognition of gender.<sup>7</sup> His conclusion gives some indication of the ideological perspective he employs which has resulted in the limited scope of his analysis. He writes:

" These findings on black children are a testimony to what can be achieved with educational persistence and

<sup>7</sup> This neglect of gender is apparent in his other studies too. For example, in Fifteen Hundred Hours because of his preoccupation with looking at school-based factors he gives only passing reference to gender (p.99) in relation to delinquency rates between boys and girls.

application. The story is an interesting and important one. In its emphasis on the value and rewards of individual initiative it provides a complement to earlier findings which pointed to what schools can achieve..." (TES 8.10.80)

His emphasis on individual initiative and school-based factors overlooks the fact that schools do not operate in isolation from the rest of society. While standards of education are important in an analysis of black achievement and underachievement, as is the educational orientation of the family, other variables are just as crucial, such as the social, political, and economic factors present in society at large. An account of gender differences in achievement must take into consideration such influences, and in particular should examine the interrelationship of schooling and the cultural construction of masculinity and femininity which is fundamentally linked to the world beyond the classroom. It is with little surprise therefore to find that Rutter and his team, with their school-based explanations, are unable to do any more than acknowledge that gender differences do exist.

These two studies had little in common but for the fact that they both highlighted the presence of black achievement in schools. What they did have in common was the media interest that greeted the publication of their respective findings. The political implications of West Indian achievement were clear. That blacks were doing well was not only controversial but was also regarded as highly 'suspect' by the differing political camps, both radical and conservative. This period in educational history was marked by a mixture of hostility and indifference towards the academic performance of young black women.

### Black Female Achievement: The Official Response

The 'official' government and local authority responses to gender and race in the 1980s were characterised by both insincerity and neglect. 'Lip-service' was paid to the issue of differential achievement among black male and female pupils but nothing more was done; no 'official' research was commissioned nor was existing evidence of black female achievement integrated into policy documents and reports.

The 1981 Rampton Report, West Indian Children in Our Schools made no secret of the fact that gender was of little significance to their investigation. The authors write:

" Our concern is that West Indians as a group are underachieving in our education system..." (DES 1981:p.10, my emphasis)

The Rampton Committee, in its decision to focus on the effects of both intentional and unintentional teacher racism, dismissed Driver's conclusions as unsound, and in so doing rejected the possibility of West Indian achievement. The message of the Rampton Report was clear; underachievement, not minority scholastic success was the issue to be explored. With Rampton's emphasis on negative self-esteem and the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy, teacher stereotypes and the operation of institutional racism, the recognition of gender would have clearly upset their well-defined paradigms.

Taking up the recommendations of the Rampton Report, not so much in word but in deed, the ILEA policy statements made in 1983<sup>8</sup> emphasised the eradication of teacher racism. However the ILEA's definition of racism precluded the satisfactory incorporation of black girls into their policy initiatives. In a political rather than academic consideration<sup>9</sup>, the ILEA suggested that racism and sexism are separate but parallel experiences. They write:

" The moral, legal and self interest arguments about racism and racial equality are similar to those surrounding another concern in modern society, that of sexism and sexual equality." (ILEA 1983 no.3, p.7)

In their ethnocentric account of sexism<sup>10</sup> the black female experience is overlooked as it is in their androcentric analysis of racism in society.<sup>11</sup> For the ILEA gender was distinctly a

<sup>8</sup> See ILEA (1983). Six policy documents were issued by the ILEA in 1983 under the direction of the then leader of the ILEA Frances Morell, and were sent to all the educational institutions in the area. These policy documents outlined the authority's thinking on matters of race, sex and class.

<sup>9</sup> Troyna and Williams (1986) suggest that much of the ILEA's multi-racial initiatives were politically inspired. For example, 'understanding' the problem was not so much a consideration as 'containing' growing black unrest in the classroom (i.e. truancy/ESN etc). They suggested that MRE would provide the solution to their problems and that anti-racism would provide a unifying ideology. The challenge of inequality was in effect an effort at re-establishing the ILEA's slipping control over its schools.

<sup>10</sup> In their discussion of negative sex-role stereotyping (ILEA 1983; no.1) they fail to recognise that black females are not marginalised in the classroom in the same way as their white peers, many of them often attempting to take up subjects deemed to be in the 'male' preserve. (See Ainley 1985; Griffin 1985; Riley 1985) Nor does the simplistic analysis of the ILEA acknowledge that attitudes toward marriage and a career are not universally shared.

<sup>11</sup> Black females are not discussed separately in any of the documents. When race is discussed West Indians are presented as a homogeneous group. In a brief mention of the work of Driver the issue of differential achievement is dismissed. (ILEA 1983: no.1)

white issue and race clearly a male matter. In outlining their theoretical position the ILEA wrote:

" The ILEA initiative focuses on three areas that particularly concern the education system: the achievement of children coming from working class families; the achievement of girls; and the achievement of children from different minorities." (ILEA 1983 no 1. p.6, my emphasis)

Because black females transcend all three areas of 'concern' - black, working class, and female - they become invisible by failing to comply with the rigid race, class and sex categorisation set up by the ILEA team. As Troyna and Williams (1986:35) suggest, this reactive approach to multi-racial initiatives was not inspired so much by 'pedagogical foresight' but was impelled rather by more immediate political and social considerations.

The 1985 Swann Report entitled Education for All, like its predecessor the Rampton Report, investigated the problem of West Indian underachievement in British schools. Its authors make clear, right from the start, that an association between gender and achievement is not a link that they wished to pursue. In one of their few references to gender they make the following brief observation:

" To complicate matters yet further unexpected differences within groups have often been noted. In some studies for example, West Indian girls have been found to be performing at a higher level than West Indian boys." (p.59)

After making this minimal comment on the issue of gender the authors of the Swann Report proceed to ignore the subject in their study. In the entire 806 pages of the report only 18 pages

make any direct reference to girls, let alone to the wider gender issue (Mirza 1986).<sup>12</sup>

Sheila Allen observes that the overt neglect of gender in social research is not an uncommon trend. She writes:

" It is now a sociological cliché to state that the theory, methods and ethnographic material 'neglected', 'could not find', 'cannot incorporate or simply 'forgot' the gender element." (Allen 1982:155)

By suggesting that there may be a gender variation in academic performance, while simultaneously casting it aside, both Rampton and Swann are indeed guilty of such an omission.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> In the Swann Report Peter Green's paper 'Multi-Ethnic Teaching and Pupil Self-Concepts' (p 46-53) recognises the importance of gender, albeit in the limited context of teacher-pupil interaction. The 'DES School Leavers' Survey' (pp.110-116) presents one table with a breakdown by gender. Verma's three page summary of a longitudinal study he carried out on the effects of ethnicity on educational achievement (pp.167-170) concludes without further explanation, that "the influence of the mother in West Indian families was particularly strong and this seemed to provide a dynamic model for the girls." (p.169). N.B. In the full length report of this study (see Verma 1986) the operation of what he calls the 'maternal interest' is never fully explained. (See pp.103-4,110-11,120,144).

<sup>13</sup> It was hardly surprising that these official government reports who defined the problem for the West Indians in Britain to be underachievement should have identified it as a male problem. These reports, it must be remembered, were written in the wake the black action in Brixton, Toxteth, and Bristol, in the early 1980s in which both the media and sociologists, black (see Dhondy et al 1974; Gilroy 1981,1982; Sivanandan 1982; Race & Class 1983) and white (see Cashmore and Troyna 1982) alike, were responsible for establishing the marginalisation of black women. In the explanations for black 'disaffection' and 'alienation', the image of 'youth' that was presented was invariably 'young, black and male'. In this context, it was hardly surprising that these official reports should assume that the black issue was overwhelmingly a male issue. Recent literature investigating 'urban unrest' continues to employ this androcentric perspective (See, for example, Benyon and Solomos 1987)

From Subcultures to Subordination: Black Girls and the Analysis of Mary Fuller.

Another landmark in the attempt to explain black female academic success came in 1980. Mary Fuller's <sup>14</sup> study of black girls in a London comprehensive school is one of the few attempts to analyse the bearing which a pupil's sex and race might have on academic aspirations and achievements.

Fuller confirms in her study, like those before her, the finding that differential academic outcomes exist between black boys and girls. She writes:

" During their fifth year, not only were the girls confident that there was much they could do to avoid job discrimination, they were also confident of their ability to achieve the academic qualifications integral to their plans. At least by the time the study was complete their optimism seemed well founded in that they had obtained a mean of 7.6 passes at 'O'level and CSE (compared with a mean of 5.6 for the black boys in the academic band) and generally with creditable grades. " (Fuller 1982:9).

Fuller, in explaining why it should be that black girls were orientated toward academic achievement, looked at the experiences of a small group of black girls <sup>15</sup> in their final year of compulsory schooling (i.e. 15-16 year olds). To account for these differences, she argues that these girls formed a discernible sub-culture within the school. The characteristics of this subculture Fuller describes as:

" ...a group of black girls at one and the same time apparently disaffected from schooling yet seemingly in their successful pursuit of paper qualifications locked into an

<sup>14</sup> Mary Fuller published two articles on black girls in schools (Fuller 1980, 1982). These articles were based on the findings of her unpublished PhD thesis " Dimensions of Gender in a School." (Bristol 1978)

<sup>15</sup> There were eight girls in all. They were of West Indian parentage, though most of British birth.

uncritical acceptance of a conventional justification of schooling." (p.92)<sup>16</sup>

This subculture, according to Fuller, was determined by the experience of 'double subordination', that is inequality based on the fact that they were both black and female. She states that her analysis:

" ..illuminates the ways in which female subordination of being black and female structures the consciousness of a specific group of adolescent girls in the specific context of a school." (Fuller 1982:87)

Fuller argues that the forms of action by the black girls in the school were strategies for trying to effect some control over their present and future lives by proving their own worth through their academic success (p.96). Thus the structure of the subculture, she argues, emerged from the girls' positive acceptance of the fact of being both black and female. She ascertains that its 'particular flavour' was the outcome of the girls' critical rejection of the negative connotations with which the categorisations female and black commonly attract. Thus:

" The conjunction of their positive identity as black but the knowledge of racial discrimination in Britain, their positive identity as female but the belief that in Britain and the Caribbean women are often accorded less than their due, meant that the girls were angry at the foreclosing of options available to them. This might be supposed to engender apathy and despair whereas in practice it elicited persistence and resourcefulness." (p.95)

While at school these girls were unified in their efforts to achieve their academic qualifications, and as such, Fuller argues, the sub-culture was only school-based. Within the

<sup>16</sup> Cecile Wright (1987:183) describes a similar phenomenon among the Afro-Caribbean girls in her study. However, it should be noted that unlike Fuller she concludes that with regard to teachers' reactions the experience of the girls was not dissimilar to the boys. Thus both male and female West Indians ended up being denied educational opportunities. (see also Chapter 8 'School Processes - An Ethnographic Study' by Cecile Wright in Eggleston et al 1987).

context of the school the black female 'subculture' had peculiar characteristics. She claims that it was neither one of resistance nor of conformity to the school.

" In terms of their expressed values and behaviour in the school, the girls manifested contradictory aspects of the good and bad pupil stance." (p.95)

In terms of classroom behaviour, this meant that the black girls gave all the appearances of being disaffected, stating that they saw the school as 'trivial,'boring' and 'childish'. Yet the girls when interviewed or observed away from the classroom were seen to be strongly committed to some aspects of schooling. With regard to future jobs, Fuller indicates that the black girls of the subculture were determined, whatever their domestic circumstances, to achievement through the job market to a much greater degree than other girls.

The situation as Fuller sees it is that although the girls knew their self-worth they believed this was often denied, and because of this denial, the pursuit of educational qualifications takes on special meaning. The girls did not need qualifications to prove their own worth to themselves, but rather as a public statement of something which they already knew about themselves but which they were certain was not given sufficient recognition. Fuller documents in detail her interpretation of how this denial is seen within the West Indian family (i.e. through an underestimation of girls' potential by their parents), and also evident among their male peers (i.e. through ridicule). The effect of this apparent 'denial' is:

" Confirmation of the girls' sense of identity could come neither from their general peer group nor from adults, but only from their own efforts. In short this was a low key,

covert, rather than celebratory subculture of resistance."  
(p.96)

Fuller suggests that the girls' resistance and reaction to the 'double subordination' of racial and sexual domination creates a belief among them that secrecy was essential, characterised by 'going it alone' attitudes. This belief, Fuller further assumes, had an isolating effect on the girls, in that within the classroom there was none of the visible solidarity which is typical of certain school-based subcultures that have been identified for boys.

While Fuller's study is both a clear and stimulating account of black girls in schools, it is necessary to take issue with some of the fundamental assumptions she makes with regard to the structure and function of the 'subculture', and in particular her description of the influence of the black family, male peers and the role of what she calls 'double subordination' for the black girls concerned.

The culturalist framework in which Fuller constructs her inherently ethnocentric argument causes her to highlight the centrality of the oppressive nature of the black family.<sup>17</sup> In discussing the major influences on the construction of the girls' consciousness, Fuller's emphasis on the low value of domestic work in the home, compounded by her assumption of negative relationships with black male peers, lends itself to the belief

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<sup>17</sup> The culturalist tradition in sociology tends to emphasise the importance of family/kinship patterns, household organisation, marital arrangement and child rearing practices of the black community in a pathological context (see Lawrence 1982 for a discussion of the work of Fitzherbert 1967; Foner 1979; Khan 1979; Pryce 1979.)

that cultural obstructions to fuller participation in society are reproduced within black families by black people themselves. She presents little sociological evidence to substantiate her claim that the way in which black girls interact with their families results in isolation and anger.<sup>18</sup> Such assumptions are clearly the outcome of 'commonsense' ideas about the black family and ethnocentric and inappropriate definitions of sexism which have been imposed on to the black experience.

At this point it is important to stress that there are degrees and kinds of culturalist accounting, and also, as a direct result of the methodology used, differences in understanding of the same phenomena. Driver (1980), for example, addressed his thesis to the differential academic achievement and attainment of ethnic groups. Yet Driver interpreted the positive aspirations as Fuller recorded as the outcome of special encouragement and status for black females in West Indian society, which is practiced at the expense of their black male peers. Fuller on the other hand, and in complete contrast to Driver, argues that the academic success of the girls is a statement of their self-worth in the face of sexual oppression and denial within the family. Riley (1985) also gives a different interpretation to her findings than that provided by Fuller. She found that Afro-Caribbean girls looked forward to relationships with men, expecting help with domestic chores and child rearing with partners of their own choice. She reported that the girls in her study felt that parents encouraged boys and girls equally but

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<sup>18</sup> See literature of the West Indian women in the family e.g. Sutton and Maikesky-Barrow 1977; Barrow 1986, and as discussed in Chapter 6.

that girls had a greater sense of responsibility to their families. It was this sense of responsibility, and not the need to establish their self-worth, that Riley suggests gave them their stronger commitment to education.

The clear emphasis in Fuller's analysis on the psychological orientation of the girls further illustrates the weakness of her conclusions. She writes:

" The black girls' behaviour within the classroom is, I suggest, intimately connected with their positive identity as black and female." (Fuller 1980:61)  
 ....the girls come together through each of them trying to cope with the difficulties of proving their own worth, especially as girls.. (Fuller 1982:97)

What she is in effect saying is that positive ethnic and sexual identity and positive self-esteem, however it is derived, can explain the academic achievement of young black women.<sup>19</sup> It holds therefore that poor or negative ethnic identity and self-esteem must be responsible for underachievement. In this respect Fuller's argument appears to be a restatement of the thesis of the 1970s: that of the detrimental educational consequences of negative ethnic identity and self-esteem.

Fuller's emphasis on 'cultures of resistance',<sup>20</sup> is another problematic aspect of her thesis. She employs a similar analytical framework to others in this tradition (Willis 1977;

<sup>19</sup> This assumption made by Fuller is challenged by the conclusions of Delroy Loudon (1978). He suggests that, "boys are significantly higher in self-esteem than the girls within all three ethnic groups (i.e. English, West Indian and Asian)." (p.226)

<sup>20</sup> The very use of the term 'subculture' implies deviation from the 'norm' and emphasises the subjective reality of the group as an explanation in itself, devoid of any wider political, social and historical considerations.

Griffin 1985), but in relation to black females it is necessary to incorporate not just an understanding of the girls' 'lived out experiences' of racism in the classroom, but also an analysis of how the ideology of racism structures opportunity and limits economic horizons. It is not sufficient to demonstrate how the ideology of racism and sexism is constructed in the consciousness of individuals or groups but to show how the ideology of sexually-structured racism, as a dynamic and persistent ideology, maintains disadvantage by its effect on economic assumptions and values. Thus it is important to investigate the mechanisms of racial discrimination beyond a mere discussion of the dominant ideology and the subsequent creation of 'cultures of resistance', and to include an explanation of its operation through the various agencies, such as the school, the careers service, youth schemes and other institutions.

Hall and Jefferson (1976) argue that to emphasise the subcultural features of youth is to divert attention away from the issues which they see as determining the quality of the experience of those being studied. They choose a more pragmatic approach to the study of social issues:

"There is no subcultural solution to working class youth unemployment, education disadvantage, compulsory miseducation, dead-end jobs, the routinisation and specialisation of labour, low pay and the loss of skills...They 'solve' (i.e. subcultural solutions) but in an imaginary way problems which at the concrete material level remain unresolved." (pp.47-8)

The notion of 'subculture' also employed by Fuller implies the central importance of 'cultures of resistance'. In Fuller's work as in other studies, the notion of subculture has been employed because it appears to offer some understanding of creativity,

activity and resistance. It seems, however, inadequate to formulate assumptions with an analysis where as Allen (1982) explains:

"... resistance and creativity boils down to the sheer expediency, cleverness and dexterity which guileful human beings display and turn an inhospitable environment to their advantage". (p.152)

Fuller's use of the concept of 'cultures of resistance' results in an unrealistic, 'romantic' reappraisal of black girls' actions and decisions. For example, Fuller writes:

" The high value placed on education and educational qualifications as a necessary preparation for work was consciously related to their knowledge of high local unemployment levels and the distinct possibility that they would encounter sexual and racial discrimination." (Fuller 1982:92)

Fuller's belief that these girls were highly politicised at this point in their educational career, and planned their actions as a defiant gesture to the world, does not stand up to closer scrutiny. Research by Ullah (1985) indicated that young black women, at the point of entry into the job market, were the least aware of the groups in the study of the racism they would encounter in the work place.

In addition to her subcultural analysis, Fuller employs the concept of 'double subordination' to describe the 'unique' social and economic position of black women in the economy. I shall only briefly discuss this aspect of her thesis here, as I will look at it in more detail later (See Chapter 3). Fuller's model of 'double subordination' does not consider the validity of culturally-specific concepts for describing the way that racial and sexual oppression operates for black women. Thus she presents an argument for looking at the inequalities encountered

by young black women where the racial oppression is simply superimposed on to sexual inequality. Lawrence (1982) makes the following observation with regard to the analysis of black women when inappropriate and culturally-specific definitions are used:

" Patriarchy does not always correspond simply to white patriarchy, and it is necessary to consider also the gender-specific characteristic of racism, which oppresses and exploits black women as black women." (Lawrence p.134)

Thus the idea that racial and sexual experiences interact in the way Fuller suggests is both inappropriate and misleading in a study of young black women in Britain.

In conclusion, Fuller's attempt to explain the academic performance of young black women, despite its theoretical shortcomings, was both pioneering in its efforts and thorough in its analysis. It marks a watershed in educational research, indicating the richness and value of a gender-orientated perspective to the study of black academic performance. It has been almost a decade since Fuller first published her findings, yet in these years little innovative research has been undertaken to further explore the value of differential gender achievement among West Indian pupils or to investigate the racial dimension of female studies.

#### From Matriarchy to Motherhood: Black Girls in the Eggleston Report.

The concept of the strong role model of the West Indian mother appears to have become an established part of 'commonsense'

mythology concerning the black female.<sup>21</sup> Though Fuller herself refers to this image of black women <sup>22</sup>, the use of this concept in the Eggleston Report <sup>23</sup> illustrates more aptly how this misrepresentation of black girls, originally instigated by Moynihan, has become integrated into everyday sociological thinking.

What has become known as the the Eggleston Report <sup>24</sup>, a study under the direction of Professor Eggleston, with Dunn, Anjali and Cecile Wright, published under the title Education for Some, is a general investigation into the vocational and educational experiences of young people from various ethnic minority groups. In their conclusion, in which they assert that social processes

<sup>21</sup> Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe (1985) state the following about the 'well intentioned' attempts at analysing black women: " They have tended, however, to portray black women in a somewhat romantic light, emphasising our innate capacity to cope with brutality and deprivation, and perpetuating the myth that we are somehow better equipped than others for suffering. While the patient, long-suffering victim of triple oppression may have some heroic appeal, she does not convey our collective experience." (p.1-2) Staples (1985) suggests that the myth of black matriarchy is a 'sinister ideology',"...a cruel hoax ...to label her a matriarch is a classical example of what Malcolm X called making the victim the criminal." (p.335-6)

<sup>22</sup> Fuller (1982) in referring to the matrifocality of the black family states the following: " Matrifocality may allow women to develop with a definition of femininity that includes strength, competence and so which enables them to challenge patriarchal relations of sexual domination..." (p.98)

<sup>23</sup> There is an earlier and original version of the report in 1984 submitted to the DES entitled The Educational and Vocational Experiences of 15-18 Year Old Young People of Minority Ethnic Groups. (Dept. Education, University of Keele). The report is now published: see Eggleston et al 1986.

<sup>24</sup> The report's release two weeks after the Tottenham Uprising was met with a substantial amount of publicity. See: Guardian Oct 17th 1985, 'Schools Hamper Hopes of Young Blacks': Guardian Oct 17th 1985, 'The Teachers at the Heart of the Crisis': Guardian Oct 31st 1985, 'Low Achievement of the Young Black Pupils is Often the Consequence of The System'.

in schools and society work against the efforts of young black people in Britain, the authors acknowledge that there is also a situation of differential achievement among black boys and girls.

They state:

" Afro-Caribbean girls achieved grades similar to the white boys, but Afro-Caribbean boys received the lowest grades in the cohort even though they were only half as likely to be entered for any GCE 'O' level as other groups." (Eggleston et al.1986:281)

Within their analysis the authors fail to give any account of why this difference should occur. Because they do not confront the issue of gender in the report,<sup>25</sup> they in fact present confused and contradictory statements about the orientation and experiences of young Afro-Caribbean people in their final examinations as the following examples show.

Firstly, one major finding in the Report claims that obstacles to equitable examination entry are an important factor in explaining the maintenance of black underachievement. However, as the statement above indicated the performance of black females in their final examinations was acknowledged to be far higher than black males and equal to, if not as good, as white males. By black underachievement Eggleston et al. must surely, by their own criteria, mean black male underachievement.

The Report, does however, fail to address the gender aspect of differential achievement. To have asked the questions of why Afro-Caribbean girls should be more likely to be entered for

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<sup>25</sup> In this substantial 300 page report, gender is given a three page mention in Chapter 2 and a one page reference in the conclusion. A breakdown of their findings by gender is given in a few tables.

specific examination subjects than boys, or to have investigated the way in which the black male experience of racism differs from that of the girls, would surely have been appropriate in an investigation of young peoples' educational and vocational situations.

Another oversight has been the absence of gender in the explanation of why young black people, compared to whites, wish to stay on at school. The Eggleston Report does note that it is the Afro-Caribbean girls who are most persistent in this respect (p.221,282). However, this observation is not integrated into an analysis in which determination at school is of major importance to the debate. This is clearly shown by the authors' account, which appears inconsistent when we examine it in the light of the black female experience.

The reason they suggest for this tendency to stay on among young black people is their hope that by doing so they would avoid racial discrimination in the labour market. They explain:

" It is probable that some of the enthusiasm to continue in full time education sprang from a lack of confidence about employment and a desire not to face a negative experience."  
(p.282)

However, if this is the motivating factor then why should black girls, who as Eggleston et al. suggest suffer less disadvantage at school <sup>26</sup> and in the labour market,<sup>27</sup> be more likely than boys

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<sup>26</sup> Eggleston presents his own evidence showing that girls did better at school in terms of results, being more likely to be entered for exams than their male counterparts (p.281).

<sup>27</sup> Eggleston indicates that Afro-Caribbean boys, rather than girls, were more likely to experience unemployment upon leaving school (100% for the boys ;70% for the girls. p.241).

to stay on? The logic of the argument does not stand up to examination. Gender, while being acknowledged, clearly has been overlooked in an obviously androcentric analysis of racial disadvantage.

The aspirations of the young women in the Eggleston Report, unlike the subject of their academic attainment, is given some marginal consideration. In a two page (pp.93-94) analysis the concept of motherhood and the strong black female role model is implied when accounting for the incidence of high occupational aspirations among the 38 Afro-Caribbean girls in the study <sup>28</sup>:

" Among the girls it was the Afro-Caribbean group which expressed the highest aspirations in terms of our table <sup>29</sup>, potential social workers, nurses and teachers being predominantly represented.....there seemed a common desire among pupils to 'better themselves' in some way. This tendency seems to be particularly noticeable among the Afro-Caribbean girls. Lest this be dismissed as 'unrealistic' it must be recalled that the mothers of the Afro-Caribbean young people appear to have by far the highest occupational levels of all the mothers in our sample." (p.93)

This statement is again confusing and contradictory. The authors state that high aspirations are the outcome of pupils wishing to 'better themselves'. How could West Indian girls be engaged in the process of bettering themselves if as Eggleston et al. argue, many of the mothers had already achieved a high social status at work? This problem is not addressed as the analysis does not

<sup>28</sup> The numbers of Afro-Caribbean girls was relatively low compared to the numbers of males and females in other ethnic groups (140 white girls; 93 Asian girls; 64 Asian boys and 72 Afro-Caribbean boys; 155 white boys.p.65) The authors of the report do recognise this shortcoming and note its drawback with regard to the strengths of any conclusions.

<sup>29</sup> (N.B. My footnote) Table 13 (p.92) showed that 67.7 % of Afro-Caribbean girls aspired to SC1 & 2 (N=34); while 32.6% of white girls aspired to the same level of occupation (N=129); (Afro-Caribbean boys = 31.7% )

attempt to explain the aspirational characteristics of the girls in a 'gendered' analysis.

There also appears to be an unqualified assumption being made about the central influence on Afro-Caribbean girls' occupational aspirations. The authors point to a link between the mother's occupational status and that of their daughters' aspirations. However, in making such a connection they are acknowledging the thesis that black females exhibit a form of cultural strength and resourcefulness that they transmit to their daughters who wish to emulate the strong role model provided. This emphasis not only marginalises the male, it also fails to investigate the influence of the labour market structures that determine the job opportunities for migrant women and their children. It is also a thesis that does not recognise the centrality of black, working class characteristics in accounting for the aspirations of black young people in general.

A further common misrepresentation made by Eggleston et al. in their report, concerns the notion of West Indian girls' attitudes toward their own motherhood and careers. They suggest that because Afro-Caribbean girls are more likely than any of their peers to take as little time off work as possible when having a child <sup>30</sup>, they are more 'careerist'. By suggesting that such a

<sup>30</sup> See table 14 (p.94). Here they showed that while 38.9% Afro-Caribbean girls would take as little time off work when having children, only 21.6% of white girls would and 27.3% of Asian girls. Only 13.9% of Afro-Caribbean girls said they would stay at home until their child grew up, compared to 34.1% of Asian girls and 27.6% of white girls.

response indicates that they are 'careerist' is inappropriate for several reasons.

Firstly, I would like to take issue with the authors' choice of emphasis on motherhood. To associate child-rearing patterns with higher or lower labour market aspirations is to suggest that there are cultural influences which inhibit or increase the likelihood of female labour market participation.

Secondly, the authors' interpretation of the girls' desire to remain at work as 'careerist' implies that they consider that there is a singular, universal orientation to work shared by all the girls irrespective of their racial and class background. It should be noted that black girls may not regard having children and continuing to work in the same way as their white peers. For many West Indian women to work and bring up children is not so much a 'careerist' choice as a historical necessity.

In conclusion, the Eggleston Report while occasionally referring to young women in its statistical data, does not attempt to integrate a gender analysis into the investigation of ethnic differences. Thus Eggleston et al. present a thesis whose claims to investigate black youth cannot be verified as the experiences of black females are overlooked.

#### Gender and the Work of the Black 'Self-Concept' Critics.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s another trend emerged in educational research that made black girls more visible. The studies of two black sociologists in particular, Delroy Loudon

(1978,1981) and Maureen Stone (1985)<sup>31</sup>, included the experiences of black female pupils in their work. These writers in their efforts to challenge the 'self-concept' theorists' notion of negative black self-esteem employed evidence provided by the actions and beliefs of black girls. However, because Louden and Stone were attempting to refute an established school of thought they had little choice but to adopt the traditional premise of 'race and culture' from which to launch their own attack. This fact, more than any other inhibited the extent to which black females could be incorporated into their studies. Thus both authors, rather than integrating gender into their analysis, used their findings on girls to demonstrate the point that high black self-esteem does exist among all black pupils.

Maureen Stone's treatment of black girls illustrates this point clearly. While she makes several references to gender, she does not attempt to explain why the girls in her study should give different responses or indicate different aspirations to those of their male peers. For example, from the results of the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Test and the Ziller Self-Esteem Item Test she concludes:

" In terms of future jobs the girls seem to have a clearer idea of what they want to do." (Stone 1985:119).

Stone makes many other such observations <sup>32</sup> and provides, inspite of her lack of analysis, strong qualitative evidence regarding

<sup>31</sup> Maureen Stone's work was first published in 1981.

<sup>32</sup> See Stone 1985:126.

the nature of the differential aspirations among black boys and girls.<sup>33</sup>

Because Stone is interested in looking at the effect of poor teaching on black pupils, her classroom observations appear to be free of the pathological interpretations that have coloured the work of other writers investigating the actions of black girls in schools. Thus her descriptions of classroom activity where black pupils, both male and female, are present are illuminating in themselves, as the following extract shows:

" My general impression of the class was of mild indiscipline among the pupils and a great tolerance or indulgence on the part of the teacher. For example one boy used the tape recorder in the classroom to listen to taped music...another group of boys played cards and one girl plaited her hair...it was as if a bargain had been struck whereby the teacher would be allowed to teach if certain pupils were allowed to follow their own interests..(p.106-107)

Fuller (1982), in her account where she puts forward the notion of 'subcultures' to explain similar classroom behaviour describes a parallel scene as follows:

" In terms of classroom behaviour the black girls gave all the appearances of being disaffected...they neither courted a good reputation among teachers, nor seemed to want to be taken seriously by the staff or other pupils." (p.90)

However, while Stone fails to develop the value of her insights into gender, Loudon does. He suggests that the differential scores he found between the girls of the various ethnic minority groups in his study was due to the variations in socialisation

<sup>33</sup> Stone documents the way in which the responses of boys in her study differed from the girls. For example she shows that in response to the question, 'Some day I would like to be?' Boys replied, 'drive; make children and work; be my own man and do what I like.' Girls, on the other hand, made what Stone describes as more 'realistic and achievable' comments such as, 'To be a social worker and visit the world'; 'Be a telephonist and lead my own life.' (p.120)

practices that females received within their respective cultures. For example, he implies that Asian girls' low self-esteem is due to parental restrictions which West Indian girls do not have to contend with (1978:226-227). Such assumptions he makes purely on the basis of 'commonsense' thinking and not on informed knowledge.

Louden does not consider the issue of why differential self-esteem scores exist between boys and girls, he only registers that they do occur. He only acknowledges gender in the restricted context of a discussion about differences between girls, which he does using the predictable and ethnocentric paradigm of 'negative sex-stereotyping'. While there is little evidence to support his assumptions about sexual socialisation, his research is important as it demonstrates differences between boys and girls of the same racial origin, which were so often been ignored in the work of the self-concept theorists of the 1970s.

#### Statistical Surveys and Empirical Evidence.

Although not specifically aimed at West Indian girls, empirical and statistically-orientated research has dominated the most recent efforts to investigate the black female situation. National surveys and large scale empirical studies provide further evidence that young black women have differential experiences in education and the labour market which contrast with those of either their male or white female peers. The ongoing Labour Force Surveys (OPCS 1985,1987; Employment Gazette 1985,1987) and the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) studies (Brown

1984), for example, show the educational and occupational characteristics of young black women on a nationwide basis. Reports by the DES <sup>34</sup>, the DOE <sup>35</sup>, and the ILEA <sup>36</sup>, which include a breakdown of their results by gender, provide detailed studies suggesting that generalisations about the outcomes for all black pupils cannot be made.

There has been much concern within the black community about the collection and use of empirical data on racial matters, and not without cause <sup>37</sup>. While the issue of ethnic monitoring is recognised as problematic, and misrepresentation in statistical fact-gathering is often common <sup>38</sup>, the data that has been collected on black females are rich sources of information, revealing patterns that many of the more interpretative studies we have discussed so far have failed to acknowledge. The patterns emerging from the figures show black women of all ages to be committed to further and continuing education, to be better qualified than black males and to be more active in the labour market than their white female counterparts.

<sup>34</sup> School Leavers Survey: see Swann Report (DES 1985).

<sup>35</sup> The West Indian School Leaver: Sillitoe and Meltzer 1985.

<sup>36</sup> Ethnic Background and Examination Results: Research and Statistics Report 1987 (ILEA/RS/8766)

<sup>37</sup> See GLC (1982) Ethnic Minorities Committee Report: Equal Opportunities and Ethnic Monitoring'. See also Burney 1988:19.

<sup>38</sup> See Mirza 1985, 1988 and my later discussion in Chapter 5 on black women as heads of households.

The findings of the DES School Leavers Survey 1981/82 (DES 1985:110) with regard to gender are clear. From their statistical presentation the authors conclude:

" West Indian children, more especially the girls, also tend to stay on longer than other children...they also tend to go more frequently than the average child from school to some form of full-time education course - but not to university or to pursue a degree course - and to have obtained a lower general level of academic achievement at school." (DES 1985:116)

Similarly the ILEA Research and Statistics Report on examination results and ethnic background (ILEA 1987:7,19.) observes that in all ethnic groups girls did better. Afro-Caribbean girls were notably performing much better than Afro-Caribbean boys and even the ESWI boys <sup>39</sup> (mean performance score for Afro-Caribbean girls was 15.9 compared to 11.2 for the boys and 13.6 for the ESWI boys and 16.9 for the ESWI girls).

Although Sillitoe and Meltzer (1985) employ a more interpretative account in their study of West Indian school leavers in London and Birmingham, the statistical information they provide with regard to gender is useful. For example in their examination of general attitudes toward work and vocational training they compare in detail the responses of the boys and girls. They found that the outlook of the West Indian girls corresponded closely to those of the boys, both being concerned with making progress in their jobs, unlike the white girls who felt domestic happiness was as important as their career (p.37).

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<sup>39</sup> ESWI refers to the countries of the British Isles; England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Their investigation into career aspirations also shows the similarities and differences between West Indian males and females, indicating that while West Indians in general were more ambitious than whites, the girls showed a marked preference for non-manual work compared to the boys' desire for skilled manual work (p.46). Sillitoe and Meltzer also note that in conjunction with 'high ambitions', black girls showed a 'striking enthusiasm' for part-time, further education, especially in contrast to white females, and taking into consideration the difficulties they encountered in getting time off from work to undertake such studies (p.98).

That the value of the Sillitoe and Meltzer survey lies in its data and not its analysis is made clear when we examine their attempts at understanding their observations. They provide the following explanation for their findings with regard to the positive orientation to work and school among black girls:

"The general tendency for West Indian women to go out to work more frequently than Whites is probably in part a cultural trait which, as will be observed later, was also reflected in their daughters...However, the lower earning capacity of their husbands and the expenses associated with settling in Britain undoubtedly put additional pressures on them to supplement their family incomes. Such pressures are naturally the most acute during the initial years of residence here, which probably accounts for the exceptional industriousness of the Later Migrants' Mothers." (sic) (p.30)

In this classic example of a poorly-informed pathological explanation, Sillitoe and Meltzer make many of the 'commonsense' assumptions that we saw earlier in the Eggleston Report. Links are made between mothers' work and daughters' aspirations purely on the basis of an 'educated' guess rather than considered investigation.

The third PSI Survey Black and White Britain (Brown 1984) gives a detailed and informative account of living and working conditions for black people in Britain. In so doing it is one of the few studies that gives substantial consideration to the characteristics of West Indian female experiences. With regard to education it declares:

" It is notable that West Indian women are involved in part time study to a greater extent than Asian and White women....the spread of qualifications pursued by West Indian women is very broad: 18 per cent of them are studying for 'O'level, 25 per cent for clerical or commercial qualifications, 10 per cent for a degree, ten per cent for City and Guilds exams and six per cent for nursing exams." (p.136)

Evidence such as this shows not only the levels of commitment but more importantly the results of restricted access to educational opportunity (i.e. black women have to return to get basic qualifications and few actually achieve the privilege of a University education)<sup>40</sup>. The PSI evidence also helps dispel many myths, such as the belief that nursing is a preferred profession among skilled and educated black women. As such it confirms the influence of the labour market in shaping the destinations of many black women in contemporary Britain.

The 1985 Labour Force Survey (OPCS 1987; Employment Gazette 1987) gives a picture of overall statistical trends for black people in general but also provides a useful breakdown according to gender. It shows the extent of disadvantage encountered by West Indian men and women when compared to their white counterparts of equivalent qualifications, age and sex. The survey also reveals

<sup>40</sup> See Tomlinson 1983b who notes that the black female undergraduates in her study, who were mainly from working class backgrounds, had struggled against all the odds to be there, but in so doing saw themselves as neither superwomen nor victims.

the reproduction of disadvantage within the second generation males and females by examining their high and disproportionate rates of unemployment in the context of their improved levels of education. For example, West Indian females aged 16-24 had an unemployment rate of 33%. West Indian males aged 16-24 had a rate of 35%, while their white male peers only experienced 18%, with white females 15%. The employment experience of the parents of these West Indian youths, who, as the Labour Force Survey points out were less qualified than their children, is clearly determined by different labour market demands over time. West Indian males 45-64 years old had an unemployment rate of 18% and West Indian females 45-59 years old had a rate of 10%. This still compared unfavourably to their white counterparts' experiences: white females over 45 had an unemployment rate 6%, and males 8%.

The data provided by the Labour Force Survey is useful as it puts the black female experience into a comparative context. It shows that regardless of qualifications or aspirations, black women (who often had the higher and more determined record of attaining such qualifications) like their male peers suffered substantial disadvantage and discrimination in the job market. At the same time it also shows that their experience differed in kind from their black male and white female peers.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Tables on qualifications and rates of unemployment and occupational levels (Employment Gazette (1987:26-27)), show that young black females are represented in different parts of the labour market than their male peers. They also appear to need different types of qualifications to sustain employment. It also shows that black females receive different treatment in the occupational sectors reserved for women compared to their white counterparts.

Thus it is clear from our discussion of empirical research, that while black females struggle to do well, the constraints of the economic and political environment in which they live severely curtail whatever achievements and aspirations they might have.

### Conclusion

Studies of the 1980s that do take account of black females, though they vary in substance and in kind, all agree that black girls not only have high aspirations but also higher levels of academic attainment than their male peers. However, because underachievement has remained the overriding concern of educational research with regard to the black child, this observation, as indeed the whole matter of gender, has been marginalised in the academic debates.

In studies that do address the issue of black scholastic success, boys are clearly overlooked. For example Eggleston and Driver associate high aspirations among West Indian girls with the strong role model of the mother. Fuller on the other hand, suggests that positive orientation to education can be explained by a black female subculture of resistance. Boys, who it is assumed are not affected by their parental orientation, least of all by any maternal influence, are thus not regarded as part of the equation. Unlike the girls, who are seen as part of a privileged and select club, they remain subject to the injustices of institutional racism and victims of the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure and underachievement.

Finally, the question remains as to why the gender issue should be perceived so negatively?<sup>42</sup> The answer appears simple. The spectre of achievement among some blacks, or blacks up to a certain age, or in particular schooling environments, would suggest that a radical reappraisal of contemporary thinking on the subject is essential. Rather than focusing on the family, parental social status, economic and social disadvantage, IQ, poor self-concept and ethnic self-esteem, commentators on the issue may have to address the far more controversial matter of the fundamental social inequality in British society.

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<sup>42</sup> This, however, does not mean that there has not been any 'public' interest in the issue. Recent years have been characterised by a 'sensational' media curiosity with regard to the academic achievement of black girls. For example, a report in the TES (3.4.87) which suggested 'Black Girls Flying High in Reading and Writing', was referring to the findings of a recently published report (Tizard, Blatchford, Burke, Farquhar and Plewis 1988), which among its many conclusions makes only mention of the fact that black girls at the end of infants' school were ahead in their reading and writing skills (p.180).

### CHAPTER 3

#### FROM MIGRANT MOTHERS TO BRITISH DAUGHTERS: BLACK WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

This chapter is an investigation into the economic status of West Indian women in Britain from their first significant arrival <sup>1</sup> in the early 1950s up to the present day. I aim to do this in three parts. In Part I I ask the questions; who were these women, what role did they play in the migrant process, and what types of jobs did they find in Britain? Part II examines the experiences and aspirations of their daughters and considers to what extent, if any, does the second generation's occupational opportunities differ from that of the first. In an effort to draw this information together, Part III looks critically at the theoretical attempts that have been put forward to explain the black female's experiences in Britain.

#### **PART I: MIGRANT MOTHERS**

##### (1) Workers or Wives.

It is a common assumption that men leave home for foreign parts while their womenfolk trail behind them (Foner 1979:56). This, however, was not the case for many West Indian women. Rose (1969) writes:

<sup>1</sup> There are records of a black African presence in Britain as early as 1555, but the first significant numbers of West Indians were brought to the U.K. in 1650 (Fryer 1984:14). However, the first migrant movement to the U.K from the Caribbean began in the late 1940s with the arrival of the Empire Windrush on June 22nd 1948. The first West Indian women (15 in number) arrived a few months later in Liverpool on the Regina del Pacifico in October 1948 (Fryer 1984:372).

" West Indian migration has been peculiar in that the percentage of women migrants was remarkably high." (p. 119)

Unlike any of the other migration movements to the U.K., West Indian women arrived in substantial numbers. Between 1952 (the peak period of migration) to 1962 (when immigration restrictions were first imposed) 108,600 West Indian women migrated to the U.K. compared with 142,620 men (Rose 1969). After the 1962 restrictions the numbers of females arriving in the U.K surpassed the number of males.<sup>2</sup> Between 1962-1966 the ratio of West Indian males to females was 65:100; this ratio remaining constant in the years 1967-71 (Lomas 1973). In the years 1972-77 twice as many women were arriving as men, and by 1982 though entry was now even more restricted, it levelled out to equal numbers of men and women.<sup>3</sup>

However, inspite of this evidence, the assumption persists of migrant movements being essentially male-inspired and thus male-headed, which includes this West Indian migration to Britain (for example: see Peach 1968,1986; Rose 1969). That labour migration theory is inherently androcentric, that is, presumes that women play a secondary and/or dependent role in the process of migration, is made clear in the work of Godula Kosacks. Kosacks (1976) observes that there are two types of migrant women. Those that go to join their husbands and those (single women) who go to work for themselves. For Kosacks migrant women are either

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<sup>2</sup> During this period the general intake of both men and women coming from the West Indies slowed down with only very small numbers arriving after 1972. (The Labour Force Survey 1983 and 1984 (OPCS 1985:33) shows that a total of only 8000 men and women were allowed entry between 1975-79).

<sup>3</sup> See Brown 1984:27.

workers if unmarried, or wives (and hence not workers) if they are. A migrant woman's relationship to the labour market is thus ascertained by her marital status alone. Marriage, Kosacks assumes, cuts across any solidarity they might develop as women in the labour process. She makes the following observation with regard to the relative positions of 'workers and wives':

" Although both share the inferior living conditions of the immigrant stratum of the working class, they have a different position within the production process, and their understanding of society and of their own position within it vary accordingly." (p.369)

Kosacks dichotomous classification of migrant women as wives on the one hand and wage earners on the other, while theoretically convenient, has the effect of presenting women in a narrow and ethnocentric light. The structure of marriage, patterns of childrearing, and levels of female participation in the labour market are not universal. In some cultures being married or having a male partner does not necessarily imply that a woman becomes economically dependent on her husband (Collier and Yanagisako 1987). Women can and do migrate in order to find work whether or not they are married or have children. Being a wife and mother does not necessarily negate the importance of having to earn a wage nor does it affect a woman's ability or desire to work.

That this was the case for West Indian women coming to Britain was clear. Though much of the traditional literature fails to acknowledge West Indian women as primary workers in the migrant

process <sup>4</sup>, an examination of other evidence reveals a movement of people in which women, on a par with men, played an equal role, as Fryer (1984) observes:

" The great majority of the West Indian settlers were in their twenties and they had plenty to offer Britain...of the men a mere 13 per cent had no skills; of the women only 5 per cent. In fact one in four of the men, and half the women were non-manual workers; and almost half of the men (46 per cent) and over a quarter of the women (27 per cent) were skilled manual workers." (p. 374)

Clearly the women were arriving in the U.K. with levels of skill that surpassed those of their male counterparts; they had indeed come to work <sup>5</sup>. To support this claim is the fact that in the West Indies there has been an historical tradition for the women to migrate to look for work. Since the end of the nineteenth century rural Jamaican women have migrated to the towns in search of work (Rose 1969). This century has seen major migration movements of females to Cuba, in 1920, and the U.S.A in 1960. Foner (1975:58) notes that in the village that she studied in Jamaica it was the women rather than the men that left, often

<sup>4</sup> Studies such as Rose (1969) and Peach (1968) refer to the migrant worker as male. For example, Ceri Peach (1968) argues that West Indian migration had a greater effect on the men than on women and children who he argues tend to follow. The evidence he presents for making this unqualified assumption is that the migration patterns of the women tended to lag slightly behind that of the men, mirroring the rise and fall of the men's arrivals. Even though there is no evidence for making such an assumption, Peach claims that this showed that the pull factor determining the the West Indian woman's movement to Britain was her husband's previous departure.

<sup>5</sup> Francis (see Rose 1969:51) in his analysis of the 1943 and 1960 Jamaican census data showed that the main occupations of woman emigrants from 1955-62 was dressmaking and personal service work. There were also some non-manual workers among them (630 clerical workers; 210 teachers and 162 nurses.)

sending for children and husbands once they were settled <sup>6</sup>.

Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow (1977) make a similar observation in their study of Barbados village life. They write:

" Both women and men seek to go abroad to England, Canada, or the United States, and for the same reasons - primarily financial but also for 'experience'. The relative proportions of the male to female emigrants have been determined more by the nature of job opportunities in these countries than the woman's marital status or domestic roles. A woman with children may leave them with relatives until she can send for them to join her abroad. Like male emigrants she has obligations and responsibilities to support and assist relatives at home through remittances." (p.321)

If we regard migration to be more the outcome of the 'push' factors emanating from the 'home' country than a function of the 'pull' of the metropolis, it becomes clear why women equally, and often more than men, make a rational and conscious decision to migrate. Elizabeth Thomas-Hope (1986:29) suggests that in the post-war era emigration from the West Indies was considered a means of self-advancement as economic opportunities for the growing mass of the population were severely restricted (see, also Tidrick 1973). Foner (1979) and Davison (1966) in their studies of Jamaicans in Britain found that most women gave as the most important reason in their decision to migrate, the education of their children. Men, on the other hand stated that job improvement was a major motivational factor. Though reasons were different between men and women, it was the women far more than the men who were concerned about improving the long term conditions of their families.

<sup>6</sup> Similarly Rose (1969) observes that it is common in the West Indies for, "women from an early age ...to manage their own lives and leave the children to the care of others." (p.48). Prescod-Roberts (1980) also notes that women make better migrants because they are more closely 'locked into familial responsibilities' and can therefore be relied upon to send remittances.

Mills and Roberts (1958) in their analysis of the occupations of Jamaican emigrant women indicate that by far the majority of women had been active in the labour force prior to their departure. Thus we can assume that the reason for leaving 'home' for most women was the hope of a better life for themselves and increased opportunities for their children, and not necessarily to escape the hardships of unemployment or destitution. Evidence of upward social mobility among women several years after migration, who moved into occupational sectors not available in Jamaica, bears this out (Foner 1979:62,86).

With substantial evidence indicating a tradition of female-headed migration in the West Indies, why then do studies in the U.K continue to present a picture of a migration movement that is essentially male-headed?<sup>7</sup> There appears to be two explanations. Firstly, the time lag factor of West Indian female to West Indian male migration<sup>8</sup> has contributed to the assumption that many women followed their husbands as economic dependants. The second factor concerns the collection and presentation of data in migrant analysis. Immigration law based on the receiving countries' definitions of what constitutes a 'dependant' determines the entrants' status rather than their own self-assessment of their status. I shall now turn to an examination of these two problematic aspects of migrant labour analysis.

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Peach 1986. In his discussion of 'Patterns of Afro-Caribbean Migration', 'West Indian migration' is never discussed in terms of differential gender experiences.

<sup>8</sup> This has already been discussed, see footnote 4.

The more reluctant and therefore seemingly male-determined pattern of female entry into Britain can be adequately accounted for if what Foner (1979:56) calls 'other factors' are taken into consideration. Foner observes that it was more difficult for women to leave home with the child-care responsibilities that they had. She reports that women were more hesitant about leaving 'home' while men were anxious to go. More importantly she notes that women had greater difficulty than men in raising the considerable funds to pay for their passage.<sup>9</sup>

The 1962 Immigration Act established the system of vouchers for workers coming to the U.K., restricting the entry of unskilled workers, and allowing entry mainly to the 'dependants' of those already settled here. The increase in the number of women migrants during this period of 'dependency allowance' could be said to provide evidence to support the conventional position that women migrate in order to follow their men folk. However, the term 'dependant' is a misnomer that has confused the issue of West Indian female migration. Women who entered the U.K. as 'dependants',<sup>10</sup> were only allowed to enter categorised as such because they had a relative or spouse already here and not because they were 'non-working wives' as the term implies.

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<sup>9</sup> She provides evidence to support her case. Skilled men who, as Foner notes (p.12), came early in the migration were more likely to have the resources to fund their trip; male unskilled farm workers characterised the later entry as did women.

<sup>10</sup> Not all women entering Britain were dependants, though the majority were. Some entered as skilled and professional workers under the discriminatory voucher scheme that militated against West Indian men in particular (Rose 1969).

Though many more women than men managed to gain entry during this period of restrictions (1962-67) the majority of dependants were actually children and not female spouses. In 1962, 57% of all dependants were children. By 1967 this figure had increased to 92%. What was happening was that women migrants were sending for their children to join them, rather than men sending for their wives.<sup>11</sup> As Rose (1969) comments:

" It is customary for the mother to precede her children in the emigration, sending for them after a number of years, and we are now seeing a backlog of children coming to join their mothers who entered the country two years before control." (p.90)

This evidence, together with the unexpected patterns of child birth, marriage, female labour market participation, and relatively balanced sex-ratios of West Indian men and women settled in Britain,<sup>12</sup> indicates that the West Indian migration was unique in many respects.<sup>13</sup> Women played a major part which has had undeniable effects on their working experience in the U.K., a consideration to which I now turn.

## (2) Working Lives

The majority of women coming to Britain heard of jobs through a relative or friend, many arrived to find that by making chance

<sup>11</sup> This was, however, the dominant pattern among other migrant populations in the U.K., such as the Pakistanis and Indians.

<sup>12</sup> See Rose 1969; Runnymede Trust 1980; Lomas 1973; Brown 1984. These studies all show that traditional interpretations of migrant settler patterns are not applicable to the West Indian case. Notions such as 'family building phases', age and rates of marriage etc. are inappropriate as the family structure and in particular the position of the female does not comply with rigid Eurocentric definitions of the family.

<sup>13</sup> In contrast to the Pakistanis and Indians whose more conventional pattern of migration has resulted in men outnumbering women 2:1 (Brown 1984:18), with high birth rates and high post-arrival marriage rates.

applications they could easily secure a job (Davison 1966). In the peak period of migration, the period often referred to as having a 'laissez-faire' approach to the entry of immigrants (Rose 1969; Deakin 1970; Sivanandan 1976), the 'grapevine' system of recruitment together with uncontrolled entry to the U.K worked as an efficient method for locating workers in those sectors of the economy that required labour.<sup>14</sup>

Half of the women migrants found themselves in unskilled and semi-skilled manual occupations while the other half were recruited as non-manual workers.<sup>15</sup> This dichotomy of job levels for black women as either non-manual workers or unskilled and semi-skilled workers has persisted from the 1950s<sup>16</sup> to the present day,<sup>17</sup> and in this respect broadly reflects the experience of white female labour. In the two major conurbations where West Indians settled, Birmingham and London, the proportions of women in each occupational sector does however vary (Rose 1969; Deakin 1970; Brown 1984). Evidence such as this

<sup>14</sup> Recruitment of workers from the West Indies was not organised or structured. Rose (1969:78) writes: "no effort was made to match employment vacancies to the supply of migrant labour." Britain unlike her European counterparts did not have any official or semi-official recruitment schemes and undertook no responsibility for passage, accomodation or the welfare of immigrants (Rose 78-79). Various employers however were interested in taking on such workers upon arrival, such as the National Health Service, London Transport, British Hotels and Restaurants Association, etc.

<sup>15</sup> This roughly corresponded to the skills and qualifications that the female migrants brought with them (see Labour Force Survey 1983-1984: OPCS 1985:475).

<sup>16</sup> See 1966 census data (Rose 1969; Deakin 1970).

<sup>17</sup> See PSI survey (Brown 1984) and 1985-6 Labour Force statistics (OPCS 1987). The levels are approximate: 52% non-manual workers and 37% semi and unskilled workers.

indicates further that labour market demand determined, to a great extent, the occupational location of West Indian females. The West Midlands show a concentration of black women in semi-skilled manual occupations while in London more West Indian women found jobs as non-manual workers. These patterns were clearly a reflection of the industrial sectors of the West Midlands which had many vacancies for female labour in its heavy manufacturing industries and those of London that required female service, white collar, technical and professional workers.

However, common assumptions about the dynamics that determine the location of black migrant workers in unpleasant and low paid jobs, do not adequately account for the experience of many black women entering the British labour market. Rose (1969) in the following passage provides an example of the traditional and acceptable explanation for why immigrant labour was needed:

" Usually it was an industry that was losing ground as far as pay and status was concerned, or in those jobs that were considered unpleasant by the host community, or that entailed long and awkward hours. In general, the employment most easily available for the newly arrived coloured immigrant was the sort of employment that the English worker did not want." (p.79)

While this might explain the experiences of male migrants it does not address those of the female migrant. Black women, because they were entering a highly developed, sexually-segregated labour market (Dex 1985), were placed in female orientated unskilled and

semi-skilled manufacturing and service occupations.<sup>18</sup> More significantly, however, as a consequence of sexual inequalities in the host society, they found themselves required also to take up jobs in those sectors where not enough qualified indigenous women could be found to fill the growing number of vacancies (i.e non-manual service occupations). Thus it was not so much the case that white women were abandoning certain jobs because of low pay and bad conditions, but rather that there was an insufficient number of trained women in the workforce to satisfy labour demand.

The presence of sexual divisions of labour , does not however mean that black woman and white women have more in common as workers than black men and white men, who are often observed to have greater levels of social and economic inequality between them. A common assumption made by many sociological commentators such as Smith (1977) is as follows:

" ...that for those who already suffer the disadvantage (in terms of earning power) of being women, there is little scope for racial disadvantage to have a further, additive, effect." (p. 88)

However there is little actual evidence to support such a belief. Black women are as likely to experience racial discrimination in the labour market and the work place as their menfolk.

<sup>18</sup> The case is often made that woman are drawn into low-paid, insecure work as a consequence of the material relations of the family and in particular the subordination of woman to men (Beechey 1979; Hartmann 1979; Barrett 1980) However this explanation becomes redundant when we consider the very different position of the black female within her family. As Carby (1982b:214) points out the concept of patriarchy becomes "contradictory when applied to the lives and experiences of black woman".

As manual, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, being black has many consequences for female workers. Black female workers employed in this sector (particularly the food and clothing industry: Mama 1984) are more likely to be engaged on a full-time basis than white women who tend to work part time (Brown 1984). Whereas white women work to supplement the family income, black women work in many cases to support their households (Stone 1982). On the factory shop floor further evidence of discrimination is apparent. Within manufacturing industry, 38% of white women are doing unskilled and semi-skilled tasks, compared to 66% of West Indian women. White women within this industry are clearly more favoured as non-manual employees. 40% of white women compared to only 19% of West Indian women are engaged as non-manual workers in the manufacturing sector in Britain (Brown 1984).

A similar picture presents itself when we look at the black female experience in the service industry. What appears on the surface to be a similar distribution by industrial sector is in effect far from equal. 72% of West Indian women work in the service sector as do 70% of white women. However the majority of white females are concentrated in professional and non-manual occupations whereas black women are found to be more downwardly skewed in the non-manual, semi and unskilled jobs, particularly in the catering industry (Runnymede Trust 1980; Brown 1984:203)

There also appears to be roughly similar numbers of white and black women located in non-manual occupations in the U.K. But if we examine in detail the black woman's actual location within

this occupational sector, the effect that race has on women's employment opportunities becomes obvious. In the 'white blouse' occupations that tend to dominate the non-manual sector for white women, black women are significantly under-represented as clerical, sales, administrative, and professional workers relative to indigenous white women <sup>19</sup>, particularly in the private sector, and notably in such areas as banking and insurance. This under-representation as Rose (1969:166) notes cannot be accounted for in terms of unsuitable black female educational qualifications. Migrant black women were as well qualified as their white counterparts.<sup>20</sup>

As public sector employees, non-manual black women workers are to be found in the National Health Service (NHS) and local authorities. 62% of black women in the NHS are non-manual

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<sup>19</sup> Rose in examining the 1966 census data shows that while only 10.2% of West Indian women were in clerical occupations, 35.7% of white women were. Virtually no black women were to be found as typists or secretaries (compared to 13.9% of the rest of the population). Black women were also less likely to be working in shops or as cashiers (1.4% compared to 10.0% of other women). Smith (1977:120) in the P.E.P. report showed in his 'actor studies' that employers were reluctant to employ black women in office jobs.

<sup>20</sup> Brown 1984:133-134. Tables show black women aged 44+ to be on a par with whites educationally.

workers,<sup>21</sup> the rest, 37%, maintain the hospitals as cooks, cleaners and ancillary staff (Brown 1984:209). Whereas 25% of all white women in the hospitals in Britain are in supervisory and administrative positions, only 5% of black women are to be found enjoying such positions (Brown 1984:164)<sup>22</sup>.

There are further fundamental differences between black and white woman which are clearly observable if other aspects of their labour market participation is examined in detail. For example black women's participation in the labour market is far greater than their white counterparts. Rates of economic activity for black women are nearly twice as high as for white women: 74% for West Indian women and 46% for white women (Brown 1984:186). Furthermore black women are more likely to be employed as full time workers than white; 41 % compared to 21%. Migrant black women, as it has been shown, in the historical tradition of woman in the West Indies, came to Britain to work and are as such committed participants in the labour market.

<sup>21</sup> Many, though not all, of these workers would be nurses. While many women came over and worked as nurses, the nursing profession is less popular among black women especially now than is often supposed (with many women 40+ now retraining to go into other social care professions e.g community and social work). Rose(1969:158) indicated that only 13.5% of all women workers in London were nurses and 16.3% in the West Midlands. Black women working as nurses have found it difficult to secure promotion, are confined to more junior positions on the wards than their white colleagues, and experience generally poor pay and conditions (particularly with regard to night work). Black nurses often found themselves over-represented in low status sectors of nursing such as geriatric and mental health, and confined by their differential training opportunities to SEN rather than SRN nursing (Phizacklea 1982; Mama 1984; Bryan, Scafe and Dadzie 1986)

<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that a much higher percentage of black women work in the NHS and local authorities than their white colleagues - 48% compared to 25% of white women.

It is often implied, because of the parity in earnings between white and black woman, that there is greater equality in the female labour market than among the males (Smith 1977; Farley 1984; Cross 1986). However the figures reveal that while the black woman's gross take home pay may be more than that of their white counterparts they have in fact worked longer (and shift) hours to achieve their earnings (Brown 1984:181,215). This situation prevails inspite of the more positive uptake of trade union membership among black than white women.<sup>23</sup>

In conclusion, it is clear that the black female occupational location in the British labour market is distinctive. Black women were required to fill vacancies in the female labour market that either white women did not want or were unable to do. Employed as either non-manual workers or semi and unskilled workers they have encountered racial discrimination that has further determined their precise occupational destinations as woman workers.

## **PART II: BRITISH DAUGHTERS**

### **(1) Patterns of Change**

The experiences of the second generation, West Indian women in the British labour market show markedly different patterns from those of their mothers. The differences, however, appear to be

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<sup>23</sup> 57% of West Indian women are trade union members compared to 34% of white women. Black woman were also far more likely to attend meetings than white woman (Brown 1984:217). Phizacklea (1982:112) suggests, however that black women are 'powerless' within trade unions.

associated with the dynamic nature of the British economy in the 1980s rather than any fundamental change in the economic and political status of British-born, black woman. For while there has been clear changes in terms of higher unemployment, converging job levels and better qualifications for the second generation, black woman still remain a uniquely disadvantaged group vis-a-vis their white peers.

The striking differences in rates of economic activity between mothers and daughters reflect the degree of change they have experienced in the economy. The 1985 Labour Force Survey (OPCS 1987; Employment Gazette 1987), show that while 80% of West Indian woman aged 45-59 were economically active, only 64% of those aged 16-24 were in employment. The difficulties young black woman encounter in the job market in trying to find employment account for this decline in rates of economic activity among the second generation. That youth unemployment has disproportionately affected blacks is clear in the figures.<sup>24</sup> Young black woman are twice as likely as young white woman to be unemployed <sup>25</sup> in spite of their determined efforts to find work (Banks et al 1984).

<sup>24</sup> Brown (1984) makes the following observation: " When unemployment rises nationally it rises much faster for black people, and the gap between blacks and whites widens." (p.174). The rates of unemployment among young black males and females is significant. 35% of West Indian males aged 16-24 are unemployed as are 33% of females. The overall youth unemployment rate for this age group is 34% compared to 16% for the whites.(LF 1985: Employment Gazette 1987)

<sup>25</sup> The unemployment rate for young white women is 15% compared to 33% for young black women (LF 1985:Employment Gazette 1987). Unregistered unemployment (4% compared to 2% for whites) is also greatest among black females - nearly half of these woman are one-parent families. The rates of long term unemployment for black women is double that of white women (Brown 1984:155)

Education is also no insurance against unemployment for young black women, as Dex (1983) comments:

" West Indian women were more disadvantaged in terms of their employment status than similarly educated whites." (p.64)

The 1985 Labour Force Survey (Employment Gazette 1987) shows that West Indian women with equivalent levels of qualifications had an unemployment rate twice that of their white counterparts: 24% of black women with general levels of qualification <sup>26</sup> were unable to find work, compared to 10% of white women.<sup>27</sup> Eggleston et al (1986) found evidence in their study to support this finding, suggesting that:

" ...at each level of examination results achieved, black respondents were far more likely to be unemployed than whites." (p.254)

There are differing explanations as to why black females should be so vulnerable to high rates of unemployment. Dex (1983) suggests that the higher unemployment frequencies of the young black women in her study can be regarded as in part reflecting the greater difficulties they encountered in keeping jobs, as well as obtaining them. She writes:

" If there is a queue for hiring and for firing, West Indians seemed to be behind the whites in the hiring but in front for firing." (p.64)

What Dex argues is that because black women fared worse in a downswing of the economy, but benefited from an upswing, they

<sup>26</sup> i.e. all qualifications other than higher qualifications. These were classified as 'other' qualifications.

<sup>27</sup> Likewise black women with no qualifications were much more likely to experience unemployment than their white peers of a similar educational status. 19% of black women with no qualifications were unemployed compared to 9% of white females (LF 1985).

were not so obviously located in a segmented labour market sector as the white women. In effect, they were:

"...a more dispensible reserve army of labour being kept to fill the gaps." (p.65)

This position is, of course, open to question. The employment patterns of second generation, non-migrant black women, like their mothers before them, are characterised by similar occupational divisions as their white female counterparts. Differential experiences within these occupational sectors, that they clearly encounter, being more appropriately explained in terms of the endemic racism that pervades the recruitment and promotional practices of employers.

Cross (1986) puts forward another explanation to account for the disproportionate levels of unemployment among black people. He suggests that, "unemployment is a function of race but much more of location." (p.95) He goes on to qualify his statement as follows:

"...while age structure may have some effect, the crucial factors are associated with the concentration in industries in massive decline ...Blacks are located in the occupational structure where they were required, not where they were qualified to be." (p.95)

An analysis that has as its central argument the concept of industrial decay, while it accounts more for the male and female skilled and semi-skilled manual experience, clearly does not address the distinctive location of black female labour in the non-manual sector of the inner city.<sup>28</sup> Brown (1984) points out

<sup>28</sup> This argument should also be approached with caution. For if unemployment can be put down to the economic decline and decay of the inner city, then as the politicians suggest, an injection of capital into the inner city can be seen to solve the crisis of structural black youth unemployment.

that, on a national level, there is little evidence to suggest that the regional location and geographical distribution of ethnic minorities can explain the gaps in equality between black and white. He writes:

" The high rates of unemployment among black people are only partially associated with the residence of a relatively large proportion of black people in the inner conurbation areas (p.153)...if Asians and West Indians had the same regional distribution as whites then their unemployment rates would be even higher than they are already."(p.152)

On the matter of unemployment the issues are clear. Racial inequality does exist between white women and black young women, with the latter being severely discriminated against in the labour market. The situation, however, appears to be somewhat different when we look at the experience of black and white females who are at work.

Like their mothers, young black and white women in employment are both still being located in the traditional sectors of the female labour market: the non-manual, on the one hand, and the semi-skilled manual, on the other.<sup>29</sup> However, there now appears to be a 'convergence' of job levels, illustrated by the similarities in employment patterns among young black and white women. For example, 72% of West Indian women under the age of 25 are to be found in non-manual occupations, as are 69% of white women. 14% and 15% of white and black women respectively were in semi-skilled manual occupations (Brown 1984:226).

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<sup>29</sup> Compared to their mothers, however, the situation has changed slightly for the second generation. Between 1974-82 there has been a 10% shift among women away from skilled and semi-skilled manual work toward more non-manual work (Brown 1984:175). This has been part of a general movement among new black entrants into the labour market in the years 1974-1982 (Brown 1984:177).

Brown (1984:180) argues that the convergence of occupational levels evident among young black people in general, and young black women in particular, creates an 'illusion' of equality. He suggests that the coming together of job levels (accompanied by high rates of unemployment), is largely the result of the erosion of opportunities for young black people now unable to obtain the manual jobs in manufacturing industry where older black people tended to be located. This has meant, among those who could get jobs, that there has been a disproportionate increase of blacks working in the growing service sector. The majority of jobs for both the non-manual and semi-skilled manual women, under the age of 25, are in fact to be found in the growing service sector of the economy. However this trend, as Brown reminds us, should not be taken as evidence of a narrowing of the gap between black and white. He writes:

" Within the service sector the types of jobs done by black people are very different than those done by whites."  
(p.180)<sup>30</sup>

Wilkie (1985) using American data argues that this trend, the decline in occupational segregation between black and white women, has been more the outcome of changes in the occupational structure than decreasing segregation within occupations. She

<sup>30</sup> For example, black women in the white collar jobs are more likely to be found in no-growth areas of the economy, such as local government and welfare offices, compared to their white counterparts who are more often found in expanding areas of industry, such as banking, finance and telecommunications (Mama 1984). The impact of 'new technology' on white collar jobs has had a significant impact on women's work but on black women in particular. The changing nature of clerical work and increased office rationalisation brought about by the introduction of word processors and computers, has created a whole new area of low-grade, office jobs that offer little job security, no promotional prospects and greater health hazards, all of which have disproportionately affected young black women. (Crompton et al 1982; West 1982; Crompton and Mann 1986; Post Sixteen Education Centre 1988).

observes that in America, between 1940 and 1970, the growth of white collar jobs, especially clerical work, created a rising demand for educated women workers. In this period, black women's educational attainment increased more rapidly than that of white women. Black women became a potential pool of workers that employers could no longer afford to ignore.

In contrast to Wilkie, Farley (1984) in his consideration of the employment changes for black women in the U.S. since 1960, concludes that racial segregation in female occupations has declined. He writes:

" In the past, black women faced the double problem of racial and sexual discrimination. Apparently this is no longer the case. Black women have nearly caught up with white women in school enrolment and educational attainment, and the change in occupational distribution of black women has been more substantial than that of white women." (p.127)

Farley points to the two major causes of what he calls 'black female progress'. Firstly, he argues that Equal Employment legislation has benefited the black woman disproportionately compared to either white women or black men. Secondly, he suggests that the 'economic' necessity of often being the family breadwinner has encouraged black women to maximise both their education and earnings.

This account is an example of the type of analysis that chooses to present the apparent decline in black and white female occupational segregation as evidence of achieved equality. What is called 'black female progress', is believed to be the outcome of black female tenacity, resourcefulness, and good fortune. Such accounts clearly overlook the experience of racism that

affects black women in the type of jobs they are restricted to within occupational sectors.

The evidence presented here suggests that the changing structure of the economy has had a significant impact on opportunities for young black women. In contrast to their parents, new entrants to the labour market are faced with disproportionately high levels of unemployment. For those in work, there has been an increase in non-manual opportunities, mostly in the service sector. The impression of equality that the decrease in occupational segregation between black and white women gives, is, however, not substantiated in reality. Racial inequality clearly persists among black and white women who continue to share the same sexually-defined sectors of the labour market.

(2) Occupational Aspirations and Expectations.

It is only recently that the high and distinctive occupational aspirations of young black British women have attracted the attention of sociologists and social psychologists. Previously the preoccupation of commentators was with what were considered

to be the low and unrealistic aspirations of young black people in general.<sup>31</sup>

The literature indicates that black girls, while choosing high social class occupations (relative to their white peers), were also selecting distinctively female jobs.<sup>32</sup> Eggleston et al (1986) observes:

" Among the girls it was the Afro-Caribbean group which expressed the highest aspirations....potential social workers, nurses and teachers being predominately represented." (p.93)

In the Eggleston Report 67.7% of the Afro-Caribbean girls chose jobs classified in social class 1 & 2, compared to 32.6% of white girls.<sup>33</sup> The jobs being selected by the black girls in social class 1 & 2 were wide-ranging; the paramedical professions were especially mentioned, such as physio and occupational therapy and pharmacy. Many social welfare and technical occupations were also aspired to. Running their own business had become an increasingly popular choice among young black women.

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Beetham 1967; Gaskell and Smith 1981. Many have challenged the notion of 'unrealistic aspirations' in view of clear evidence of racial disadvantage (Nandy 1967; Fowler 1977; Stone 1985; Verma 1986). Nevertheless, as Griffin (1985;30) found in her study of young black and white women, the idea of 'unrealistic aspirations' remains 'an integral part of classroom mythology.' Teachers and career officers still having pre-conceived notions about what is was appropriate for black girls to do. The recent idea that "Blacks are More Choosy About Jobs" (TES 7.9.84) appears to be a reappraisal of the old concept of 'unrealistic aspirations'. The slight suggestion of greater selectivity in job choice among blacks (Banks et al 1984; Eggleston 1986) has been interpreted by the media as evidence of blacks 'over-aspiring.'

<sup>32</sup> See Dex 1983; Fuller 1982; Griffin 1985; Riley 1985; Stone 1985; Eggleston 1986.

<sup>33</sup> In contrast 41.1% of white girls, compared to 17.7% of black girls, chose jobs classified in social class 3. Office work and sales assistants being popular choices for white girls.

There has been speculation as to why black girls should choose female type occupations. Riley (1985), for example, suggests that the black girls in her study did not regard the jobs they selected as women's work, often challenging the assumption of what a traditional female job was. For example, one girl chose pharmacy as a career, arguing in no uncertain terms with Riley that it was not a 'female type' job. Riley suggests that the decision to do nursery nursing, a popular choice among the girls, was rationalised in the same way. Unlike secretarial work,<sup>34</sup> nursery nursing was not considered woman's work and was realistically chosen in the context of limited schooling opportunities. She explains:

" Annette, for example, who had described secretarial work as boring, wanted to be a nursery nurse. She argued that it would be far more interesting than any of the occupations suggested to her by the careers teacher. She explained that, while she liked working with children, she also regretted the limited range of opportunities that her schooling had provided. She particularly would have liked to have done woodwork..." (p.66)

Griffin (1985) also comments on the situation of the Afro-Caribbean preference for traditional female jobs. She puts forward the following explanation:

" I was surprised to find so many young women choosing traditionally female occupations...I assumed that men's jobs would present an attractive prospect for most young working class women, because it offered a chance to earn a reasonable wage and to learn a recognised skill....but getting a man's job was not necessarily seen as the path to equality and liberation. Most young women had realistic and

<sup>34</sup> Griffin (1985) argues that the attraction of office work for white girls, and not for black women, was that it represented an idealised form of 'essentially white middle class femininity' and as such was seen as a means of 'getting on' to many white working class girls. It offered the opportunity of meeting eligible men and was a secure well-paid job. Parmar (1982) argues that black women are often not considered for such jobs as they do not 'fit into' the general stereotype of office femininity.

pragmatic reasons for preferring women's jobs...men's jobs were associated with brother's or father's experiences of hard manual work in dirty noisy conditions, doing long hours of overtime in order to earn a 'living wage'. Going to such a job would mean being a token woman in a predominantly male work place, and this could be lonely and miserable."  
(pp.80-81)

It has also been suggested that while black and white girls were similar in that they both aspired to 'gender appropriate' jobs, they differed radically in their attitude toward their careers. Young black women gave what Eggleston et al (1986:94) describe as more 'careerist responses' than their white counterparts regarding their future intentions to work if they should have a child. Similarly Fuller (1982) observed that, whatever their future domestic circumstances, the girls in her study stated that they would still want to work. As one girl explained:

" I want a proper job first and some kind of skill so that if I do get married and have children I can go back to it; don't want just relying on him for money, cause I've got to look after myself, there must be something I can do...."  
(Fuller 1982:91)

Studies that describe the positive black female orientation to education and the labour market, tend, however, to locate the black mother as the central force in shaping their daughters' aspirations.<sup>35</sup> This emphasis, as already discussed (see Chapter 2), is inherently problematic. In the context of career aspirations it is no less so. The 'strong black female role model' as an explanatory framework for the higher aspirations of young black women is, at present, both ill-conceived and underdeveloped in educational and labour market research in the U.K. The 'superwoman'<sup>36</sup> image of the black woman it presents, rarifies the black female experience, suggesting that it is

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Dex 1983:67; Eggleston et al 1986:93.

<sup>36</sup> See, Wallace 1978.

exceptional. Such a perspective implies that the dynamic which structures the black female experience is unlike that of their black and white peers. While black women do have traditions of work and marriage that play an important part in understanding the characteristics of their labour market participation, this should not be confused with what is essentially a situation determined by the dynamics of an economy with a sexually-differentiated labour force, fundamentally distorted by racism.

### PART III

#### RACE CLASS AND SEX: SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING BLACK WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET.

To date there have been few attempts that consider the theoretical implications resulting from the issue of black women in the British labour market. Those that do, offer essentially additive models,<sup>37</sup> implying that race, class, and sex are 'intersecting',<sup>38</sup> 'interpenetrating',<sup>39</sup> 'simultaneous',<sup>40</sup> are carried out in 'harness',<sup>41</sup> or can be 'fused',<sup>42</sup> or 'synthesised' to explain the 'matrix' of black woman's lives.<sup>43</sup> The

<sup>37</sup> The additive model referred to here differs fundamentally from the original model employed by Westergaard and Resler (1975) who marginalise the significance of both gender and race when they argue that each simply reinforces class inequality.

<sup>38</sup> Phizacklea (1983:7)

<sup>39</sup> Allen (1987:177)

<sup>40</sup> Carby (1982b:213); Brittan and Maynard (1984:7)

<sup>41</sup> Fuller (1982:88)

<sup>42</sup> Anthias and Yurval-Davis (1983:68)

<sup>43</sup> Amos and Parmar (1984:18)

problematic concepts of 'double', 'triple' <sup>44</sup> or even 'four-fold' <sup>45</sup> subordination, which appear to dominate present theoretical accounts of black women in the labour market, have been largely the result of such an additive approach.

The concept of double subordination, it can be argued, has at its roots the dual systems, or multi-dimensional, approach to social stratification where gender, age, race etc. are seen as independent dimensions which cut across each other, giving rise to a complex structure of inequality (Hartmann 1979). However, as Crompton and Mann (1986) argue the problem with such approaches is that societies are not built up of independent dimensions or levels:

" 'Capitalism', 'gender' and 'race' are not homogeneous totalities interacting externally with one another... (it) is wrong to see capitalism as producing the places; gender and race the persons." (p.5)

Carby (1982b) makes a further point with regard to the white feminist interpretation of the black female experience. She directs our attention to the fact that existing assumptions made by white feminists in their use of such terms as gender oppression, and in particular their notions of what constitutes patriarchy, the family, dependency and reproduction, become problematic when applied to the lives and experiences of black women.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Fuller who writes: "The facts of racial and sexual disadvantage in Britain mean that...whatever their social class, black women and girls are doubly subordinate in the social formation." (1982:52). Similarly Phizacklea (1983:7) states that black women are, "placed at the intersection of two processes, gender and racial discrimination."

<sup>45</sup> Morokvasic (1983:26) employs a further dimension that of self-oppression.

Bhachu (1986) makes a further important point with regard to the ethnocentricity inherent in the concepts of double and triple subordination. She argues:

" The double and triple subordination theses ignore the strengths of cultural forms that can be liberating for Asian or Black women in the West...the debate has been focuses too much on what seems, from an ethnocentric perspective, to be static and unchanging traditions." (p.283)

The analysis of Phizacklea (1982) illustrates many of the misrepresentations of black women engendered by a thesis bound by the contradictions and limitations of the concept of 'double subordination'. In the following extract she clearly lays out her position:

" In sum I am arguing that West Indian women occupy a subordinate position in the socio-legal and ideological relations, a position (shared by the vast majority of black female migrant labour) which is in many respects similar to indigenous women but is sufficiently dissimilar and distinct to warrant a class fraction. " (p.106)

Phizacklea indicates that what she actually means by a 'class fraction' is a permanent migrant class. This class, she argues, constitutes the most disadvantaged and vulnerable section of the female labour market, supplying cheap and flexible labour power where and when it is needed <sup>46</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Phizacklea in her contribution appears to place her theory in the Marxist tradition of labour market analysis. There are several theoretical models that attempt to account for racial disadvantage in developed, industrial, capitalist societies. The dual labour market theory (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Blackburn and Mann 1981), for example, argues that the labour market is segmented into two sectors, blacks and women being caught in the secondary sector. The split-labour market theory (Bonacich 1979) suggests that conflict is rooted in the different price of labour. Internal colonialism (Blauner 1972) emphasises historically-determined, black and white economic relations. The Marxist explanation suggests that blacks and women form part of a 'reserve army of labour' drawn upon by the needs of capital (Baran and Sweezy 1966).

The reductionism of Phizacklea's thesis causes a major oversight within her analysis. Phizacklea presents an image of the black female labour experience in which they are over-represented in unskilled and semi-skilled manual work, and under-represented in white collar, non-manual work. Though black women are severely discriminated against in the work place, and do suffer disproportionately from the effects of unemployment, this is not an accurate account of the black female experience in the labour market, either in the 1950s or in the 1980s.

As seen in the previous sections investigating black female labour market participation, black women are located almost equally in non-manual and semi-skilled manual occupations. A structural feature largely determined by the dynamics of a sexually-segregated labour market which affects black women in employment.

Phizacklea not only offers an inaccurate account, she also presents us with a confused analysis. For while she sees black women as a doubly disadvantaged (in terms of gender and race) class fraction on the one hand, on the other, she resorts to the culturalist argument of a black female 'tradition of self-reliance' to account for differences associated with black and white female working class labour. She explains:

" Their subordinate position in economic, politico-legal and ideological relations is to some extent shared by women generally, but is nevertheless distinct. Racial categorisation, and its concrete effects, is the most obvious difference, but socialisation in a culture with a

different interpretation of gender roles and in particular 'motherhood' is also highly significant". (p.115)<sup>47</sup>

She claims that black female socialisation within this 'culture' works in their struggle to counteract some of the disadvantages inherent in their 'fractionalised' class position.

" Life in the Caribbean is tough for women, and migration offers an escape route from persistent poverty ...fifteen to twenty years later she instead finds her living standards increasingly eroded ...some might expect in these circumstances West Indian women would react with withdrawal, possibly return to their homeland, but neither strategy is in keeping with their tradition of self-reliance." (p.115)

What appears to be happening is that Phizacklea, while giving an essentially economic explanation for black female labour market disadvantage, resorts to notions of self-determination and individualism to account for any unexpected behaviour that is out of character for a doubly disadvantaged class fraction.

Dex (1983) offers a similarly confused analysis when she writes that West Indian women were unique in that they:

" were indicating their intention to resist filling a permanent migrant's position in the economy, drawing where it seemed useful on their West Indian roots and the British economy's institutions." (p.69)

Dex argues that second generation West Indian women benefited from both the positive and negative lessons of their migrant mothers economic and cultural experiences. For example, she suggests that the shift toward non-manual work among the second generation is a reaction to their mothers' undesirable position in the economic hierarchy. Dex concludes on a celebratory note:

<sup>47</sup> What Phizacklea calls "the distinct conception of motherhood" among the West Indian women combined with access to waged work (which she argues was not previously available in the West Indies) is the what accounts for black women supporting their families. (p.109)

"..their positive responses, however, learnt through the migration process of their parents and in facing for themselves discrimination in the labour markets, may provide them with a useful resource with which to be active in facing the future." (p.70)

This unsuccessful attempt to include the celebratory tradition of black womens' writing <sup>48</sup> appears to account, in part, for the confusion evident in the work of both Dex and Phizacklea. In the context of a labour market analysis, such a perspective appears inappropriate. The effect has been, despite claims to the contrary (Phizacklea 1982:115), to entrench even more deeply the 'commonsense' myth that black women possess internal and natural strengths that explain their unique labour market position and allow them to endure and overcome certain aspects of labour market disadvantage.

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<sup>48</sup> For black women writing in America, see: Ladner 1972; Lerner 1973; Noble 1978; Davis 1981; Hooks 1982; Giddings 1984. In Britain, see: Bryan, Scafe and Dadzie 1985; Grewal et al 1988.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the factors that influence the career aspirations and expectations of second generation, Afro-Caribbean young women up to and at the point of their entry into the labour market. Working on the assumption that both home and school influences contribute to their occupational choice <sup>1</sup>, it was decided that a multi-dimensional approach to the research would be the most appropriate methodology to employ. For my purposes the multi-dimensional strategy consisted not only of an analysis on several sites, but also included the use of a variety of methods of investigation.

#### A Multi-Dimensional Approach to the Study of Young Black Women.

The decision to use a multi-dimensional research strategy; one that, within a framework including several different sites, employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods, was the outcome of several considerations.

Firstly, there was the recognition that the shortcomings in the existing research on black women have been largely the result of the limited methodological frameworks employed by the authors of these studies.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the conventions of what is often called, 'career research' studies that investigate the transition

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<sup>1</sup> Looking at the relative influences of the home and the school has been an established tradition in the literature that investigates the transition from school to work. See, for example, Veness 1962; Carter 1962; Douglas 1964; Verma 1986.

<sup>2</sup> See the review of the literature in Chapters 2 and 3.

of young people from school to work, show the importance of investigating the inter-relationship between a multitude of factors that influence occupational choice. Thirdly, it was felt that a strategy that employs many varied methodological tools enhances the quality of the data collected and thus the value of the conclusions drawn. I shall now turn to a more detailed consideration of these three factors.

(1) Black Women in Research

Research on black females has fallen broadly into two methodological camps. On the one hand, it has been characterised by the ethnomethodology of Fuller (1982) and Reily (1985),<sup>3</sup> and on the other hand the studies by Driver (1980) and Eggleston (1986) have been more strongly influenced by the positivist traditions that have dominated much of educational research during the last twenty years.<sup>4</sup> The inherent shortcomings of each of these methodological approaches have influenced the findings and conclusions of these different studies on black females.

Fuller, for example, interpreting the behaviour and actions of a few girls, and projecting her own beliefs of motherhood on to them as a causal explanation of their behaviour, falls into an endemic trap of the symbolic interactionists, that of

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<sup>3</sup> Ethnomethodology, developed in the work of Garfinkel (1967), represents the subjective extreme in the methodological continuum.

<sup>4</sup> The positivist tradition which has been referred to as 'empirical methodology' by Karabel and Halsey (1977) involves a quantitative approach to the study of educational inequality and seeks to find patterns and trends employing often large-scale, cohort analyses or longitudinal studies.

ethnocentricity. Driver <sup>5</sup> and Eggleston et al.,<sup>6</sup> while offering small-scale, statistical evidence of patterns of performance, are, because of their methodological shortcomings, unable to offer any satisfactory explanation for these observable patterns. As a consequence their findings are left open to speculation and 'commonsense' interpretation. Thus it is not surprising to find that their conclusions, relying on secondary sources, are not dissimilar to those of Fuller and Reily, and therefore suggest that motherhood and the role of the strong black woman is a central causal explanation for positive black female aspirations and attainment.

There has been recognition of the fact that research on the black pupil has been methodologically wanting. For example Troyna (1984) has indicated that grossly oversimplified empirical studies have given a distorted and uniformly bleak view of black children's educational achievement. In the same vein Brewer and Haslum (1986), acknowledging the methodological impoverishment of research on black pupils, call for a more sophisticated approach that will investigate:

"...how the social matrix of particular ethnic minority groups affects their educational attainment." (p.20)

What the existing studies do illustrate are the limitations of employing a unidimensional research approach to the study of

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<sup>5</sup> Driver's study has been the subject of much criticism vis-a-vis his method of investigation and has been accused, among other things, of bias in sampling technique (see Taylor 1981). He does acknowledge, however, the need for ethnographic data to complement his 'performance data'.

<sup>6</sup> Eggleston et al. do include an ethnographic account in their study (see the chapter by Cecile Wright). However this study is not directly related or integrated into the rest of the research data (see the account of their own methodology p.55)

black female educational performance and labour market orientations. Clearly neither approach, the ethnomethodological or empiricist, as currently employed, has satisfactorily succeeded in describing or explaining the socio-economic position and experience of young black women.

(2) 'Career' Research

The second reason for adopting a multi-dimensional research approach was an evaluation of the collective experience of researchers in the field of 'school leaver' research. These researchers clearly recognise the need for a multi-dimensional research approach by acknowledging the complexity of the situation, as Carter (1962), writing over 25 years ago, illustrates:

"The varying influences of the home and the school and the local environment have seen to result in differential aims and achievements. " (p 64)

Verma (1986) writing more recently in a multi-ethnic context, suggests that what is lacking in most studies of differential aspirations is an adequate treatment of the way in which aspirations are constructed. Thus, he attempts to develop a multi-dimensional research model for the analysis of his longitudinal data. This model consisted of three levels of analysis (see p.79). The first sought to establish the wider social situation of ethnic groups in Britain, including social class, degrees of employment, underemployment, housing etc. The second level was an attempt to establish the 'immediate environment', focusing on such factors as family, school and peer groups. The third and final level was concerned with the psychology of the individual pupils - self-esteem, motivation, attitude and language use were examined. Interaction of cultural

factors was emphasised at all three stages of Verma's model. The composition and 'core' values of various cultures and the individual's own perception of his/her group membership was also a central focus. Verma's model of 'levels of analysis', despite its ideological shortcomings,<sup>7</sup> offers a useful framework for investigating the complex interaction of the many variables that influence career choice.

### (3) The Objective Value of a Multi-Dimensional Approach

Webb (1966) states that:

"If a proposition can survive the onslaught of a series of imperfect measures, with all their irrelevant error, confidence should be placed in it." (p.3)

A final consideration for employing a multi-dimensional strategy was the benefits such a methodology has to offer with regard to developing a sound theoretical argument. Logan (1984) observes in his study of young people's transition from school to work that it is very easy to build up a research design using pre-existing categories and thereby foreclosing the existence of equally significant explanations that might have emerged from the data. For example, he argues that his work was conceived around old notions about the transitions from school to work, i.e. ideas about dissatisfaction and motivation.

The use of a multi-dimensional strategy moves some way towards avoiding falling into the trap of replicating old paradigms. With its emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative data

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<sup>7</sup> Verma's emphasis on a cultural causation is a problematic theme in his model (see Chapter 2). It is developed essentially as an ahistorical and apolitical, and hence static model. He fails to incorporate any understanding of the dynamics of social change within or between generations.

collected from a variety of sources, alternative causal links can be investigated.

Feminist researchers also question the application of traditional research methodologies to the study of social phenomena in general.<sup>8</sup> Their debate centres around the validity of so-called 'objective' research, which they argue reflects an androcentric tradition in research methodology. Stanley and Wise (1983), for example argue that the distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' research is a false assumption that arises from the masculine experience of the world. They suggest that the traditional male emphasis has been on objectifying experiences and getting away from the 'personal' to some transcendental realm of 'knowledge' and 'truth'. They put forward the point that women's experiences constitute a different view of reality and that feminist perspectives form an untapped source of knowledge about the world.

The multi-dimensional strategy employed here can take into account, and indeed has at its foundations, the subjective experiences of young black women. Aspects of the model, in particular the various methods of social investigation, allow for a wider interpretation and understanding of black, female, subjective rationalisation. Moving beyond merely a consideration of the 'personal', and away from attempting to objectify the findings, this multi-dimensional strategy offers a practical approach that can illuminate the relationship between

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Rich 1976; Roberts 1981; Bowles and Duelli Klein 1983; Stanley and Wise 1983; Currie and Kazi 1987.

consciousness and the material world, which, for the study of the black woman is a vital link to make (Mirza 1986b).

### I. The Project.<sup>9</sup>

The project was a longitudinal, qualitative and quantitative study undertaken in two secondary schools during the academic year 1983-4. Its purpose was to establish the factors influencing the career aspirations and expectations of young black women in the schools. The sample population consisted of 198 black and white male and female pupils, aged between 15-19 years of age. In addition there was also a smaller sub-sample of 27 younger pupils, aged 13-14 years and several young women were also interviewed independently. A follow-up study was undertaken in 1987. The project also involved several other sites, as well as various methods of data collection. The following diary time-table summarises the 18 months spent in the field.

#### Summary Time-Table

##### 1983-1984

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| June-August 1983:  | Contact the ILEA: seek permission to enter the schools for fieldwork.<br>Contact the Heads of schools: interview about proposed research.<br>Continue building up community contacts (social/youth workers etc.)<br>Visit and observe local FE colleges (MSC/YTS)<br>Investigate local labour market opportunities: local careers office and local authority economic resource units. |
| September-October  | 2-4 weeks preliminary observation: Pilot study. (Set back: schools withdraw permission)   |
| November-December: | Contact 'new' schools and begin preliminary observation and familiarisation.  |

<sup>9</sup> This research project was funded by a three year Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Studentship.

- December-March 1984      Main period of observation: Administer questionnaire to, 5th and 6th years. Collect data from school records.
- March-May:                      Continue observation: classroom and staffroom.  
Attend Staff meetings; Conduct pupil interviews.  
Identify girls for case studies.  
Interview careers officers and careers staff.  
Classroom teaching.
- May-July:                        Interview 3rds on options: 'spot' questionnaires.  
Continue with class & staffroom observation.  
Attend parents' evenings.  
Give short essays.  
Concentrate on case studies: home visits
- July-August:                    Continue with case studies (school holidays)  
Visit community/youth groups in locality.
- August-September:            Trinidad, West Indies: Structured and informal interviews with 6th form.
- September-December:        Collect exam results: Follow-on informal staff interviews: Investigate early destinations.  
Begin analysis of data so far.
- 1985:  
January-June:                    Analysis of research results using SPSS-X.
- 1987:  
September:                      Administer postal questionnaire on destinations.

(1) The Sample

A random sample was drawn from the fifth and the sixth form pupils in both the schools. 128 black and white male and female pupils were taken from St Hilda's, 70 (35%) from St Theresa's. They were all aged between 15-19 years,<sup>10</sup> of which 62 (31%) were Afro-Caribbean young women; 13 (7%) were Afro-Caribbean young

<sup>10</sup> When age was further broken down 75% were 15-17 years old and 25% 18-19 years old.

men; 77 (39%) were 'other' young women; and 46 (23%) were 'other' young men (see Table 1 below).

Table 1.

The Sample: distribution by Race, Sex and School

|              | Black Female | Black male | Other Male | Other Female | ALL  |
|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|------|
| St Hilda's   | 25           | 12         | 45         | 46           | 128  |
| St Theresa's | 37           | 1          | 32         | 0            | 70   |
| TOTALS       | 62           | 13         | 77         | 46           | 198  |
| % of group   | 31%          | 7%         | 39%        | 23%          | 100% |

The sample, it must be stressed was an 'observed' sample (i.e. specific in its location) and therefore is not necessarily representative of the 'accessible' target population.<sup>11</sup> However, the characteristics of this sub-population of the fifth and sixth years did reflect the various characteristics of the pupils in general, in terms of their age, ability ranges, gender and ethnic groupings. Thus the sample had not only large numbers of girls (one school was an all-female school), but also few black males (St. Hilda's, the co-educational school was situated in an area of lower ethnic concentration).

The category 'other' in the sample included a wide range of ethnic and racial groups, both black and white i.e. 'other female' and 'other male' referred to young men and women in the sample who were not of Afro-Caribbean origin. Because the place of birth of 94% of the sample was the U.K (99% of black girls were British born), the ethnic origin of pupils was gauged by

<sup>11</sup> Inferences drawn from this data therefore relate only to the population at hand and are not meant to lead to generalisations about the population as a whole.

looking at the mothers place of birth.<sup>12</sup> The following table gives an indication of the ethnic origins of the sample, including those classified as 'other' male and female.

Table 2

Ethnic distribution of Sample by Mother's Place of Birth

|            | Black<br>Female | Black<br>Male | Other<br>Female | Other<br>Male | Row<br>Total |
|------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Britain    | 0               | 0             | 38              | 17            | 27%          |
| WestIndies | 62              | 13            | 0               | 0             | 38%          |
| Ireland    | 0               | 0             | 28              | 21            | 25%          |
| Asia       | 0               | 0             | 3               | 1             | 2%           |
| Africa     | 0               | 0             | 2               | 3             | 3%           |
| Sth.Europe | 0               | 0             | 4               | 4             | 4%           |
| Far East   | 0               | 0             | 2               | 0             | 1%           |

It was felt that second generation, non-white pupils (i.e.Asian, African etc.) in the sample were not present in sufficient numbers to justify separate categorisation in the tables investigating the career aspirations and expectations of Afro-

<sup>12</sup> Even if the pupils were of mixed racial origin the mothers' place of birth was always taken as the definer of the pupil's ethnic status . It should be stated that in this study there was only one pupil of mixed origin in which the father was the black parent. This girl was therefore classified as 'other' female. The decision to classify girls of mixed origin accordingly was made on the basis of the literature that indicates the importance of the mother's influence on educational and career aspirations of their daughters (See Chapters 5 & 6).

Caribbean girls and were thus placed in the group 'others'.<sup>13</sup> However, it is recognised that ethnic differences are substantial and distinctions between groups are important to make. Thus, in the qualitative discussion of the data, non-white and white 'other' males and females are discussed separately (see Chapter 6 where Irish, second-generation and Afro-Caribbean are examined in a comparative context).

Establishing the social class background of the sample was complex (See discussion in Chapter 5). The conventional procedure is to take the social class of the male head of household as representative of the social class of the family. However, for my purposes this was not an acceptable precedent as it offered no accurate way of measuring the social class of many West Indian families which were often headed by a female, even when a male was present. It could be argued that because West Indian women so often fulfil the criteria established by conventional stratification analysts being consistent and sustained contributors to the family income - that they qualify as being eligible to define the social class status of their families.

It was assumed, therefore, in this study that either the mother or the father, whoever could most appropriately fulfil this

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<sup>13</sup> These 'other' black pupils did not have sufficient in common (culturally) to be classified in the group 'black' females and males, which was specifically looking at the Afro-Caribbean experience. It was also felt that the numbers of these other black pupils were too small to justify setting up another classification grouping in such a small overall sample. It was also recognised that the diversity among these other non-white groups were such that it would be difficult to make a separate classification meaningful.

criterion, should define the social class of the family according to the classification system used by the Registrar General (OPCS 1980). If both the male and the female contribution was assessed as 'equal' by this criterion (i.e. both worked full-time; travelled to work etc. See, questionnaire: Appendix No.1, for how this was assessed), then the earner with the higher social class was taken to be the indicator of the family's social class, be they male or female. It has been argued elsewhere in this thesis (See Chapter 5), that, rather than introducing bias into the study, this method offers a more accurate reflection of the social and economic experience of the West Indian family. The following table shows the social class of the pupils in the study as defined by their parents' social status according to their mother's or father's occupation.<sup>14</sup>

Table 3

Social Class of Head of Household by Race and Gender

|         | Black female<br>(48) | Black male<br>(9) | Other female<br>(55) | Other Male<br>(29) |
|---------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| SC1 & 2 | 44%                  | 33%               | 13%                  | 0%                 |
| SC3NM   | 8%                   | 11%               | 13%                  | 10%                |
| SC3M    | 33%                  | 22%               | 44%                  | 55%                |
| SC4 & 5 | 15%                  | 22%               | 20%                  | 31%                |
| unempl. | 0                    | 11%               | 9%                   | 3%                 |
| unpaid  | 0                    | 0                 | 2%                   | 0                  |

<sup>14</sup> The details of the occupations of the parents were reported by their children in the questionnaire. This accounts in part for the missing number of cases where the children did not know or wish to answer. A more satisfactory way would be to ask the parents directly, however this was not possible.

Clearly what appeared to be a completely working class West Indian cohort if measured in terms of paternal social class (see Chapter 5), is by a culturally-valid redefinition, now no longer 'objectively' classified as such <sup>15</sup>. With many mothers located in social class 1 & 2 occupations these families are upwardly placed in the occupational hierarchy. However the working and living conditions of West Indian women in these professional occupations do not imply that they enjoy the same standards of living as whites, and in particular men, who are classified in similar occupational groupings (i.e. qualified and well-educated nurses are in social class 2 yet paid very poorly). However, by other social class criteria the West Indians did show differences to their white working class counterparts, for example they tended toward home ownership.

The sample also reflected the various ability ranges that were present in the school.<sup>16</sup> The table 4 shows the distribution of the pupils in the study according to the ILEA banding system.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that within a redefinition of social class the family background of the 'other' male and female pupils remains almost unchanged.

<sup>16</sup> A recent report on examination performance (ILEA 1987:11) shows that Afro-Caribbean pupils are disproportionately represented in the lower streams.

<sup>17</sup> The ILEA banding system is used in conjunction with parental choice in the allocation of pupils to secondary schools. On the basis of primary school judgement and performance in verbal reasoning (VR) and mathematics tests, pupils are divided into three ability band groupings, high, medium and low; band 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The pupils' ability in the study was calculated on the basis of their VR test scores to which I had access on their school records.

Table 4Ability Allocation by Race and Gender

|        | Black females | Black males | Other females | Other males |
|--------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Stream | (62)          | (13)        | (77)          | (46)        |
| High   | 23%           | 0           | 44%           | 20%         |
| Medium | 24%           | 21%         | 26%           | 46%         |
| Low    | 53%           | 77%         | 30%           | 34%         |

Other characteristics of the sample, such as family size, numbers of brothers and sisters, place of residence, male/female guardian, type of house, and experience at primary school were also investigated.

The Third Year Sub-Sample

In addition to the main sample of fifth and sixth year pupils, a random sample of twenty seven third year students was interviewed from both schools. The pupils at St Hilda's were asked to fill in short 'spot' questionnaires on career choice. The five spot questions enquired about their aspirations and expectations. In both schools the third year pupils contributed to the study by participating in informal discussions regarding their subject and job choices.

Other Sub-Samples

In the school in Trinidad thirty young women of various ethnic backgrounds <sup>18</sup> aged 16-18 years participated in semi-structured interviews concerning their career choices and attitudes to marriage and relationships.

<sup>18</sup> In Trinidad the multi-racial population was reflected in the sample of which 55% was of East Indian extraction, 30% Afro-Caribbean. The others (15%) were of mixed race including several young women of Chinese origin.

In youth clubs and community centres several young women (16) participated in a pilot study. Informal discussions and exchanges with these women, aged 18+ provided additional information on the Afro-Caribbean, British, female post-school leaver attitudes' to and experience of the labour market.

## (2) The Schools

School 1, St Hilda's,<sup>19</sup> is a co-educational, Catholic school situated in the inner London Borough of Southwark. School 2, St Theresa's, is a single-sex (girls only), Church of England school located in the neighbouring borough of Lambeth.

The two schools were finally selected on the basis of their willingness to co-operate in the research project, many schools in the locality having declined to take part.<sup>20</sup> The schools were also selected because of their situation in inner city areas known to have a high concentration of West Indians living there. Previous research sets a precedent for selecting schools on the basis of criteria other than their randomness, suggesting that access, good relationships and familiarity with a school can be

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<sup>19</sup> The names of the two schools in the study have been changed.

<sup>20</sup> To gain access to the schools researchers must apply, by detailed application forms, to the ILEA 'Research and Statistics Branch'. A list of several schools was sent compiled on a quota sample basis, the criteria being that (1) they were state, non-denominational, co-educational, comprehensive schools, (2) that they had a high intake of Afro-Caribbean pupils, (3) That they were located in South London (for accessibility). Because of the sensitivity of the research topic (gender and race: the project also had to go through several committee stages and amendments were made before it was approved by the ILEA,R&S). Several schools declined outright, one school, however, did accept but after a period of two weeks withdrew amid adverse publicity over accusations of racism among the staff.

an enormous advantage in field research. Shipman (1981), for example, indicated how convenience determined the choice of one of his projects conducted in 1967. Burgess (1983) showed how the headmaster's willingness to co-operate influenced him in choosing Bishop McGregor school for his study. When researching schools Burgess states that there are five aspects to consider when selecting a site. He lists them as simplicity, accessibility, unobtrusiveness, permissibility and participation. Since most of these criteria were satisfied by the two schools concerned they were finally selected as research sites.

Both of the schools were of a similar size. They were average sized comprehensives with approximately seven hundred pupils, and class sizes of about 25-30 pupils. Both schools also drew their pupils from the locality and, despite their religious orientation, the intake appeared to reflect the social and ethnic make up of the boroughs in which they were situated. St. Hilda's pupils came from the Catholic community of Southwark and in particular the Camberwell area. (90% of the pupils from St Hilda's came from the local area). St. Theresa's had as its catchment the Brixton and Norwood areas of Lambeth (84% of its pupils came from the local area), and although nominally a Church of England foundation, had a mixed intake of all religions and ethnic groups.

Both Southwark and Lambeth are areas of high ethnic concentration. Lambeth has the highest concentration of West Indian families in London; 10.6% of all West Indians in London live there, and 13.9% of the borough's households are headed by a

West Indian (GLC 1985b). This concentration was reflected in St Theresa's where 53% of the school's population was of West Indian origin. Southwark, however, had a slightly different ethnic make-up, which was also reflected in the school's population. The concentration of West Indians was far less, with only 6.1% of all West Indian households in London residing there, making up a total of 9.1% of all the households in the borough (GLC 1985b). As a result, and in contrast to St. Theresa's, only 18% of the school's population was of West Indian origin. Because of its Catholic emphasis, St Hilda's had a fair proportion of 'white minorities', such as the Irish and Southern European (Italian and Spanish).

The two schools were also situated in boroughs characterised by all the social and economic indicators of inner city decline and deprivation. In terms of housing, unemployment <sup>21</sup>, educational deprivation and restricted labour market opportunities for men and women, these two boroughs scored highly (see GLC 1985a; London Borough of Lambeth 1985; London Borough of Southwark 1986).

The schools themselves were examples of the contrasting standards in building stock that characterise inner city comprehensive schools. St. Hilda's was situated on a busy main road, next door to a large bus depot. The school itself was enclosed by a high fence made of wire. The school entrance, surrounded by unwelcome metal bars and a heavy metal gate, opened on to a path flanked on either side by tarmac play areas. The lack of any grass or trees

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<sup>21</sup> For Lambeth, the rate of unemployment was 18%; and for Southwark, it was 19%.

added to the schools austere and dilapidated appearance. The building itself consisted of a series of dull pink and yellow pre-fabricated extensions around a main modern building. Several of the pannels that made up these buildings had been vandalised, many being 'kicked in' or painted on.

St Theresa's, in sharp contrast was situated in pleasant 'green' surroundings. The front of the building was dominated by the facade of an old trust house. A dual drive way swept up to the front entrance and carefully tended gardens and the large green playing fields gave the impression that the school was far away from the reality of its immediate location. The school, despite its environment, was situated near to several, large, post-war and modern council estates and within walking distance of the city centre of Brixton.

Because the schools in the sample were not randomly selected ,but chosen within the context of a restricted situation, it could be argued that this system produces an unrepresentative sample. At no point in the study do I claim that it is a totally representative sample, nor do I suggest that any conclusions that I draw from the data are necessarily true for all the ethnic groups concerned. However, rather than introducing any negative bias, the sample schools contributed positively to the outcome of the study. The schools' religious orientation, instead of being a drawback was found to be of immense value. St Hilda's, because of its specific ethnic intake drawn from the local Catholic population, provided a unique research opportunity to compare the white, ethnic minority, second-generation female experience

(i.e. Irish) with that of their black counterparts. Likewise the single sex-school situation also enabled me to observe, as a control on the co-educational position how black females construct their career choices without the influence of male peers.

### (3) In the Field: Some Observations on the Researcher's Status

Most anthropologists refer to ethnographic research as doing 'fieldwork'. The field method, often known as participant observation when adapted for school-based research, relies heavily on an observational approach involving a relationship between the researcher and those who are being researched. As Hargreaves (1976:198) points out, it is the nature of this relationship that is of utmost importance in ensuring the quality and reliability of the material obtained. The participant observer he states should be able to accept a role within the situation he or she studies. She should be able to participate as a member of the group as well as observing it. This procedure should be carried out, as Adelman (1985) suggests, with as little deception as possible to those involved in the study. The moral and practical dilemmas of such research are recurring themes for the ethnographer (Powney and Watts 1987). It is my purpose here to discuss my position in relation to some of the issues that 'being in the field' raises. It is an important consideration, for the researcher's position, status, and relationship with the respondents can, and must, affect the validity of the findings (Berreman 1962).

It was a coincidence that both schools in the study had a recent history of being involved in educational research projects.<sup>22</sup> As a consequence the staff in particular were familiar and at ease with the presence of a researcher and the research situation, often commenting on their own interest in educational research<sup>23</sup>. Because of their positive relationship in the past with outside educational researchers, the headteachers of both schools felt uninhibited about giving me permission to carry out my research project in their respective schools.

As Powney and Watts (1987) observe, the relationships in ethnographic situations are often asymmetrical, that is both sides benefit from the project. The headteachers felt that my presence could be advantageous to their schools in several ways. In interviews both headteachers indicated that because I was young and black I could be regarded as a positive role model to the girls in the schools. I was also found to have other uses. The schools often asked me to 'fill in' or take lessons if a teacher was absent.

Just as Wakeford (1969) had been a student at one of the schools he investigated, so too had I attended St Theresa's six years

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<sup>22</sup> St Theresa's was involved in a research project conducted by the local Diocese (the ArchDeacon was himself, black) on the destinations of successful black students. St Hilda's was part of a well known longitudinal study (Fifteen Hundred Hours undertaken by Rutter and his team) which investigated the influence of the school on educational outcomes.

<sup>23</sup> Several members of staff in both schools were doing post-graduate (M.A's) or other forms of in-service training that required critical enquiry of one type or another. They expressed an interest in and wished to contribute and assist in my project in any way they could.

previously. Many of the teachers that taught me were still at the school during the time of the project. There was little doubt that my previous association with the school had assisted me in gaining access under difficult research conditions.

Any subjective bias arising from my familiarity with the school, the staff, and my experiences while a pupil there must to some degree be recognised. However it was felt that the introduction of bias this situation might encourage was far outweighed by the positive aspects of access and confidentiality that I enjoyed. Indeed other researchers have acknowledged the benefits that such status allows (Wakeford 1969). The use of another school to which I had no previous association or contact acted as a 'control', helping me to balance out any such bias. My time at St Hilda's allowed me to observe the extent of any bias in the treatment and responses I received from St. Theresa's, which upon inspection was found to be minimal.

It can be argued, however, that there is no way to avoid bias in the interpretation of ethnographic data. The researcher, of course, brings her own particular view of the world and the way she perceives it into the study. Stanley and Wise (1983) argue that subjectivity in the case of feminist research is a necessary and productive input in to the study of women. The validity of personal experience, they suggest, has been submerged by the quest for 'objectivity', and as Rich argues merely represents the term that men have applied to their subjectivity.

At a practical level, Adelman (1985) puts forward the following solution to overcome the misrepresentation so often evident in ethnographic studies. He suggests that the participant observer should be a competent member of the culture he or she is writing about. Reissman (1988)<sup>24</sup> discusses the importance of shared culture and social class when interviewing women. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that the quality of research into issues of race can greatly be improved by the interpretation and perspective brought by black scholars (Lawrence 1981; Lashley 1986).

In several respects I shared much in common with my respondents. I was myself young, female, and originated from the West Indies. Having left one of the schools a six years earlier, I enjoyed a unique insight into the experiences of the young black women in the study. It may be assumed, however, that the researcher's close identification with the cohort could lead to complications not only of 'internal validity' (Cohen and Manion 1985), but also concerning the collection of data from other sources within the school, especially from the staff who could have perceived the researcher as a threat. However, this issue proved to be academic.

The length of time spent in the schools (one year) and the researchers own position as a teacher made for good relationships

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<sup>24</sup> This article by Reissman can be found in the journal Gender and Society, March 1988, as reported in THES (4.3.88)

being formed between myself and the staff in both schools.<sup>25</sup> In fact I enjoyed a curious position among the teachers in both schools. I was regarded as an 'ally', often being called upon to help or advise them in sensitive or problematic issues concerning their black students, parents, the multi-racial curriculum, and even colleagues. They saw me not as a colleague, but more as a person with a particular expertise in issues they often found difficult or unable to manage. Being regarded as an 'outsider' many members of staff felt they could confide in me and even requested practical assistance from time to time. This position was reflected in the unconditional access I was given in both schools to records and reports.

Similarly, I enjoyed a unique, yet dynamic,<sup>26</sup> relationship with the black girls in the study. The young black women, particularly in the early part of the study, saw me as 'one of the girls'. At this stage of the project they readily parted with information on their home and school experiences, pleased to find some one interested in what they had to say, and who they felt, could understand what they meant. Like the staff, many of them also confided in me about personal relationships, parents and school problems, sometimes requesting help or mediation. However, it must be noted that at all times I was careful to

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<sup>25</sup> Zweig (Logan 1984:19) states that the art of interviewing is personal in its character and stresses the importance for the interviewer to have a degree of self-understanding and a range of experiences to be able to appreciate and empathise with the ambivalent concerns of the interviewee. As a teacher and past-pupil I gained much information during interviews with all concerned.

<sup>26</sup> Schatznam and Strauss (1973) have indicated that research roles are continually negotiated and re-negotiated.

remind them (and the staff) of my position as a researcher, emphasising my reasons for wanting information and my being there. I reassured them of the confidentiality of their responses, a matter which Eales (1987) suggests assists in gaining the confidence of the interviewee and allows them to relax and part more readily with the information. Letters were sent home to the parents <sup>27</sup> of all the pupils involved in the study, explaining what the research was about and reassuring them of confidentiality.<sup>28</sup> It was during this first stage of the fieldwork that I administered the questionnaires, whose completion benefited from the girls' curiosity and willingness to participate.

Burgess (1983) notes that there are different phases associated with field work and the role of the participant observer. This was clearly the case and as the study progressed and I began to be a familiar face about the school my presence among the pupils became markedly less obtrusive. During this second stage (March-July: see Timetable) I conducted the interviews and did much classroom observation. I was also able to do some 'supplementary' teaching in both schools at irregular intervals, as and when it was called for. This had useful effect <sup>29</sup> on the research relationship already established between myself and the black female respondents. Whereas we had begun as 'friends' I

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix No.4 for copies of the letters sent to parents.

<sup>28</sup> The school headteachers and the staff were also reassured of confidentiality (N.B. the names of the schools, staff and pupils have all been changed).

<sup>29</sup> Hargreaves (1976) also notes that teaching in the context of the participant observer's role is important.

was now acknowledged to have some measure of authority. Thus while being 'culturally immersed' (Adelman 1985) I was effectively distanced.

Whyte's 1943 classic study, Street Corner Society, draws attention to the advantages of an ambivalent researcher's position, where the researcher has both privileged insight (i.e. 'one of the gang'), but is at the same time not identified completely as a member of the group. Berreman (1962) also suggests that some degree of difference in status is important. He illustrates the fact that informants will select information according to what they think is appropriate to give and not what they really think. For example, the girls may not want to tell their peers, or someone believed to have a similar status to themselves, certain information that they would readily impart to someone who was not thought of as a peer. My changing relationship with the girls, from being, 'one of the girls' to 'teacher', allowed me to collect interview data in varied observer roles and situations, thus counteracting accusations often levelled at studies of this kind for containing 'insider bias'.

With regard to other aspects of data collection in the study similar issues arose concerning my status and role as researcher. Gaining access to parents for case study material was enhanced by my 'West Indianess'. I was always welcomed and was often invited for tea or a meal. I was often perceived by the parents as a 'go-between', between the school and their child; a person with a genuine interest in the educational welfare of their child, but

at the same time not a teacher. Thus parents often felt able to confide in me their deeply held convictions and feelings toward the school, teachers, work, racism etc.

Access to the school in Trinidad was also simple for much the same reason that St. Theresa's allowed me to do research there. Again it was a school that I myself had attended in the past.<sup>30</sup> The girls<sup>31</sup> interviewed, while intrigued by my British experience, saw me as a past-pupil and readily participated in the interviews.

The young women at the Brixton youth centre<sup>32</sup> were keen to participate in the study. Explaining that I was piloting my questionnaire with them, they were pleased to help me set up my study, often offering useful and thoughtful advice. Thus we built up a good rapport. I often visited the centre and was involved as a participant on a woman's project doing activities such as sewing, arts and crafts.

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<sup>30</sup> It was an all girls, secondary school, partially funded by the government and aided by the Presbyterian Church to which I have many family attachments. Government-assisted schools of this type make up 43% of the schools in Trinidad, the remaining 53% are run by the government (Ministry of Information 1984).

<sup>31</sup> The ethnic mix of the school reflects the racial characteristics of the Island where 40% of the population is of Asian origin. Other groups represented in the school, and in the population are Afro-Caribbean (42%), Chinese (0.8%), Syrian (0.1%), mixed (14%) and White (0.7%): Ministry of Information 1984: 1970 Population Census Bulletin 1A)

<sup>32</sup> This was a centre for black youth. It offered facilities for day recreation for the unemployed; Billiards for the young men and projects for learning skills such as sewing for the women. It had a creche for the children and employed a full-time youth worker.

Permission was need from the ILEA to gain access to the local Further Education College in Brixton. Identifying with the topic of the project, the staff were keen and interested to assist in the study, supplying much information and written material on courses and programmes at the college for young black women. In the same way the local Career Offices were willing to assist, where permissible, supplying lists of pupils and destinations.<sup>33</sup> Several careers officers gave generously of their time to discuss issues about race, gender and unemployment in the context of their role as an advisory body. I was able to build up a particularly good relationship with one of the careers officers, herself black, who provided me with invaluable information.

## II. Methods of Social Investigation

The practical application of the multi-dimensional research strategy calls for the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of social investigation. Such a multi-faceted approach is not uncommon in educational research. Burgess (1983) refers to the use of a variety of research methods of investigation as 'multiple strategies'. However the more widely used term for this method is 'data triangulation' (Webb 1966:3). Denzin (1971:177) offers a broader interpretation of this method and argues that triangulation does not only involve methods and data but investigators and theories as well.

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<sup>33</sup> Access to some information was not available, especially concerning individual pupils. This was a policy of the Careers Office. However the staff helped me to trace pupils in other ways that were permissible, often doing this in their own time.

The accusation often levelled at such 'multiple strategies' is that the method is 'quasi-experimental' (Campbell and Stanley 1963). Criticisms such as these call into question the precision of the data. However, this method can be justified on several counts.

Firstly, the question must be asked, is it desirable to employ a singular or inappropriate methodology in order that one might claim 'external validity?' The arguments presented in this chapter suggest that such an objective, at the expense of other considerations, can result in a limited interpretation of the findings.

Secondly, as Eggleston et al (1986) observe, the every nature of school-based research precludes precision. They write:

" In the natural world of schools it (precision) can rarely if ever be attained." (p56)

In schools, one is dealing with populations and conditions that are often unique to that particular time and place. For example, responses to questions often vary according to the interviewer, or the situation in which the interview is conducted. No two situations can be set up and replicated as in scientific research, nor it can be argued should they. The richness of school-based research comes from its diversity. Any conclusions from a particular research study can be used to shed light on a similar situation elsewhere but not explain that situation too.

Thirdly, the size of the sample, which was sufficiently small to conduct in-depth interviews, as well as being large enough to

undertake a limited survey, presented an ideal opportunity to employ, effectively, a multiple research strategy.

(1) The Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix No.1) was designed primarily to obtain details of school experience and home background, (including the social class of the respondent), in order to establish the factors that influence occupational aspirations and expectations of black and white, male and female pupils. It was administered to all 198 pupils in the study during their class time, and in particular their careers lessons.

The questionnaire endeavoured to place the 'objective' criteria affecting career choice, such as social and family background, culture and economic status, in the context of individual, 'subjective' preferences being made with regard to future occupations. The questionnaire was constructed after a pilot study revealed the need for a more detailed, yet open-ended approach.<sup>34</sup> The final questionnaire investigated the following four areas of interest:

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<sup>34</sup> The pilot questionnaire, requiring precoded structured responses, was acknowledged to be rigid and suggestive. It did not allow for subjective 'opinion' data.

(1) Personal Characteristics  
(race, sex and age)  
Questions: 1 & 2

(2) Family Conditions  
(social class variables)  
Questions: 3, 7-15, 25 & 26

(3) Educational Experience  
(attainment and interest)  
Questions: 16-22

(4) Career Choice: Expectations & Aspirations  
(outcomes/consequences of (1), (2) & (3) above)  
Questions 4, 5, 6, 23, 24.

The questionnaire was constructed taking into account the general principles and guidelines advised by Moser and Kalton (1977) when designing a questionnaire, i.e. clarity, simplicity, convenience and applicability. The decision was taken to combine the use of both factual and opinion questions not necessarily in a sequential order. It was felt that this strategy had the effect of lessening the respondent's tedium or refusal rate which, as Cohen and Manion (1985) observe, often occurs when personal or factual information is requested. For a similar reason it was also decided to use a combination of both open-ended and pre-coded questions,<sup>35</sup> acknowledging the limitations and benefits of each (Moser and Kalton 1977:341). Open-ended questions allowed the respondent to freely reply to questions about their 'subjective' opinion within a structured context, where such a response was required. These open-ended questions were used in two ways. They provided important information for a qualitative analysis, but also could be coded as input into SPSS-X for a more quantitative approach.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, question 10 = pre-coded; 15 = open-ended.

### A Note on Partial Completion.

Often pupils only filled in part of the questionnaire. This accounts for the substantial reduction in numbers on some tables. The partial completion of questions was particularly notable with regard to open-ended/opinion questions. Factual questions appeared to receive a better response. When administered the pupils were told to fill in all the questions, however they were reminded that it was not a compulsory exercise. With regard to pupil non-response to my questionnaire, I observed the following:

(1) Some pupils chose not to answer some questions (i.e. some found it 'nosey' and often wrote to that effect in the section of the questionnaire left for their own comments)

(2) Some pupils did not have the necessary information needed to fill in all of the questionnaire (i.e. they did not know the details of parents' jobs etc.)

(3) Some pupils did not understand the questions or how to fill in a questionnaire.

(4) Some pupils felt that they did not have an opinion on certain questions, and so did not respond (i.e. questions such as what job would you like, were often left blank for this reason).

(5) Because the questionnaire was not compulsory some students did not take it seriously. This was particularly true of the white boys who often took the opportunity to 'muck about' during the time allotted for completion, or wrote silly replies. This accounts for the lower numbers of

white boys included in the analysis than actually were in the sample.

(6) Some pupils were suspicious of the questionnaire. This was particularly true of the black boys who felt any information they gave could be used against them.

#### The Follow-Up Questionnaire

A postal follow-up questionnaire was sent to 72 of the young black men and women in the study four years after the initial 1983-4 survey (see Appendix No.2). This questionnaire was designed to find out the subsequent educational and/or labour market destinations of the pupils and was only sent to the black leavers. There were several reasons why this was done.

Firstly, as the aim of this study was primarily to investigate the aspirations and expectations of young black women it was felt that the follow-up survey should concentrate on their experience. Because of other restrictions, due mainly to a very limited budget (there was no funding given for this part of the project), this sort of decision had to be made. Another important consideration was the problem of access to confidential information. Because I was not allowed direct access to the records, reports, addresses, and destination information compiled by the careers office on individual pupils and on schools, I had to request, that they, (and indeed one of the careers offices offered and did), send out my questionnaire on my behalf. Because of this restricted access to addresses from one careers office to which the majority of the white pupils belonged, I was confined in the scope of this follow-up questionnaire.

All 62 black girls and 10 black young men were sent the questionnaire using addresses, (where not available from the careers office), from the original questionnaire. 33 (46%) replies were received, 31 from the females and 2 from the males. An obvious cause for non-response here was the difficulty caused by change of address. Several questionnaires were returned unopened, with the address unknown.

## (2) Records, Reports and Results

Additional data on the pupils were available in the schools from records and reports. In both schools data were also available on mock and final examinations results. Access to this type of information was less problematic than anticipated at the outset of the fieldwork,<sup>36</sup> and thus many questions particularly on parental occupation, family size and ability set, were accessible and therefore replicated in the questionnaire. Other details about the pupils, such as punctuality, attendance, conduct and teachers' comments, were available in individual pupil records and provided an invaluable source of information. In both schools I had access to individual pupil's examination results and the ILEA reports on the overall school attainment in examination performance. The examination results for each pupil in the study was recorded in conjunction with their questionnaire details. The quinquennial reports in both schools were made available, as were other school and staff reports and magazines, all of which proved to be helpful to the analysis.

<sup>36</sup> Access to records and reports (referred to socio-metric data) was, as explained earlier, permissible because of a number of factors relating to my status as a researcher.

### (3) Formal and Semi-Formal Interview

Formal and semi-formal interviews were conducted at the several different sites of the study <sup>37</sup>. Formal interview situations were set up in the two schools. Different groups of pupils were asked questions guided by a detailed, structured interview schedule <sup>38</sup> (See Appendix No.3). Each group was selected from among the pupils in the study according to their race, gender and school ability allocation. For example, group (1) consisted of black girls only (high ability n=6); Group (2) was again all black females, but of low ability allocation n=10 ; Group (3) was both black and white girls (mixed ability n=16); Group (4) was made up of black and white boys and girls from all ability ranges (n=24).

The interviews, undertaken with different groups of pupils, provided good 'control' conditions for interviewing. The opinions of black girls in the sample could be looked at under different peer group influences. It was found that in all-female situations the girls talked more freely than in the group where boys, both black and white, were present.<sup>39</sup> The presence of

<sup>37</sup> It must be noted that at all times respondents were made aware that I was gathering information for research purposes.

<sup>38</sup> As far as possible the interview schedule was adhered to, however during discussions the pupils often wanted to talk or develop a subject of interest. I was conscious that I should not suppress the 'natural' flow of the discussion, but often had to draw the discussion back to the main points in the schedule. My role as an interviewer in these conditions was to balance the discussion between spontaneous and controlled responses.

<sup>39</sup> In this group, disagreement (often aggressively stated) teasing and provocation by the boys contributed to inhibited responses from the girls and less than serious comments being made by the boys.

white girls in the interview, on the other hand, did not inhibit black female responses.

Formal interview data was taped and later transcribed. The taping of interviews has been the subject of much debate. However, as Powney and Watts (1987) state, "There is no substitute for a full tape recording of an interview." (p.124). Indeed the revelations provided in the transcripts of these interviews were found to be invaluable to the analysis. To lessen the obtrusiveness of the tape recorder, a small machine was used and introduced early into the discussion before the interview started properly (Keegan and Powney 1987). At this stage, I allowed the pupils to play with the recorder as they invariably wished to, usually singing into it as if they were 'pop stars', or newsreporters. After the initial curiosity wore off and the interview commenced the tape recorder was soon forgotten.

Logan (1984) observes that interviewee responses were tempered by the way in which they had categorised him. It was also recognised here that the interviewer's status in the eyes of the respondents was critical in gaining, what was often deemed as being confidential opinions, on issues and matters of importance to the pupils.<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that teachers were at no time present during any of the interviews.

During the year spent in the schools, informal interviews were conducted among the 5th and 6th year pupils contributing data of

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<sup>40</sup> See the earlier discussion on the 'researcher's status.'

a less 'controlled' nature. Less formal interviews were also conducted elsewhere in the study. For recording informal interviews, and in an effort to maximise reliable reporting, I used both short recall and more often, note-taking, done as unobtrusively as possible if the situation allowed.

(a) The Trinidad school: Semi-structured interviews were conducted among the 30 young women interviewed here. An adaptation of the formal schedule was deemed appropriate and discussion centred around relevant topics, such as work, relationships, marriage; children etc.

(b) The Youth Centre: Again, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Discussion focused on topics such as school, work, unemployment, racism, marriage and relationships.

(c) Parents: Meeting and interviewing parents in the home was conducted on an informal basis. Direct questions were asked on particular areas, such as their daughter's education, but on the whole the conversations were casual and friendly.

(d) Teachers: Teachers were asked particular questions about certain pupils and their progress, school matters, and their own views on specific issues. However, over the year spent in their company much conversation was on an informal nature.

(e) School Headteachers, Careers Officers, and College Staff: Interviews were carried out in the formal setting of their respective offices. However these interviews though in formal surroundings, were not structured but focused on matters of interest.

#### (4) Participant Observation

Gold (1958) refers to four typical field roles. Participant as observer, complete participant, the observer as participant and the complete observer. In this study I adopted the role of participant as observer, as I both participated in classroom and school activities, visited and became friendly with families, while at the same time observing the actions and reactions of those around me.

Participant observation was found to be an invaluable method of social investigation. It provided a rich source of information to complement and assist the analysis of the more quantitative longitudinal data. My position, and the sensitivity of my role as an observer in the field has already been discussed at length elsewhere in this chapter.

#### Participant as Observer: In the Schools

The two schools were studied simultaneously, that is I spent one day in one school and then the next day in the another.

Depending on the time-table, some days I would spend half a day in one and the other half in the other. On other occasions I might spend several days at one school only.

General observations were made about the school, the daily regime, the headteacher's role etc. General staffroom observation was also undertaken, and school meetings were attended. Classroom observation constituted a major part of my time spent in the field. I attended many classes and lessons, in which my interest was not only to observe teacher-pupil

interaction but other classroom situations. In particular I was interested in curriculum content and teaching effectiveness.

The observations in the school were recorded by a system of daily diary-keeping. Short-term recall was used and observations were written down, if possible at the time, but if not soon after the event, during recreation or lunch, after school, or in the privacy of the staffroom. Diaries were dated and subsequently indexed.

Participant as Observer In the Home: The Case Study Approach.

Becker (1970:75) makes the observation that, "one only properly acquires knowledge of a phenomenon from intense exploration of a single case." Cornell (1984) in her study, Hard Earned Lives, makes a case for the value of personal accounts in social research. The emphasis on case studies is seen by Stenhouse (1978) as a return to close observation. According to him, those who rely on an observational approach attempt to gain theoretical insights through a careful study and comparison of a number of cases (i.e a multi-site case study).

It can be argued, however, that the case study approach on its own, and because it normally relies on single entities and small scale phenomena, such as an incident, an organisation or a small community, is, in essence, unreliable. For my purposes such small scale studies were used in order to supplement or illuminate data and observations made in other situations, employing different methodological tools. Used in this context the case study approach was found to be valuable.

Case studies of three black young women and their families were selected from the larger sample <sup>41</sup> on the basis of their willingness to co-operate. Homes were visited on more than one occasion, and parents were interviewed informally (sometimes other family members were interviewed if present). My method of recording informal interview data was similar to that used in the school. In the relaxed home situation where I was often regarded as a guest, it was not appropriate to use a tape recorder or to take notes, thus I relied heavily on short-term recall.

#### (5) 'Spot' Questions

A useful source of information on the third year pupils came from quick, one word, written responses to seven short questions. It was a simple and easy way to get structured information without administering the long, detailed and fairly complicated questionnaire. The pupils were asked to give:

- (1) Their names.
- (2) The jobs they would most like upon leaving school.
- (3) To say what influenced their choice.
- (4) What would they most like to do if they could do any job.
- (5) What job they most disliked.
- (6) Their favorite subject at school.
- (7) What job did their mother and father do.

#### (6) Essay Writing

A random sample of fifth year pupils were asked to write an essay entitled 'My Homeland' as part of their English assignment on the topic of 'nationality'. At the time of writing they were unaware

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<sup>41</sup> selection on this basis is referred to as 'snow-balling'.

that I would be looking at the essays, and thus they were written free from any bias that might have resulted from this fact.

However, the girls' permission was sought before I used any of their written work.

### III. Data Analysis:

#### (1) Qualitative Data Analysis

In a longitudinal project of this nature a great deal of written data is collected. At the end of my study I had eight field diaries, each between 80-100 pages in length. In order to organise this mass of data a three stage, colour-coded, index system was devised. The primary index referred to, by page, the details of the entry. The second index then further classified this primary index into specific subjects, such as parents, careers, school discipline etc. The third and final index then placed each of these subjects under one of the following headings: Gender, Social Class or School Structure. As school data does not always lend itself to convenient categorisation, a system of cross-referencing was also used.

Interview data from the transcribed tapes was also indexed. The headings here were largely determined by the interview schedule. Racism, Career Expectations, Marriage and Relationships were some of the categories used. Opinion responses on the questionnaire also formed an important part of the qualitative data and were integrated into the analysis according to the race, class, gender and ability level of the pupil.

## (2) Quantitative Data Analysis

Data for each pupil supplied by the questionnaire was coded and entered into a SIR data base using a VAX 11/750 (running VMS). Each of the 198 pupils was given two files, a general file contained personal and family background information. The second, a school file, consisted of details of the pupils' attainment, results etc. The two files together were made up of 80 fields, that is each pupil had 80 variables pertaining to their home and school life. The SIR data was then transferred for analysis with SPSSX-X. The analysis consisted mainly of cross tabulations and frequencies, however missing variables and small numbers made it impossible for any sophisticated statistical analysis to be performed on the data.

In conclusion, my attempt to combine a longitudinal survey approach, with what can be described as essentially a school-based ethnographic study, was ambitious. However, despite the difficulty of combining these two distinct methodological perspectives into what may be called a multi-dimensional framework, it did offer a satisfactory means of studying the complex influences that affect the career aspirations and expectations of young black women.

## CHAPTER 5

OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE AND THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF SOCIAL CLASS

A curious state of affairs persists in the study of educational inequality and social class. On the one hand those studies that investigate the influence of race and gender inequality in education often display a lack of understanding of the fundamental role of social class.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, studies that address the issue of social class distinctions in education nearly always fail to integrate a consideration of race and gender disadvantage into their analyses.<sup>2</sup> This compartmentalisation of the various aspects of educational disadvantage seems especially surprising when we consider that they are fundamentally interconnected. For how could an analysis of social class, widely acknowledged to be a major factor in educational inequality, not take into account the fact that blacks and females are the two groups known to suffer most from the effects of educational disadvantage?

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<sup>1</sup> It is not uncommon to find many studies assuming the class homogeneity of Afro-Caribbean and Asian pupils. It is as if an account of race automatically makes a recognition of social class invalid. This was especially true of early studies on multi-cultural education. (For review of literature see: Taylor (1981,1988); Taylor and Hegarty (1985); Tomlinson (1983a). In much the same way gender is nearly always absent from analyses of race, and race from analyses of gender. Many studies of gender and education might investigate working class cohorts etc i.e. Delamont(1980), Spender and Sarah (1980) and Stanworth (1984), but their analyses which emphasise the marginalisation of girls in schools and the mechanisms of gender oppression do not satisfactorily account for social class or racial variations. (See: Brah 1988)

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, major studies of educational inequality such as Douglas (1964), Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980), Mortimore and Blackstone (1982).

This chapter, which explores the inter-relationship between social class, race and gender, is an attempt to move toward redressing this shortcoming in the study of educational inequality. My aim is to investigate the way in which the educational system appears to interact with culturally-specific forms of social class. In Part I, I establish a case for a cultural evaluation of social class through an examination of the differences in occupational aspirations among the pupils in the study. In Part II, I continue with the argument for a cultural reconsideration of social stratification by examining the specific class characteristics apparent among West Indians, which can be seen to contribute to the distinctive aspirations of young black women.

## **PART I**

### THE CASE FOR A CULTURAL EVALUATION OF SOCIAL CLASS

There is a genuine need for a cultural reappraisal of social class definitions in the U.K., made immediate, not least because of the present omission of Afro-Caribbeans in contemporary British class analysis (Mirza 1985; 1988). Afro-Caribbeans living in Britain are no more homogeneous in their class make-up than their white British counterparts <sup>3</sup>, yet they are often

<sup>3</sup> Research in the USA indicates that there are substantial class distinctions to be made within the black community. This research suggests that there is a growing polarisation between the the working class ('underclass': Wilson 1987) and the middle class blacks. See: Pinkney 1984; Farley and Bianchi (1985); Landry (1987). While it is debatable whether or not this phenomenon is occurring in Britain ( or in the USA for that matter), it does point to an observable lack of class homogeneity among blacks.

discussed as such. In the same way that class affects occupational location, access to economic, political and social resources, values and life-styles among the white British population <sup>4</sup> so too are blacks influenced.<sup>5</sup> However, just as blacks differ among themselves, so too do they differ from whites who have been 'objectively' classified in the same social class grouping. If black peoples' class position is defined in terms of their relations to the means of production, they appear to hold a similar position to their white compatriots (Miles 1982). If on the other hand, their class experiences are taken into account, substantial differences between black and white become evident.

As a consequence of various historical, cultural, economic and social factors black working class and middle-class families do have a fundamentally unique experience in the work place, at school and within the family, compared to their white counterparts who occupy 'objectively' the same class position. The racial dimension of the class experience is crucial to an understanding of the distinct aspirations and expectations of black working class people in Britain . As we shall examine later

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<sup>4</sup> For studies on the class characteristics, divisions and mobility in contemporary Britain, Glass (1954); Goldthorpe, Llewellyn and Payne (1988); Marshall, Newbury, Rose and Vogler (1988).

<sup>5</sup> Systematic studies about the social class characteristics of black families in Britain are less readily available than of the majority (assumed to be 'white') population. Statistical analyses give some indication of characteristics of different parts of the non-white British population i.e Brown (1984). Other evidence of class characteristics and in particular, the presence of a black 'middle class' are available in studies such as Giles (1977), Foner (1979), Pryce (1979), Rex and Tomlinson (1979).

in detail, the process of migration has had a significant impact on the experiences, and hence attitudes and values, of working class, West Indians in the U.K.

Examples of these distinct characteristics of the black working class are to be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

However, I shall offer a brief summary of my findings here in support of my argument for the recognition of a cultural context of social class. My research indicated that in many West Indian, working class households the woman can often be found in an occupation that may be defined objectively as middle-class. (i.e. social work, classified as SC 2: S.E.G. 5.1) <sup>6</sup>. However this fact is largely obscured by the tradition of taking the male to be the head of household. Other distinctions are often misinterpreted because of similar ethnocentric evaluations. For instance, in the life-cycle of the black working class woman (and sometimes the black working class man) single parenthood is a not uncommon stage.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the presence of relative autonomy between men and women in many black, working class households means that both partners are found to contribute equally to the family income. West Indian attitudes to education are also positive, the meritocratic ideal being a very important determinant of occupational and educational aspirations. Homeownership is also

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<sup>6</sup> Why this family should not be defined as middle class according to the role and occupation of the women, is the subject of another debate, see later section on the 'black female experience'.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 6 for a detailed explanation of the West Indian working class preference for compatibility over economic security in relationships.

a black working class aspiration<sup>8</sup> as are a number of other values typically identified with a white, middle class orientation.<sup>9</sup>

In studies of education and the black experience the consistent misinterpretation of social class factors is clearly a response to the rigid and ethnocentric interpretation of social class that these studies assume. It is often the case that social class (often referred to as parental influence) is not found to be a significant factor in educational performance. Many studies conclude that the effects of 'ethnicity' over-ride that of social class when accounting for black underachievement.<sup>10</sup> For example Sillitoe and Meltzer (1985) in their study of West Indian school leavers illustrate this point. They conclude that:

"controlling for family occupational background has a negligible effect on the variations associated with ethnicity." (p 29)

This statement is hardly surprising when we consider that they not only take father's occupation as definitive (because they

<sup>8</sup> In my study 59% of the working class West Indian households lived in owner occupier homes, compared to only 26% of the white working class families. The white families were far more likely to live in council homes: 64% compared to only 34% of black families.

<sup>9</sup> Moses (1985:500 & 503) suggests that among West Indian families values and attitudes are less different than often presumed, making class distinctions less marked than among a white population. Giles (1975:98) stated that white teachers were not able to make class distinctions among West Indian pupils. The teachers learned to their surprise that "even among working class families they had middle-class values." (p39)

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Verma (1986) who suggests that social class did not predict examination achievement for Bangladeshi, Indian and West Indian youth. It was only a factor among the Whites and the Pakistanis. See, also, Craft and Craft (1983) who suggest that irrespective of social class West Indians are markedly under-represented as high achievers.

argue that this is the traditional way of doing things), but assume that low socio-economic status of West Indian households automatically accounts for educational underachievement. They write:

"..although ethnically related factors appear to be entirely responsible for the abilities of West Indians being lowly rated, relative to those of whites with similar educational attainments, there is little doubt that the West Indian leavers were further handicapped by coming almost exclusively from manual or lower non-manual families."  
(p.30)

When parental background is discussed with regard to black educational performance, it is nearly always done so in a negative light. The treatment of race and social class in the Swann Report (DES 1985) is just one such example of this. In their analysis entitled, 'The inter-relationship of racial discrimination, socio-economic status, social class and region.' (p. 71-76), Swann makes the link between low socio-economic status (defined as social class) and poor educational attainment among black children. The evidence Swann gives for making this association is the existing studies of white families <sup>11</sup> which purport to show the presence of just such a link. Swann projects these culturally specific findings onto the black experience and makes a logical assumption that black children from low socio-economic backgrounds must be influenced in the same way as their white counterparts, only worse. They write:

" In conclusion, then, we are left in no doubt that the ethnic minority communities are, on average, markedly more socially and economically deprived than the White majority, though to an extent and in a manner that varies as between different ethnic groups. Secondly, this extra deprivation is almost certainly due, in substantial part, to racial

<sup>11</sup> Douglas (1964); Rutter and Madge (1976); Mortimore and Blackstone (1982).

prejudice and discrimination. And lastly, this extra level of deprivation in turn contributes substantially to underachievement at school." (sic) (p.76)

Social class is important in such an analysis but only in terms on its negative contribution to the relative deprivation of black families. This narrow definition of social class in the West Indian context precludes a positive cultural evaluation of the West Indian class characteristics from the analysis.

Other studies also fail to give a satisfactory account of social class, not because, like Swann, race and class are presumed synonymous, but rather because of its apparent inconvenience to their analysis. The Eggleston Report (1986), in its discussion of black school leavers, is one such study that fails to address social class in any meaningful way. To recognise social class in the West Indian context would be incompatible with its conclusions which favours an emphasis on institutional racism.<sup>12</sup>

While Brewer and Haslum (1986) quite rightly call for research that takes into consideration the way in which, "the social matrix of particular ethnic groups affect educational attainment" (p.20) they themselves illustrate the negative way that social and cultural factors can be interpreted even when they are

<sup>12</sup> The concept of institutional racism is problematic not least because of its confused definition (Williams 1985). Swann (DES 1985:28) defines it as " a complex inter-relationship between individual attitudes and institutional practices and procedures." (my emphasis). Clearly the notion of negative self-esteem and the mechanism of the self-fulfilling prophecy remains intact in this re-appraisal of the operation of racial discrimination, as Eggleston et al (1986:287) reveal when they conclude that: " Many black children.... lack confidence in their own judgement and fail to get reassurances that are apparently experienced by white children. This lack of encouragement may occur not through overt action by the teachers but through the 'hidden curriculum' that regulates behaviour both in and out of school."

recognised. Haslem and Brewer argue that the reason why too few studies fail to look closely at the influence of home background on black children is because conventional measures of social disadvantage are of no use whatsoever in predicting the educational problems of West Indian children. They suggest that while children from ethnic minorities do experience considerable social disadvantages, the association between this and their educational attainment is not the same as for their white peers. Brewer and Haslum using 'commonsense' deduction based largely on secondary sources, suggest that the role of the mother figure in West Indian families has a negative effect on the educational attainment of their children. They found that West Indian mothers' social class and reading age were statistically significant predictors of reading attainment among West Indian children<sup>13</sup>. They also suggest that the high rate of single parenthood and economic activity among black women:

"are an alternative way of explaining the situation of West Indian children .....Such variables may cut across and outweigh the effects of the socio-economic conditions examined so far." (p.31)

There have been other attempts to investigate the complexities of the 'social matrix' of West Indian families. In a bid to account for scholastic success among black pupils, Bagley, Bart and Wong (1979) suggest that parents who are critical of English culture and the English education system, speak creole and standard English, are educated and materially comfortable, produce children who do well at school. Children who live in poor

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that there has been some controversy surrounding the statistical data in the Brewer and Haslum study. Plewis (1987) argues that the calculations made were mathematically unsound. It should also be noted that other studies have not found such a link between under-performance and maternal status (ILEA 1986a).

material circumstances, are less well educated, and tend to speak creole at home, do not do so well, the reason being that they lack the necessary self-esteem to succeed. This attempt, though imaginative, makes the assumption that a positive orientation to education is solely a middle class phenomenon.

Clark (1983) offers an interesting insight into the understanding of class and culture with regard to educational performance. In his study of why poor black families succeed he suggests that the emphasis should be on family disposition not composition as a means of explaining the positive orientation of black children from materially deprived backgrounds <sup>14</sup>. Clark argues that:

" It is the family members' beliefs, activities, and overall cultural style, not the family unit's composition or social status that produces the requisite mental structures for effective and desirable behaviour during classroom lessons."  
(p.2)

By focusing on psychological processes and social communication, Clark's analysis (of ten families) is fundamentally flawed, as Edgar G. Epps acknowledges in the introduction to the book:

" Clark's study does not inform us about the distribution of educationally competent families within the stratification system." (p.xiii)

Though it must be recognised that such studies have serious and negative policy implications in terms of their claims against the operation of social class inequalities and emphasis on individual motivation, Clark's book however, is one of the few studies to offer insight into what he calls the 'quality of life' in poor black homes. The message of the study being that low socio-

<sup>14</sup> For example, Clark examines the family life of single parent families with regard to educational success.

economic status cannot always be considered as a reliable predictor of educational outcomes.

A recognition that there is a cultural context to social class does not render, as Miles (1984:221) suggests, a class analysis invalid <sup>15</sup>. To acknowledge that there exists a black working class with distinct cultural and historical origins from the white working class does not imply that race is subsumed by class. On the contrary it enhances its meaning, for not only does it incorporate a fundamental recognition of blacks with regard to their relations to the means of production but it also allows a more satisfactory reappraisal of working class black consciousness.

#### I. Pupils' Social Class Career Aspirations and Expectations.

An understanding of the cultural context of social class is essential to a satisfactory analysis of the career aspirations and expectations of the different groups of pupils in the study sample. The findings revealed clear distinctions in the social class aspirations and expectations of the different groups of pupils. Table 1 shows the social class of the occupations the pupils expected to get upon leaving school.

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<sup>15</sup> In a polemic with the CCCS (1982), Miles takes issue with their treatment of class as developed in the 'radical sociology of race relations', comparing them to the the 'liberal tradition' in the sociology of race relations (as exemplified by Rex and Tomlinson 1979).

Table 1

Social Class Career Expectations By Race and Gender<sup>16</sup>

|          | Black Females | Black Males | Other Females | Other Males |
|----------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
|          | (57)          | (11)        | (75)          | (36)        |
| SC1 & 2  | 74%           | 27%         | 35%           | 11%         |
| SC3 NM   | 10%           | 0           | 27%           | 22%         |
| SC3 M    | 12%           | 55%         | 17%           | 45%         |
| SC4 & 5  | 0             | 9%          | 1%            | 14%         |
| Unempl.  | 0             | 0           | 1%            | 0           |
| Army     | 2%            | 0           | 0             | 0           |
| Dontknow | 2%            | 9%          | 19%           | 8%          |

As the table clearly indicates there were marked differences in job expectations according to the gender and race of the young person, black girls having much higher social class expectations than any other group. 74% of black girls expected to find work in either social class 1 or 2, that is jobs classified in the professional, managerial and intermediate categories <sup>17</sup>, many of these young women selecting caring occupations such as nursing and social work were to be found in this group. Only 11% thought they would obtain employment as skilled, non-manual workers, office work being by far the most popular occupation in this category. Compared to their mothers, 36% of whom were employed as skilled manual workers, only 12% of these girls expected to find work in the same category. On the whole young black women

<sup>16</sup> N.B. The percentages in all the tables have been rounded off to the nearest figure.

<sup>17</sup> The classification groupings, as explained in the methodological section, are those used by the Registrar General (See OPCS 1980).

seemed the most certain of any other group about their job expectations which is indicated by the small number of girls (2% compared to 19% 'other females') to state that they "did not know" what job to expect on leaving school.

When we examine the social class occupational characteristics of the young black men <sup>18</sup>, other interesting patterns emerge. With 27% of the black boys expecting to get jobs in SC1 & 2 (professional and intermediate occupations), they also had relatively high expectations of the labour market, however, nowhere quite as high as their female counterparts. By far the majority of young black men expected to find employment as skilled manual workers (55%) (plumbers, electricians etc.). Young black men were clearly avoiding occupations from where they were traditionally excluded, i.e. non-manual occupations (office work etc.).<sup>19</sup>

When we compare the career expectations of young white women <sup>20</sup> to that of young black women the differences are obvious. White

<sup>18</sup> It must be noted that this was a very small sample group of only 11 pupils and, as with all the groups being discussed here, cannot claim to be representative.

<sup>19</sup> Box and Ford (1967), Spilerman (1977) and Gambetta (1988), drawing on rational choice theory, suggest an important factor in making a rational job choice is the probability of securing employment. If there is little chance of succeeding (racial and sexual divisions in the labour market see to that) this will affect the likelihood of trying to get certain jobs. Others (drawing on the functionalist tradition in sociology) suggest that job choice is determined by early, primary 'economic' socialisation (Musgrave 1967).

<sup>20</sup> The category 'other female' was largely made up of white girls. A few young women of other ethnic origin not classified as West Indian were included in this category. The same was true for the "other males" (See: Chapter 4)

females had much lower expectations concerning their future employment. Only 35% expected to work as professional, managerial or intermediate employees, almost twice as many black young women expected to take up this type of work. In contrast to the black experience, however, the proportion of young white women who expected to find employment as non-manual workers was far greater (27%), suggesting office type work was seen as an alternative to traditional female 'caring' occupations. Many women who did choose 'caring' occupations chose specific child care jobs that resulted in their classification in the lower social class group of skilled manual workers (16% classified as skilled manual workers). Another notable difference was that young white women were least sure of their occupational fate. 19% stated that they 'did not know' what job to expect upon entering the labour market.

White male expectations were distinctive. They were secure in the fact that they would be getting jobs as skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers. A total of 59% expressed their expectations of just such employment futures (45% SC3 M, 14% SC4 & 5). The employment expectations of the young white men were the most downwardly skewed in the sample, with only 11% expecting to be employed in any professional capacity.

None of the findings here about the social class expectations of young black and white people are surprising. Other studies have found similar patterns among their respondents. For example it has been acknowledged by Fuller (1982), Dex (1983a), and Eggleston et al (1986) that young black women have particularly

high expectations of the labour market. Young black men have also been found to have relatively high and 'realistic' expectations about work (Verma 1986; Eggleston 1986). Working class white girls are often discussed as being confined to the lower end of the occupational ladder (Griffin 1985, Wallace 1987). Willis (1977) explains how working class white males reproduce their manual occupational status.

However, what is significant here is the comparative discussion of racial and sexual differences in occupational expectations. The distinctive variations between groups who share objectively a similar class position, indicates that a cultural dimension to a class analysis is necessary in order to account for these differences. Before we turn to such a consideration, other aspects of the social class career characteristics of the cohort must be examined to further support the need for a cultural evaluation.

It should be noted that the career aspirations of young people embody a different aspect of career choice than expectations. Career aspirations focus on the hopes and wishes of the pupils rather than their more rationally-inspired expectations. It is useful therefore to compliment an investigation into the social class expectations of the cohort with an analysis of their career aspirations to see if any differences arise. Table 2 shows the social class of the career aspirations made by the pupils in the study.

Table 2.

Social Class Career Aspirations by Race and Gender

|          | Black Females | Black Males | Other Females | Other Males |
|----------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
|          | (57)          | (11)        | (75)          | (36)        |
| SC1 & 2  | 74%           | 46%         | 48%           | 19%         |
| SC3NM    | 10%           | 0           | 17%           | 28%         |
| SC3M     | 10%           | 27%         | 16%           | 50%         |
| SC4 & 5  | 2%            | 0           | 5%            | 3%          |
| unpaid   | 0             | 0           | 2%            | 0           |
| Army     | 2%            | 9%          | 0             | 0           |
| Dontknow | 2%            | 18%         | 12%           | 0           |

The NDCS Survey <sup>21</sup> suggests that there was little variation between the aspirations and expectations of their cohort (p 273). However my findings showed that while this was true of the young black women in the study, it was less so for the other groups. The aspirations for the others were markedly higher than their expectations.

While young black woman appeared assured about being able to fulfil their hopes when they entered the world of work <sup>22</sup>, young

<sup>21</sup> See: Fogelman 1983.

<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that 2% of young black women aspired to jobs of a lower social class than they expected. This indicated their wish to do certain 'female' defined jobs that entailed skills such as cooking or child care which they were aware were thought of as low status or low paid. These were clearly desires that they held but did not expect to pursue in the real job market because they felt it was undesirable in the long run to do so.

black men were less confident<sup>23</sup>. In contrast to their expectations, the aspirations of the young black men were much higher. Whereas only 27% had expected to get a job in social class 1 or 2, 46% aspired to attain such occupations. In the previous table (1) it was apparent that 55% of young black men expected to be skilled manual workers, table 2, however, shows that only 27% of these young black men really aspired to a career where they would be employed as such. What was interesting to find was the avoidance by young black men of jobs classified as SC 3 non-manual work. They neither expected nor aspired to these types of jobs (office work, lower level administrative occupations), which represented an area of employment, due to both racial and sexual segregation of the labour market, in which black men have been traditionally excluded.<sup>24</sup>

Young white women were more likely to aspire to jobs in a higher social class than they expected to achieve. Girls that expected to be employed in a SC3 non-manual capacity, if given the opportunity would prefer to be working in jobs classified as social class 1 or 2. This preference was indicated by the upward shift from SC3 non-manual to SC1 & 2 (professional and intermediate occupations) of 12%, 10% of whom appeared to come from the non-manual sector. The lack of confidence of this group of pupils had about being able to secure the occupation of their

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<sup>23</sup> Ullah (1985), on observing a similar phenomenon, puts forward the explanation that this is because black females, in contrast to black males, do not expect to encounter as much racial discrimination in the labour market.

<sup>24</sup> The national statistics of employment patterns of racial minorities in the U.K bears this point out. See Brown (1984).

choice was again reaffirmed by the 12% who, upon being asked what they would really like to do, still stated that they did not know.

Young white men showed a similar tendency to aspire to jobs of a higher social class than they expected to get. However there was a far less marked upward shift in aspirations from expectations than indicated by either their white female or black male counterparts. The majority of these young men expressed their desire to remain by and large working in the skilled manual sector, with 11% of those previously expecting work as unskilled and semi-skilled workers aspiring to join them or secure employment higher up the social scale. Several young men expecting to find work in the non-manual sector indicated that they would prefer jobs, if possible in SC1 & 2 (6%).

The evidence presented here shows the distinctive nature of the career aspirations and expectations of young black women relative to the other groups in the study. The majority of these women both expected and aspired to jobs classified in the highest social class grouping. In contrast young black men, though aspiring to higher social class occupations than their white male peers but lower than their black female counterparts, were less likely to expect to fulfil their aspirations in the job market. Young white women were more likely to aspire and expect to secure employment in SC3 both in a non manual and skilled manual capacity than their black female peers. Though almost as many did aspire to social class 1 and 2 occupations as SC3 occupations, they were much less likely to do so than their black

females peers. Young white men were least likely to want, or expect, a job in SC1 & 2 of any of the pupils. Their preference for skilled manual work was marked. However, a fair proportion did aspire and expect to be employed as non-manual workers, which was in sharp contrast to the young black men, none of whom indicated that this area of employment was open to them.

## II. Parental Influence on Occupational Choice:

Social class, as measured by parental background has long been associated with educational and occupational outcomes for children <sup>25</sup>. An investigation of parental occupation on career aspirations and expectations reveals an unexpected <sup>26</sup> impact of various aspects of parental influence on black female occupational choice, and further points to the need for a cultural evaluation of social class.

### The Influence of the Fathers' Occupational Background

Many studies assert that there is an important link between the parental background and educational outcome of a pupil by their use of the paternal occupational yardstick <sup>27</sup>. Research on paternal social class and educational outcome among black pupils has been less conclusive, (as already discussed), but this research has nevertheless nearly always used fathers' social

<sup>25</sup> See: Douglas (1964); Halsey Heath and Ridge (1980); Mortimore and Blackstone (1982); Rogers (1986); Gray and Jesson (1987); Heath (1987)

<sup>26</sup> Unexpected in the sense that previous research on black females indicates the central role model of the mother as a strong influence in determining occupational choice, see: Fuller (1982); Dex (1983a); Eggleston et al (1986)

<sup>27</sup> For example, see: Coleman (1969); Jencks (1972); Rutter and Madge (1978); Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980).

status as a measure of parental background <sup>28</sup>. In this section we shall examine if there is any measurable influence between the occupational aspirations <sup>29</sup> of the young black women in the study and their fathers' occupational location. Table 3 shows the social class aspirations of young black women in association with their fathers' jobs.

Table 3

Young Black Womens' Social Class Aspirations by Fathers' Social Class

|                | <u>Fathers' Occupation</u> |       |      |         |         |            |
|----------------|----------------------------|-------|------|---------|---------|------------|
|                | SC1 & 2                    | SC3NM | SC3M | SC4 & 5 | Unempl. | NotPresent |
| <u>Y.Women</u> | (7)                        | (1)   | (19) | (12)    | (2)     | (11)       |
| SC1 & 2        | 86%                        | 100%  | 74%  | 50%     | 100%    | 91%        |
| SC3NM          | 0                          | 0     | 10%  | 25%     | 0       | 9%         |
| SC3M           | 0                          | 0     | 16%  | 9%      | 0       | 0          |
| SC3 & 4        | 0                          | 0     | 0    | 8       | 0       | 0          |
| Army           | 14%                        | 0     | 0    | 0       | 0       | 0          |
| Dontknow       | 0                          | 0     | 0    | 8%      | 0       | 0          |

Though the numbers are small (52 girls in all) and therefore cannot claim to be representative, there is nevertheless a strong pattern in the data. Table 3 shows that young black women, whatever the social status of the father, are very likely to aspire to a job of a high social status. This trend was very

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Sillitoe and Meltzer (1985:28), Mortimore at al (ILEA 1986a-d).

<sup>29</sup> I only discuss the occupational aspirations of the young black women in this section of the chapter as there was not much difference between the aspirations and expectations, and further more aspirations (i.e. hopes and desires) are a more useful indicator of subjective occupational choice among all groups in the study.

evident among young women with fathers who themselves were in higher social status jobs. The daughters of men in manual occupations (i.e. SC3M and SC4 & 5) deviated from the pattern slightly, by choosing occupations that were classified as non-manual and manual. Those girls with fathers not working in the household, either due to unemployment or because they were not present, had daughters who aspired by and large to SC1 & 2, that is professional and intermediate occupations.

Can we assert from the evidence that fathers' occupation influences their daughters' job choice? The data appears to indicate that these young women were not reproducing their fathers' social status, making their choices independently from paternal influence. This was made clear by the fact that many young women whose fathers were in lower status occupations were aspiring to the same occupational group as those young women who had fathers in the higher professions. Fathers' occupational status could be seen to have some effect when it is observed that girls with fathers in manual occupations were more likely than those from non-manual<sup>30</sup> and professional backgrounds to choose non-manual and manual occupations. However, if the type of work that these jobs entail is investigated it is evident that they were not choosing to do the same type of work as their fathers.

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<sup>30</sup> The disproportionate representation of black males in the non-manual occupational grouping should be noted once again.

These jobs were regarded as high status female work and so in a sense represented mobility for these young women.<sup>31</sup>

#### The Influence of the Mothers' Occupational Background

It has been argued that the mother plays a central role in influencing the educational attitudes and aspirations of their children (Jackson and Marsden 1963; Hoggart 1957). Other aspects of the maternal influence have also been ascertained. Some studies, for example, investigate the psychological aspect of the maternal influence. Rutter (1981) emphasises its impact on child cognitive development and Chodorow (1979) on 'sex socialisation'. Research on white working class women highlight the direct and indirect role of the mother in the occupational choice process of girls (Holland 1983). In studies on the black female a similar case is made for the positive role model of the mother to account for both the occupational and educational orientation of black girls ( Fuller 1982; Phizacklea 1982; Dex 1983; Eggleston et al 1986). It has even been asserted that the black mother plays a crucial part in the maintenance of educational disadvantage among her children in general (Brewer and Haslum 1986).

The aim of our investigation here is to establish if there is any direct link between mothers' job and daughters' aspirations, and to examine to what extent any association between the two can be best explained. Table 4 looks at the findings:

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<sup>31</sup> For example, these jobs are classified as lower status occupations (i.e. office /administrative work is grouped as SC3NM, or trained nursery nurses as SC3M). See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the meaning of 'gendered occupations' to young black women.

Table 4

Young Black Womens' Social Class Aspirations by Mothers' Social Class.

Mothers' Occupation

|               | SC1&2 | SC3NM | SC3M | SC4&5 | Uemp | Unpaid | NotPres |
|---------------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|--------|---------|
| <u>Aspir.</u> | (24)  | (4)   | (15) | (9)   | (2)  | (3)    | (1)     |
| SC1 & 2       | 70%   | 50%   | 73%  | 75%   | 100% | 67%    | 100%    |
| SC3NM         | 10%   | 25%   | 20%  | 0     | 0    | 0      | 0       |
| SC3M          | 10%   | 25%   | 7%   | 0     | 0    | 33%    | 0       |
| SC4 & 5       | 0     | 0     | 0    | 25%   | 0    | 0      | 0       |
| Army          | 5%    | 0     | 0    | 0     | 0    | 0      | 0       |
| Dont know     | 5%    | 0     | 0    | 0     | 0    | 0      | 0       |

Again it must be stressed that this discussion is based on a small sample population (n=50) and thus the findings are by no means representative. However, this does not detract from the fact that there are clear trends emerging in the data that do not appear to be there by chance and are worthy of mention. What the findings did show is that young black women, whatever the occupational status of their mothers, are more likely to aspire to a high status career than simply mirror their mothers' occupational experience.

It could be argued that there was some degree of maternal social class influence, made evident by an increased likelihood among the girls with mothers in SC3(NM &M) to choose jobs of that social class, compared with the decision of girls with mothers in social class 1 & 2, who were less likely to take up a career as a manual or non-manual employee. This was further shown by the

fact that 25% of the young women whose mothers were in social class 4 & 5 opted to do this same type of work.

However this social class influence can be seen to be marginal in the light of the more marked trend in the evidence that strongly suggests that the aspiration to a high occupational status was being made regardless of mothers' social status, even among girls from a lower maternal social background.

That the girls' occupational decisions appeared to be made independently of their mothers' occupational status was further supported by the fact that even girls whose mothers were in SC1 & 2 (the most common occupational category all round for both mother and daughter) did not necessarily choose the same job as their mothers were doing, 20% chose jobs classified as social class 3. Thus in conclusion the dynamic that determined high occupational aspirations among young black women appeared to be something other than the mothers' occupational status.

#### The Influence of Family Occupational Background.

If we are to adequately gauge the social background of the young black women in the study who themselves are not yet in employment, and so cannot define their own social status, then we must assess as best we can the most representative social status of the family. Given that we are not in a position to redefine

social classification schema <sup>32</sup>, the most operative way to achieve this end would be to take the social class of the parent who could most adequately fulfil the head of household requirements laid down by conventional stratification theorists themselves.<sup>33</sup>

Goldthorpe (1983) articulating the conventional view, puts forward the following definition of the 'head of household'. He writes:

" The family 'head' is the family member who has the greatest commitment to and continuity in the labour market." (p 470)

However, he then assumes:

" ...that this member is usually male is then an independent empirical observation." (p 470)

<sup>32</sup> There have been attempts to incorporate women into a classification schema. For example, Helen Roberts (1987) presents the 'City Classification Scheme' which takes on board the feminist critique of stratification analysis (see, also, Acker 1973; Delphy 1981; Delphy and Leonard 1986), by her recognition of the domestic responsibility among women hitherto invisible in the economy. Britten and Heath (1983) argue their case for cross-class families where by both male and female economic contributions are considered. This is problematic not least because it is difficult to operationalise and the woman remains in the background of the family. There have been other concessions to women in stratification analysis all of which have limitations. The conventionalists for example, (Goldthorpe 1983) do recognise the woman if a male is not present. This is a method prevalent in most studies of the black family and result in highlighting the disproportionate number of female-headed households in the community. Another attempt is to take the occupation of the woman separately and to judge her accordingly when a male is present. This is easy to do and is a common method in many sociological studies as it does not entail any radical rethinking of the conventional analyses. N.B. studies on women in stratification analysis also demonstrate their ethnocentricity by their failure to mention the influence of race and culture. See, for example, Abbott and Sapsford 1987.

<sup>33</sup> For examples of the conventionalist definitions that assert that the positions of families, and women within families, are determined by the position of the male head see Parkin (1971:14-15), Westergaard and Resler (1975:475) Goldthorpe (1983:465).

It is my proposition here, contrary to conventional wisdom, that employed, married, West Indian women in Britain can be defined as the 'head of household', and this is the important part, even when a husband is present. Furthermore I wish to argue that they can be defined as such by Goldthorpe's own criterion that states that the family head is the one who has the greatest commitment to and continuity in the labour market.

Goldthorpe regards any attempt to include married women into the class schema as 'problematic'. This he claims is because of the:

" discontinuity so characteristic a feature of the employment histories of women." (p 475).

Goldthorpe makes the ethnocentric assumption <sup>34</sup> that the majority of employed married women are working part-time and that their economic participation may have a somewhat impermanent and intermittent character as they enter or leave the labour force in response to the needs of child-care or the demands of a husband's career. However correct this may be for the majority of women in Britain (and that is questionable - see Beechey and Perkins 1987), it most certainly is not true for all and is particularly misleading with regard to the West Indian woman in Britain.

<sup>34</sup> It can be argued that conventional stratification analysis is both ethnocentric (culturally specific) and androcentric (male-centered). It is androcentric in the sense that it presumes that the occupational status of the male is the criterion on which a family's social status is defined. As a consequence a woman's social status is determined by her marriage and not by her own occupation. By virtue of this androcentricity stratification analysis is also ethnocentric, that is culturally specific. It is culturally specific because it assumes marriage entails a real change for most women as regards their economic status. Their jobs upon marriage are assumed to become a secondary rather than primary means of support. This was not the case among West Indian women in Britain.

The evidence of this study, and indeed that of the PSI survey, Black and White in Britain (Brown 1984), suggests that there is no cultural precedent for making this ethnocentric assumption concerning West Indian womens' commitment to the labour market. The characteristics of the black female workforce (discussed in the following section 'Black Female Orientation to Work', and in Chapter 3 and 6) indicate that the social and economic contribution of the black woman to the British labour force is substantial. It is sufficient to merit recognition by any credible schema. Thus in the West Indian context to employ a convention that marginalises the female contribution and presumes that the male should be head of household when both partners equally contribute to the family, would, in effect distort social reality.<sup>35</sup>

Nancy Foner (1979), in her study of the West Indian migrant to Britain, makes an interesting observation. She presents evidence to suggest that to ignore the West Indian woman's occupational status in her own right would be problematic when trying to calculate occupational mobility. She states:

" While Jamaican women clearly do share in their husband's income it is another issue to say that their occupational status is derived from that of their husbands." (p.112)

Foner's study shows that in fact the husbands of nearly all the white-collar and skilled women in her London sample were in jobs

<sup>35</sup> Gill (1984) and Massiah (1982, 1984, 1986) make a similar point with regard to West Indian women in the Caribbean, suggesting that womens' contribution to the labour market has often been misunderstood largely as a consequence of inappropriate methodological concepts. They call for a redefintion of women's work, role and status in the Caribbean suggesting that the current definitions have led to an incorrect approach to women in development.

of a lower status than their wives, and many of them had experienced downward mobility in England. Thus, to consider the husband's occupational status and mobility experiences, rather than the woman's would result in mis-classifying them as downwardly mobile instead of upwardly mobile.

In the same way it was apparent that not to take the females occupational status into consideration when establishing the family background of the girls in the study would result in a misrepresentation. The families in my study would appear downwardly rather than upwardly skewed in the occupational hierarchy.<sup>36</sup> This was clearly illustrated by the figures which showed not only that the social class of the black male was much lower than that of the female, but the social class of the West Indian family to be substantially altered if the female was correctly incorporated into the schema.

In every respect the West Indian woman's labour market commitment earns her the right to be recognised as capable of defining her family's social position. However, as already discussed, it is often the case that in determining parental background the conventional wisdom is to take the occupation of the male head of household. Studies of black occupational mobility persist in

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<sup>36</sup> In this study the social status of the women who were 'heads of household' were higher than that of the males. 68% of West Indian women classified as 'head of household' were in social class 1 & 2, whereas only 15% of black males were. The majority of black males who were 'heads of household' were in social class 3, manual occupations(i.e. 46%).

conforming to this methodological convention <sup>37</sup> by maintaining that males are in every cultural setting still the most committed and involved in the labour market. It is this ethnocentric convention in established stratification analysis that has yet to be successfully refuted.

Returning to a consideration of the effect that family background has on occupational aspirations we shall now consider Table 5 which shows the relationship between the family social status and daughters' occupational aspirations. The social status of the West Indian families in the study is defined here in terms of either a male or female occupation of that parent who most adequately fulfils the requirement of family head according to Goldthorpe's own definition. If both members appear to contribute equally to the family position <sup>38</sup> then the parent with the higher social status was taken to be the definer of the family's social background.

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<sup>37</sup> In one of the few studies to investigate the extent of occupational mobility among blacks, McNabb and Psacharopoulos in their paper 'Racial Earnings Differentials in the U.K.' (see Heath 1981;108-3) mirror the methodology employed by the National Social Mobility Enquiry of 1972 and its follow up in 1974 by the Oxford Mobility Group (See Goldthorpe 1980 for a description of these studies) and accept the convention of using an all male sample population.

<sup>38</sup> The parents commitment to the labour market was judged by work characteristics such as if they engaged in full-time work or part-time work. Other aspects such as distance travelled to work helped to assess their level of involvement in the labour market. With a more adequate questionnaire administered to the parents (and not to the children, as this was) such aspects of length of employment and time off work for child rearing could be included.

Table 5

Young Black Womens' Social Class Aspirations by Head of  
Households' Social Class

Head of Households' Occupation

|                    | SC1 & 2 | SC3NM | SC3M | SC4 & 5 |
|--------------------|---------|-------|------|---------|
| <u>Aspirations</u> | (21)    | (4)   | (16) | (7)     |
| SC1 & 2            | 72%     | 75%   | 75%  | 72%     |
| SC3NM              | 10%     | 25%   | 13%  | 14%     |
| SC3M               | 10%     | 0     | 12%  | 0       |
| SC4 & 5            | 0       | 0     | 0    | 14%     |
| Army               | 5%      | 0     | 0    | 0       |
| Dont know          | 5%      | 0     | 0    | 0       |

While the numbers are few, there appears to be a pattern in the data that indicates much the same trend that has been observed in our previous consideration of maternal and paternal occupational influence. The evidence suggests again that young black women are choosing labour market destinations independent of the occupational status of the head of household. This is shown by the fact that the majority of young women (over 70% under any head of household grouping) chose careers in SC1 & 2 (i.e. professional and intermediate occupations). Girls from social class 3 families (non-manual and manual) are as likely to choose occupations from their own social background as SC1 and 2 girls, 20% of whom wanted to do work classified as social class 3 occupations.

Other findings indicate that the majority of heads of households classified as professional and intermediate workers are in fact

female (68%). In the same way male heads of household tend to be skilled manual workers (46%). This finding together with the observation that young black women aspire to high status professions, whether the heads of households are themselves manual or professional workers, presents further evidence that maternal or paternal social status is of little consequence in the decision-making process.

In conclusion, family background, as more accurately gauged in the West Indian context through a more representative definition of the head of household (whether male or female), appears to be marginal.<sup>39</sup> This finding, not unlike our previous observation concerning maternal and paternal influence, provides further proof that the link is weak between the first and the second generation occupational aspirations among West Indians in Britain, suggesting that young black woman do not necessarily wish to reproduce their social class status however defined.

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<sup>39</sup> Blau and Duncan (1967:430) similarly conclude that family background has no significant effect on occupational status independent of educational attainment. They put forward the argument for a Parsonian theory of movement suggesting that there is a trend from ascription to achievement in society. In our case family background was not an important indicator of career aspirations not because ascription had taken place or was likely to take place but because of the belief in the meritocratic ideal by West Indians. They believed in achievement despite the fact that the effects of ascription and social inheritance (Bourdieu 1973) are clearly seen in the West Indian occupational structure.

**PART II**BRITISH WEST INDIAN SOCIAL CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

It was clear in the last section that parental social class, however defined, was not directly related to the aspirations of their daughters. In this section we ask the question as to whether there was another way in which the parental background operated to affect social class aspirations of young black women that cannot be measured by the conventional association of parental status to pupil outcome. In this study there appeared to be two ways in which parents influenced aspirations: One, the positive orientation to education and the other, the black female orientation to work, both of which can be regarded as British West Indian working class characteristics. I shall now turn to an assessment of these two important class characteristics in order that we may move toward some explanation for the high aspirations of young black women.

I. The Migrant Effect and Parental/Pupil Orientation to Education

It is often the case that people migrate for 'a better life'. This is as true of the West Indians who came to the U.K. as any other group of people. West Indians came to Britain in the 1950s, in what can be argued as a both a male and female headed migration (see Chapter 3), in search of better opportunities for themselves and their children. While objectively occupational opportunities for migrants are restricted by specific constraints with regard to their disadvantaged labour market position there is another dimension to migrant life: that of their own

subjective occupational orientation. This internal cultural dynamic of migrants, what I call the 'migrant effect', refers to the degree to which migrants themselves pursue the goal of upward occupational mobility, particularly for the next generation, by striving for educational achievement and qualifications <sup>40</sup>. The influence of this 'migrant effect' on educational outcomes may vary according to the culture of the migrant group, the country of settlement, economic and social conditions ( especially significant is the extent of racial exclusion and discrimination), but it nevertheless remains a characteristic feature among many migrant groups.<sup>41</sup> Glazer and Moynihan (1963) discuss in their study of American migrant society, Beyond the Melting Pot, the drive for educational credentials among the many migrant groups in the U.S. They describe the Jews 'passion' for education (p.155); the Italian concept of (family) social status through the professional occupations of their children (p. 206); the Puerto Rican capacity for hard work and the value they place on schooling (p.114). Of the West Indian migrants <sup>42</sup> who came to the U.S.A in 1920-1925 Glazer and Moynihan write:

<sup>40</sup> Glazier and Moynihan (1977:346) provide evidence of this trend to 'move on' among ethnic groups in New York when they observe that occupation (as well as homeland and religion) as a form of ethnic identity is declining, indicating that these ethnic groups (Jews, Italians etc.) do not reproduce themselves from one generation to the next but change, often forming new but different identities as they become increasingly mobile. (N.B. this trend is not necessarily the same for black Americans who do not have the same sort of access to resources)

<sup>41</sup> For literature detailing the various experiences of different ethnic groups in the occupational structure see : Nee and Sanders (1985) on Asian Americans, Zenner (1985) on Jewish Americans, Nelson and Tienda (1985) on Hispanics in America, and Alba (1985) Italian Americans.

<sup>42</sup> West Indians made up one third to one quarter of the black population in America.

" The ethos of the West Indians....emphasised saving, hard work, investment and education...buying homes and in general advancing themselves." (p 35)

They remark that West Indians, 'furious' at the prejudice they encountered in America (which they felt was far greater than that among the whites in their home islands), turned to radical politics.<sup>43</sup> They observe:

" Negro communists and labour leaders, it has been said, were disproportionately West Indian." (p.35)

Leggett (in Bettelheim and Janowitz 1977) supports this thesis of political involvement, claiming that blacks, having the lowest ethnic status have therefore the highest level of class consciousness. Indeed a degree of political consciousness among early black migrants to the U.K. has been demonstrated by the 'Black Education movement' set up by this generation of migrants (Chevannes 1979; Tomlinson 1985). The struggle for basic educational rights has been a political focal point for the 'black community' since the 1960's. However, as Tomlinson observes, it is not so much a radical movement but one that seeks to ensure equality of opportunity for migrant children within the education system. Confirming that migrant parents have strong educational aspirations for their children, Tomlinson (1982) writes:

" The parents<sup>were</sup> very much aware of the discrimination their children could face in seeking employment after school placed great faith in the acquisition of educational qualifications to help overcome this" (p.34)

Parental recognition that the British education system discriminates against the black child has resulted in the establishment of black supplementary schools, spearheaded by the action, in particular, of black women (Tomlinson 1985:69). These

<sup>43</sup> For example Marcus Garvey.

separate black schools embody the belief that education will ultimately help black children to succeed in an 'English' system by providing them with the credentials necessary for employment, or further education and training in the majority society.

#### Parental Attitudes Toward Education

It was found in the study that black parents wanted improved educational standards for their children, and despite the general feeling of disillusionment and mistrust towards the schools their daughters attended, still retained their faith in the meritocratic ideal. Among the parents interviewed it was clear that securing educational opportunities for their children was of central importance, as one father explained:

" We work to give our children opportunity. We earn to pay rent, buy a little food. Man, there was no time for bettering ourself. Our children, they now have the benefits to better theyself, education and so on. We didn't have these opportunities our childrens now have these opportunities and we's work hard for them." (sic)  
(Mr Burgess, LRT maintenance).

Parents were 'realistic' about employment opportunities and their knowledge of British racism, gained from their own experience, made them anxious for their children. They had a clear understanding of the 'make or break' situation that faced their children in Britain today, as Mrs Pierre, a mother of one of the girls, explained:

" When we came here, there was so many jobs, we could 've move from one to another. The first night I arrive I get a job with my cousin. But the more of us come the less work , but we had relatives then an that make it easier. But now these children, they don't understand. They have it harder to get a job now, there is much against them that we not have then. But now they have opportunity. We are here to help them get on and we can help them educate themselves. They don't have to find the money for rent. You see, we had our children here and so they grow up expecting different things." (Mrs Pierre: auxilary (night) nurse )

Clark (1983) puts forward a thesis on why poor black families succeed in education. He argues that too often studies emphasise family composition (i.e. single parent families etc.) and not family disposition (i.e. beliefs and values). This is an important point, black girls in the study did seem to derive much of their determination for 'getting on'<sup>44</sup> from their parental orientation and both the passive and active support this engendered. It was apparent that West Indian parents did encourage their daughters and were proud of their successes in many different ways. A parent, a canteen worker for 24 years since her arrival from Jamaica in 1954, outlined her ideas and values on education and her daughters' success:

" It is important that she does what she wants, then she will do well...Anita should stay on and finish her studies. I does see many that leave , hang around the streets , what is the point of leaving school to do this? Our other daughter, Shelia, she went to ' John Henry' school, did well and then went on to college, then a Government job. They send her on a social work training course, CQSW I think it called. She probably out working today, she's a residential social worker now. The next one she does something with computers. Me, I don't understand a thing about that . My's only fear is Anita, now she start saying she want to be a nun. It's that school you know. What will she do when we want to play we music, drink and relax?" (sic)

Parental attitudes to their children's education varied from those who took strong disciplinarian measures<sup>45</sup> to those who adopted a passive approach. The passive approach was an attitude that relied heavily on trust between parent and child, and much responsibility lay with the child. Ms Dean, a cleaner in a West

<sup>44</sup> This is a term used by Sillitoe and Meltzer (1985), who observe in their study that black girls in particular stated the need for 'getting on'. Similarly Eggleston et al (1986) observe the desire among the black girls in their study to 'better themselves'.

<sup>45</sup> For instance Giles (1977:14) remarks on the 'Victorian' attitudes and ideas of discipline among the West Indian parents he studied.

End hotel, describes what was the passive support role of many parents in the study:

" She's a good girl, goes up and works on her own. Some children at school disturb her. Some children want to work, others don't. You know their are just some children like that. We never force them to work , there is no point it must come from themselves."

This type of parental support was often misunderstood by the school. Teachers argued that this form of parental concern was not sufficient for the girls' needs, and often complained that it led to over ambitiousness among the pupils. For example, Ms Perkin a fifth form mistress, had this to say of one parent who was an educational welfare officer:

" The problem is that she believes you must work hard to get anywhere, to move out of your circumstances, this philosophy has got through to Sharon who is just too over-ambitious for her ability."

It was clear that teachers, rather than considering it an asset considered passive parental encouragement to be negative, as the following comment made by a teacher concerning a black parent shows:

" The mother wants too much of her daughter, she is far too over ambitious for her. Just to show you she really hasn't a clue about her daughter, she's only capable of a low grade CSE and she wants her to do 'O' levels".

Another teacher had this to say of the passive, but supportive, role of one family:

"The parents are not unduly worried as she works hard but she is just not able enough to carry it off, she is not geared up to the exam level."

The evidence showed that in many cases black parents attempted to provide whatever support that they were able to give, mostly of a

moral <sup>46</sup> and where possible a material nature.<sup>47</sup> It was clear that many working class black parents, not least because of their own educational background or the restrictions induced by difficult working conditions, rely heavily on the school to provide the less accessible material and academic help they were often unable to supply.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that however 'conservative' <sup>48</sup> the parental attitudes toward education appeared to be, this acceptance of the status quo was not reflected in the cultural ideology of the West Indian working class. They often referred to the racism they knew existed in society and in the classroom. The setting up of supplementary schools, with its emphasis on high educational standards, bears witness to this fact. The apparent contradiction between the desire for a traditional education and the need for radical politics did not appear to be problematic to the West Indian, working class community, who found it a logical stance in the light of their migrant experience and the racism they had encountered. Ms Arnold rationalises these seemingly opposite views in the following passage:

" I does get real angry when they say the Queen's prejudice, she invited us here. I remember the day my friend brought a Gazette and showed me the headline, "Immigrants Welcome, Queen welcomes Immigrants". We was sitting under a tree in the shade, that's when I make up me

<sup>46</sup> This included a disciplinarian approach to ensure that the child did their studies.

<sup>47</sup> Rutter (1975, 1982) notes that West Indian parents were very involved in their children's education. He found that among the parents interviewed many had taken their children to the library in the last three months and also bought books for them.

<sup>48</sup> 'Conservative' in the sense that they did not hold 'radical' beliefs, adhering strongly to the notion of a meritocracy.

mind to come. She invited us here, how can they be prejudiced if they ask us to come? She is Head of State in the West Indies. The problem is they don't know their history here, these English people." (sic)

However, Mrs Arnold went on to explain the reality of life and bringing up children in this country and in so doing presented a different ideological position:

" Its bad, real bad ...The school has a lot of it (racism). I know because it was real difficult to get Verne in the school...there are so few blacks there and you know the reason why. I know the teachers are racist, but you must be careful because they are the teachers and until you leave that is a problem. Them can be vengeful and harm your child's prospects, this is a real racist place." (sic)

Parents were also aware of the problems faced by black youth but did not associate the difficulties they encountered with the police with anything other than racism and state coercion. Despite their disciplinarian values, which often prompted them to complain of the laziness of young people, parents were aware of the political issues involved. Mrs Davis talked about the bad media publicity blacks get and the level of police harassment which they encounter:

" I tell you there's no wonder there so much trouble. They (the police) really ask for it the way they treat us black people. But the way the papers report it you'll never know what really go on, you see. In Brixton I was in the middle of it. The things I saw...pushing two black boys into a van, then they just start kicking and beating upon them on the floor. A next boy he run up to help but they just turn on him too. Man, I just turn and ran." (daughter listening says " I hate them .")

### The Second Generation's Orientation to Education

Nancy Foner (1979), in the late 1970s, makes the following observation about the orientation of West Indian migrants' children towards education in the years to come. She writes:

" The struggle to get a good education may, however, become a central focus in their lives; the second generation set their goals higher than their parents have and measure their achievements and prospects by English rather than Jamaican standards." (p.217)

Indeed, as Foner predicted, the second generation, West Indian girls in the study did show a strong commitment to education and in particular identified with the meritocratic ideal as a means of 'getting on'. This was clearly illustrated in the girls' optimistic statements:

" Black people work hard and want to really make something of themselves. I want to get on in my life .." (Maureen: aspiration social work; mother: office worker; father: carpenter)

" I believe you can really change things for yourself, it is up to you but you really can." (Laurie: aspiration sports woman; mother: secretary; father: BT engineer)

The strategy of 'staying on' in pursuit of educational qualifications was the way many working class black woman expressed their aspirations for 'getting on' in life, as the following extracts show:

" My plans are to stay in education until I get my 'A' levels. Then I plan to go to college to become a social worker.." (Sherry, mother: social worker; father: BR engineer; ability high)

" I want to stay on and then go to college so that I might study journalism." (Veronica, mother: cook; father: mechanic; ability average)

While West Indian working class parental attitudes were an important factor in motivating the girls, there was substantial evidence that the specific choice of career was greatly influenced by a realistic self-appraisal of their academic capabilities. Girls did not aspire to careers that they felt they would not be able to achieve whatever the parental occupational status, as a comparison between the following statements show:

" I would like to do medicine especially something to do with women and the curing of disease." ( Isabel, mother : midwife; father: labourer; ability high)

" I would like to be a legal secretary and work in an office" ( Joy, mother: insurance officer; father: accountant; ability low).

" If I leave school I would go to college and do a BEC general course after that I would do a BEC national and then HND so then I have got a wide range of jobs which I will be able to do." ( Selma, mother: nurse; father: telephone engineer; ability average)

" I would like to study and learn about computers. I'd like to do data processing as it is something interesting and that I will be able to do." ( Sharon, mother :cleaner; father: absent; ability average)

It was notable however, that the higher the social status of the parent the more likely that the daughter would choose to go on into higher education, rather than further education, as a means of qualifying for a profession. Several statements, set against the context of their parental status, illustrated this process of exclusion:

" I would like to go on and do a degree in psychology, preferably at a polytechnic." ( Jackie, mother: cook; father: welder; ability high)

" I would like to do a BA degree in business studies, in accounts and then study for a chartered accountant degree at University." (Floya, mother: playgroup leader; father: chartered accountant; ability high)

In this way social class can be seen to have some effect on the accessibility of higher education. However, as Tomlinson (1983b) in her study on black women in higher education shows, many of the young women at university were from working class social backgrounds. Indeed the aspiration for a university education was not exclusive to girls of professional parents, and several young black women from working class backgrounds did indicate that they would like to go on to university:

" I would like to stay on at school and do 3 'A' levels. After I would like to get into a university and get a degree

in law. I intend to be a barrister and practise law"  
(Ruby, mother :nursery teacher; father: clerk; ability high)

" I want to do a degree course somewhere that I know..."  
(Francis, mother: social worker; father: postman ;ability high)

Coming from single parent backgrounds did not necessarily limit the girls' aspirations, especially if their ability was high:

" I have already got six 'O' levels . Now I am doing three more and some 'A' levels so that I can study interior design. I want to go to the London School of Furniture."  
(Deborah, mother: local government officer; father: absent (postman); ability high)

" I would like, finally to do art therapy, after doing a course at Goldsmiths' (University of London)" (Avril, mother dead; father: Painter/decorator ;ability high)

Nonetheless, the goal of higher education among black working class girls of high ability was the exception rather than the rule. It was notable that the majority of young black women did aspire to Further Education College whatever their ability, the majority seeking work in a social/ caring profession ( see Chapter 6).

An explanation for high black female aspirations has been attempted by Fuller (1982). While she was right to observe the girls' commitment and resoluteness in their efforts to achieve their goals, she was less correct in describing this positive orientation as a 'sub-culture of resistance', the outcome of a reaction to negative parental and societal pressures toward black females. The explanation for their positive orientation seemed to lie within an understanding of the transmission of the West Indian migrant working class ethos, the values of which had filtered down to the girls from their parents, and had

subsequently been modified <sup>49</sup>. Many of the young women in the study described how their parents had an important role to play in influencing not only their cultural identity, but also in shaping their specific educational outlooks, both of which combined to make them what they were today:

" Both my parents brought me up in the West Indian way. They brought me and are still bringing me up in the way their parents brought them up. I would like to pass this West Indian tradition down to my children so that this tradition lives on and never dies." (Karen, mother: nurse; father: LRT maintenance)

" As we grew up my parents used to talk about 'back home ' and how it differed from England. Although I was born in England I always felt attached to my parents' country...if our parents did not pass down some of their culture black people would lose out on a lot of things eg. who their 'ansister' (sic) was, and how they lived and how they differed from white people and their culture." (Merle, mother: cleaner; father: bus conductor)

The Church was also an important part of West Indian working class life, and it was not uncommon to find the girls expressing a religious influence in their career decision.<sup>50</sup> One girl stated:

" I would like to be a successful business woman with God's help, it gives me strength to know He guides me." (Janet, mother: teacher; father: carpenter)

Several other girls who stated that God was a major source of encouragement also taught at Sunday school on the weekend.

<sup>49</sup> For example parents often had 'conservative' social values particularly when it came to such matters as inter-marriage and family respect. Many second generation girls with their experiences of being black British wished to challenge many of what were often regarded as redundant values, as the following statement suggests: " If I was to bring a dreadlock home, my mother go mad ! She'd say, ' he not descent; what will the family think !'...my mum is more against a Rasta than a white boy, but its not about the colour or the hair but what a person is like." (Merle)

<sup>50</sup> See Justus (1985) on the central role of the Church in West Indian society. Tomlinson (1983b:73) also notes the influence of the Church and God on black female aspirations in higher education.

Being second generation, West Indian, meant, that unlike their parents, these young women also saw themselves as British. Having a black British identity was not considered problematic.<sup>51</sup> The girls had few illusions about being accepted as being British, and maintained a second-generation modified form of 'West Indianess' among them, as the following statements reveal:

" I may have been born here but I do not feel that I am English, simply because I have not been given the chance to feel English. I do feel that I am black though, but that I live in England." ( Karen, mother: nurse; father: LRT maintenance)

" I am me because my parents have taught me a lot of their ways, and being brought up in a British society has combined to make me what I am today." (Julie, mother: cook; father: absent)

"I have only ever lived in England, but my parents are Dominican. I think England is a nice country but the people are false. Because one minute they are talking to you and the next they are talking behind your back, which is not very nice. In England there are a lot of prejudices which you do not find in other countries. So even though I have a British passport I don't only class myself as British but as Dominican too." (Denise, mother: cook; father: unemployed)

The girls were aware of managing the separate spheres of school and home life. In the following extract of a classroom conversation the teacher asks the black girls in the class about the problems of a 'generation gap':

Ms James: "But do you not find there to be different aspirations between you and your parents ?"

Dianne: "You get used to it"

Merle: "You don't do it at home, you'll get told off, but you do it at school , you don't bother."

<sup>51</sup> In answer to the question, " who do you most admire" : 49% of the girls in the sample said that the person they admired most was themselves. This was in contrast to their white peers, only 25% of whom gave this answer.

The strong emphasis on discipline and doing 'what was expected of you' in the West Indian household was acknowledged by the girls to be part of their culture and ultimately practised by their parents in their best interests.<sup>52</sup>

" My mother came here to get a better education for her children, some times if you feel you don't want to go to school... well you just have to feel you want to" (Dianne, mother: dinner lady; father: BR ticket collector)

" Back home its stricter there , beating and all that. Sometimes it's not good . They expect too much of you for your age . Beat you if you don't pass a test and all that, but I tell you it makes you work!" (Ann, mother: nurse; father: plumber)

" My parents brought me up very well, a little bit restricted but it doesn't bother me." (Dawn, mother: cook; father: unemployed)

It was found that the girls held similar expectations about discipline and control as their parents. This accounted for their often stated preference for strong discipline in the classroom, which they identified as 'control', and organized, structured lessons which they regarded as 'good teaching'. In the girls' statements it was clear what they considered a good education was:

" Since I have been here things have got so bad. Miss Grey (the Headmistress) has got no control, things are out of hand I would say." (Kara: upper sixth form student)

" There is no discipline downstairs (i.e lower school)...it's disgusting." (Francis: upper sixth form student)

As a consequence of their educational expectations, it was not uncommon to find that girls were often disillusioned with the type of teaching they were receiving. It was clear that the

<sup>52</sup> Bagley (1984:228) in his study showed that parental punitiveness and control among Jamaican girls was associated with more 'field dependence' (i.e. greater cognitive skills in analysis and structuring). This finding, he points out was contrary to expectation.

young women had developed a strategy by which they gauged those lessons and teachers that were worth listening to. The girls were obviously bored and uninterested in the 'liberal teaching' approach of some teachers. In these often relaxed and less structured classes the girls would sit in the back of the room and carry on with 'prep' neither being disruptive nor participating. This was also the case with teachers whom the girls judged to be indifferent or uncaring (often felt to be racist; see Chapter 8), and lessons they considered a waste of time.<sup>53</sup> Fuller (1982) suggests that the negative classroom stance which she also observed among the girls in her study was a manifestation of the 'subcultural' resistance to authority prevalent among alienated black females. However there was little evidence to support this view of their often obvious classroom dissent. The girls appeared to be getting on with their own work as a means of rationalising what they considered to be unproductive and wasteful lesson time. Their response to certain (though not all)<sup>54</sup> teachers was the outcome of the girls' particular and unique orientation to education, which was clearly the product of their West Indian social class background.

## II. The Black Female Working Class Orientation to Work

<sup>53</sup> See Chapter 7 & 9 on the standards of teaching and classroom reactions, in particular of the girls in the lower streams who felt classes were often a form of containment. One girl explained: " I am sure if you put the black kids in the high groups they would work but as they put blacks in a low group they will be bound to do no work. I have been streamed low when I know I could do better" (Gina)

<sup>54</sup> Some teachers were respected and admired by the girls. The response to these lessons was markedly different to those the girls did not regard as 'good teachers'.

" Women are socialised to be resourceful. Each succeeding generation learns from the preceeding one what it takes to survive in an environment often unfavorable to women"  
(Justus 1985;447)

While there appeared to be no direct association between the maternal social class occupational status and daughters' aspirations (see previous discussion on maternal social class influence), data from other sources indicated that the second generation girls were greatly influenced by their mothers' work experience. The way in which the previous female migrant generation affected their daughters' orientation to work, was clearly illustrated in the statements and decisions made by young black women. Within the context of a cultural consideration of social class, a unique female work tradition is revealed which clearly has an important influence on the aspirations of succeeding generations.

If we begin with an investigation into the characteristics of this unique black female work tradition, the distinctive nature of their experience vis-a-vis their white working class counterparts becomes evident. In the study 84% of the black mothers worked, 69% in full time employment. This contrasted sharply with the other mothers in the study, of whom only 46% worked, 28% full-time. White women were also almost twice as likely to be unpaid workers (29%) - a type of work often referred to as housework - than black women (13%).

Despite the limited scale of this investigation this was by no means an unrepresentative sample. The PSI (Brown 1984) statistics and the Labour Force Survey (OPCS 1987) revealed similar trends in the national population. For example PSI stated

that 74% of black women in the U.K worked, and of these women only 29% were in part-time employment. In the indigenous population, 46% of the women worked and most of these were in part-time employment, (46%).

The black female cohort differed from the white women in the sample in other ways too, in that black women were more likely to head their households. Both in terms of the traditional definition of a female headed household (i.e. one where a husband is not present); and according to the more equitable definition (i.e. the most economically committed and better situated in the occupational hierarchy). This study showed that 45% of West Indian women headed their household compared to 11% of white women.

Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow (1977), in their study of Barbadian society, make this comment about the West Indian female orientation to work, they write:

" Women are expected not only to contribute to their own and their children's support but also to acquire and build separate economic resources, control their own earnings and use them as they see fit. Men readily accept the idea of their wives working; in fact a man might boast of his wife's position and earnings." (p 307)

Clearly the evidence does suggest that West Indian women do have different relationships within their families and, in particular, with the males in these families, that contribute to a unique working tradition. Barrow suggests that men and relationships with men were an important part of enhancing female economic autonomy and were not a restriction in the traditional Euro-centered sense. Nor, as some authors suggest (Wilson 1969) only a means of gaining social respectability. Explanations as to why

this may be so point to the central concept of an ideology of meritocracy in West Indian working class life, in which both men and women appear to participate equally. As Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow (1977) observe:

" The position a woman acquires often results from her own achievements rather than her spouse and women tend to be individually ranked even if they are married. Although both sexes speak critically of status ranking and its negative role in the social life of the community, status mobility is in fact a major concern. Women as well as men are pre-occupied with finding a way of 'rising' a notch above within the social hierarchy, and both look to the occupational system of doing so." (p. 302)

Lee (1982) makes the following interesting observation with regard to the ideology of meritocracy and its effects on the equality of opportunity between the sexes. He writes with regard to the Irish situation:

" The less a culture emphasises merit, the more resistant to equality are the males likely to be... if only because the supremacy of the dominant males does not depend on superior merit. They are therefore likely to feel vulnerable to what they perceive as a threat posed not so much by women, as by ability in women." (p. 10)

In a culture that places a value on merit, such as the West Indian working class culture in Britain, this syndrome that Lee describes in the Irish situation does not appear to arise in the black British context. It would seem from the evidence given by the males in the study (see Chapter 6: for accounts of fathers and young men concerning women working) that female labour market participation is not perceived as a threat to their own economic and social status.

Barrow (1986) also moves some way toward accounting for the characteristicly positive labour market orientation and tradition of economic independence evident among working class, West Indian women in the Caribbean. She argues that the struggle for

economic autonomy was a necessary strategy for survival, a form of self-reliance should other forms of economic support fail, or be insufficient to meet their often most basic requirements.

Barrow makes the important observation that the black women's rationale for working was not about gaining social mobility, or even escaping from poverty, but rather a means to:

"..achieve mere survival and mark time with occasional improvements in standards of living." (p.170).

It could be argued that this strategy, evident among the migrant generation, has been passed down and modified by the second generation who themselves, seeking a modicum of upward mobility, still appear to employ a similar rationale.

In the interview data provided by the young black women, strong feelings about the need to work was evident (see Chapter 6). In their expression of this desire, these women located the essential role of their mothers (or female guardian or relative) as an important inspiration, as the following statements show:

" I want to be like my mother, well liked , sociable, outgoing and most of all successful." (Joanna, aspiration: teacher; mother: secretary)

" Both my mother and sister do book-keeping and accounts. I would like to follow in their footsteps and do as well in my job as they have done in theirs..." (Trudi, aspiration: office work; mother: book-keeper)

" My mother has had to work hard to bring us up, and she brings us up in the West Indian ways. She's had to take shit at work, but I think she's brave ..." (Anita, aspiration: social work; mother: cook)

In response to the question, " who do you admire most?", a total of 20% of the young black women positively indicated their mother, other female relative (e.g. grandmother, aunt or sister) or female friend. This was in contrast to their white female

peers of whom only 8% said that they were influenced by any female associate, whether mother or sister.

When asked if they would like to do the same type of work as their mothers, however, the girls nearly always replied 'no'. It was clear, therefore, that it was not the mothers' actual job that influenced the girls as much as their mothers' ( and other black females') attitudes and rational strategies. This aspect of occupational influence can be seen if a comparison is made between actual maternal occupation and daughters' aspirations.

For example, while 20% of the black girls' mothers were employed as nurses, only half as many of their daughters wished to pursue such a career (10%). In fact, when asked what job did they most disliked, 32% of the young black women indicated that nursing was the job they would like the least, suggesting a reason for the decision was the type of work and that they knew of women, often their mother, who did it.

While a large number of mothers were engaged in unskilled and semi-skilled 'caring' and 'service' work, (for example, 27% of the mothers were employed as home-helps, dinner ladies and cleaners), virtually none of their daughters showed any inclination to undertake such work. The only work that they desired to do that was classified as unskilled and semi-skilled was associated with child-care. Another popular choice being made by the girls that did not reflect their mothers' labour market experience was their desire to do office work. While 20% stated their desire to do

such work, only 10% of their mothers had been successful in securing such jobs.

On the whole the careers being selected by the girls reflected a much broader range of jobs than those in which their mothers were currently employed. Jobs in journalism; artistic careers of various sorts, jobs in business and the medical and academic professions, were some of the careers chosen by the girls which their mothers had little experience of.

### Conclusion

A conventional examination of the influence of social class, examining paternal, maternal and heads of households' occupational status on young black womens' career choices, demonstrated that by this method no association could be found. Young black women, whatever the occupational status of their parents, maintained, in general high social class aspirations.

However, a detailed consideration of West Indian, working class, migrant cultural characteristics revealed that, in fact, young black women were strongly influenced by their parents orientation to work and education. Positive attitudes to education and the lack of restrictions on female labour market participation within West Indian families, it could be argued, account for the high social class aspirations of these girls.

## CHAPTER 6

OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE AND THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF GENDER

The marginalisation of girls in schools has been a central area of concern for feminist educationalists in recent years (Wolpe 1975; Sharpe 1976; Stanworth 1977; MacDonald 1980; Clarricoates 1983; Lees 1986). The effect of this marginalisation on occupational outcomes for girls has also been the focus of much attention (McRobbie 1978; Roberts 1983; Chisholm 1984; VanDyke 1985; Griffin 1985; Wallace 1987). However these studies, while recognising the complexities of the process that lead to gender marginalisation,<sup>1</sup> fail to account for the diversity of the female experience.<sup>2</sup>

It is important, therefore, to investigate female occupational choice processes with specific reference to young black women. In this chapter I shall look at two aspects of the second generation, West Indian, female experience in British schools. Firstly, I shall examine the nature and characteristics of femininity among the young black women in the study; and, secondly, in the light of these specific forms of black

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<sup>1</sup> Walkerdine and Walden (1982), for example, do discuss the specific situation of girls and mathematical performance.

<sup>2</sup> While there are specific studies relating to girls of different ethnic and social backgrounds, (see for example Okley (1987) on Public School girls and Fuller (1980) on Afro-Caribbean girls), such studies employ limited 'universalist' explanations about the processes of gender disadvantage (ie. same process is assumed to be applicable for black as for white, for rich as for poor). In so doing they fail to fully account for the diversity of female experience. See, Brah (1988).

femininity, I shall discuss the rationale behind young black womens' job aspirations.

In an attempt to establish the specific cultural context of gender for these young women, I shall in Part I of this chapter, begin by comparing and contrasting the second generation Irish female experience with that of their West Indian female peers.

The cultural construction of femininity has many consequences for the schooling of young black women. In Part II of this chapter I investigate these outcomes and consider the extent to which our understanding of this specific form of black femininity contributes to an explanation of the differential occupational aspirations that are evident, not only between sexes, but also between cultures.

## **PART I**

### BLACK AND WHITE BRITISH MIGRANTS: FEMALE ORIENTATION TO LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION.

The culture of femininity among working class girls, it is argued, (Mc Robbie 1978; Roberts 1983; Wallace 1987), is the central causal mechanism by which working class girls come to take their place as dual labourers <sup>3</sup> in the production and reproduction of labour power in a capitalist economy. However, this hypothesis, concerning the perpetuation of sexual

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<sup>3</sup> By dual labourers I refer to the domestic division of labour. (see Delphy 1981)

inequalities within the labour market,<sup>4</sup> is inappropriate when called upon to account for the reproduction of racial, sexual and class distinctions among black women.. As a theoretical paradigm, this model cannot adequately address the fundamentally different nature of the black female experience. This is because as a theory it is in essence culturally specific; making ethnocentric assumptions about the way in which culture, and in particular the role of the family, interacts with the structure of the labour market.

However, as is so often the case in sociological accounts of inequality,<sup>5</sup> the cultural 'universalism' of this theoretical paradigm, has rarely been questioned. Indeed it forms the basis of the major explanations of black female labour market orientations, and as discussed in Chapter 2, often results in the misrepresentation of this experience; a consequence of its over-emphasis on the concept of 'motherhood' (see Fuller 1982; Eggleston et al 1986; Riley 1985). The inadequacies of this dominant and pervasive<sup>6</sup> explanation on the reproduction of

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<sup>4</sup> In the mid to late 1970's the cultural perspective was a popular explanation for the reproduction of class. (see Willis 1977; Hebidge 1979; Corrigan 1979). Though the paradigm of this thesis was clearly androcentric it was adapted for studies on women by authors who acknowledged the fact that many of the early studies omitted women (McRobbie 1980).

<sup>5</sup> A major example of ethnocentricity in sociological analysis has been stratification studies (see Chapter 5). Here convention assumes that all women occupy a secondary economic status within the family (Goldthorpe 1983).

<sup>6</sup> It is dominant in as much as feminist literature, one of the few bodies of scholarship to have pioneered the issue of gender inequality, almost exclusively uses the concept of the culture of femininity as a means to account for the reproduction of sexual inequality. It is pervasive in that authors addressing the issue of race and gender unconsciously adopt this causal explanation. (Fuller 1982; Griffin 1985; Riley 1985)

gender disadvantage become clear upon a closer examination of the work of McRobbie (1978 ) who exemplifies this paradigm.

McRobbie (1978a, 1978b) argues that appropriate gender behaviour for working class girls throughout their adolescent years is orientated towards their ultimate raison d'être, that is, 'winning' a man and getting married. What directs working class girls 'freely' into marriage , childrearing and part-time labour are specific cultural notions of femininity and romance. The ideology of romance, Mc Robbie argues , transforms the material dominance of the male into an illusion of true love. As such these notions of femininity are not arbitrarily imposed from 'above', but as Willis (1977) describes in the context of his 'lads', are the outcome of creative negotiation of contrary material and ideological situations. The acceptance by the girls of their future as home-makers and childrearingers, directs them to specific parts of the labour market structured for the female school leaver, a labour market where general conditions and insecurity reproduce female dependency on other sources of material support. As a consequence of the interaction between the cultural construction of femininity and the labour market, most of the jobs available to women , involve few long-term commitments, or trade off 'glamour'and the possibility of romance against low pay and poor conditions.

### I. The Culture Of Femininity And The Irish British Experience.<sup>7</sup>

The experience of the second generation, Irish girls in the study suggests that there is no reason to doubt the validity of McRobbie's thesis in particular cultural contexts<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, the actions and beliefs of the girls appeared to support McRobbie's model of the cultural reproduction of the sexual division of labour.

Pupils of Irish descent made up a sizable proportion of the cohort (26.6%). The female contingent of this second generation, Irish population, in interviews, consistently expressed their

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<sup>7</sup> There have been several waves of Irish migration to Britain this century. A major wave came in 1950's, as Ryan(1987) observes: "Whole towns in the west of Ireland were denuded of young people who'took to the boat' to England. The Irish economy seemed to offer them little chance of work."(p.15) The girls in this study were mainly the offspring of this , as Jackson (1963) observes, unskilled and traditional (in terms of values) generation. There has been a more recent wave of Irish immigration however, and the young people who make up this present flow should not be confused with the descendents from the previous wave. As Ryan observes, this current generation of migrants , although following in the footsteps of the previous 'exodus', is made up of skilled young men and women seeking work. They are the product of the free education system introduced in the early 1960's in Ireland. "Their expectations have been raised but no provision has been made economically for them."(p.15) This generation who do want change : "Leave behind a society not only with 18% unemployment (30% youth unemployment), but a society which recently rejected divorce and which many see as hypocritical and stifling."(p.13)

<sup>8</sup> The question still remains as to the validity of McRobbie's model. Alternatively Irish girls could be choosing options according to historical exclusion (gender and racial discrimination) and over time rationalised these limited opportunities until they have become part of the cultural orientation of the group.

desire for marriage, having children and looking after a home.<sup>9</sup> For the Irish girls, however, the wish for domestic fulfilment was perceived as incompatible with a permanent commitment to the labour market.

An obvious explanation as to why these girls should juxtapose work with marriage, lies in an examination of their (historically unique) attitudes and values. How they articulated their desires gives some indication of how the cultural construction of femininity can be seen, in some instances, to reproduce labour market disadvantage.

Like the young women of West Indian origin the majority<sup>10</sup> of second generation, Irish girls also saw themselves as still essentially Irish and not British. They were not only very conscious of their ethnic origins, but as migrants they tended to view their cultural 'heritage' in an uncritical and positive light, as the following extracts illustrate:

" I consider my homeland Ireland ....I have been influenced by my parents' background in some sense. Every year my family goes back to Ireland, 'home' as it is called....We are expected to be proud of our Irish background and follow in our ways." (Mary aged 16)

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the wish for marriage, family life etc., did not preclude the desire for labour market participation among all girls. Data indicate a range of differing ethnic attitudes to occupational aspirations and to family life. As other studies have shown ( Parmar 1982; Bhachu 1986) Asian girls had a positive attitude towards work and family.

<sup>10</sup> The minority who did not see themselves as Irish appeared to have adopted British cultural values. Their dissociation with Ireland seemed to be because parental ties were not strong rather than any firm desire to be assimilated into the British culture because of shame or stigma attached to being Irish, as Ullah (1985:313) suggests.

" Both my parents are Irish and I have been brought up in an Irish atmosphere. I refer to Ireland as my home."  
(Eileen aged 16)

" I think I am Irish because I have been brought up to believe in God and follow the Irish way of life because it has been handed down to me from my parents. It could be hereditary even." (Margaret aged 17)

Ullah (1985:318) argues that girls were more likely than boys to adopt 'an Irish identity', as were the lower socio-economic groups. Indeed, the evidence suggested that these mainly working class girls <sup>11</sup> did hold strong views on being Irish. Having an Irish identity had important implications for the labour market participation of the second generation, young Irish women in the study, in that it ensured the maintenance of their traditional values about work and marriage.

What both the indigenous British working class and Irish migrant cultures in the sample had in common was an essentially 'male centred ideology',<sup>12</sup>. Beale (1986) comments on this Irish ideological orientation which persists, despite the influence of the Irish Womens' Movement since 1970. She writes:

" The ideology of the family functions to support male dominated heirarchies, and is another source of continuing oppression for women." (p.190-191)

Just as McRobbie has argued in the case of 'working class girls,' the traditional Irish ideology of marriage, very much alive among the second generation, does have debilitating consequences for

<sup>11</sup> The majority of the mothers of this group were employed in unskilled or semiskilled part-time occupations (eg. dinner ladies ,cleaners, etc), otherwise they were classified as 'unpaid'(ie.housewives).Fathers were on the whole skilled manual labourers (eg.builders ) and unskilled workers.

<sup>12</sup> Barrett and McIntosh (1982) discuss the ideological and actual outcome of the role of the family for women in the specific cultural context of the British family.

the young Irish women living in the UK. Beale again writes of what she calls this 'narrow home-based view of the female role.'

" It is perhaps the treatment of married women, in particularly the mothers, which best indicates the limits to equality of the sexes. It is here that structural inequalities come home to roost in the explanation that mothers will always subsume their interests to those of their husbands and children, and in the idea that once married, a woman and man should adopt fundamentally different roles. For the woman, this all too often means forfeiting her rights to financial independence and to a job, and losing the freedom to make decisions about her own body." ( p. 190)

The girls' career aspirations strongly reinforced their specific cultural concept of femininity.<sup>13</sup> Their statements reflected their partial and often transitory commitment to the labour market, and illustrated the affirmation of their womanhood through the institution of marriage and motherhood.

" I want to be a nursery nurse because I like children and I want to look after them , especially my own." (Linda: aged 16)

" I would really like to be a butition (beautician) because it is a good future for me before I get married." (Maria: aged 16)

Many of the jobs chosen by the girls had less to do with careers and more to do with work <sup>14</sup>. As Kathy, a young Irish girl explained:

" When I leave school I want to work in Woolworths, then I suppose I'll get married."

<sup>13</sup> The career aspirations of second generation Irish girls were noticeably lower in terms of social class and S.E.G. compared to the aspirations of their West Indian peers. They frequently chose 'female type' work such as nursery nurses, shop assistants, beauticians, secretaries, etc.

<sup>14</sup> This is in sharp contrast to girls of West Indian origin who although from a similar migrant background (ie both parental generations migrated for 'a better life' and left their own countries to get improved jobs and opportunities for their children. ( Foner 1979; Ryan 1987) aspired to much more demanding careers.

The girls had inculcated many traditional values which they expressed. A common view was their opinions on child care :

" I'll never never let any one look after my children. You hear all these stories, you know, I'm going to take care of my own." (Linda: aged 16)

Romantic liaisons were common among the boys and girls. Girls often were found reading romantic comics or books in the lesson, and frequently appeared to be preoccupied with discussions of their own or others relationships and intrigues. It was also not uncommon to find girls fighting over a boy. During a maths lesson, for example, a serious and vicious fight erupted between two girls of Irish descent. Apparently hostilities had been brewing for some time, because it was claimed Mary had 'stolen' Shiobhan's boyfriend. Books, and even chairs were hurled across the room, to the accompaniment of some rather obscene language and hair pulling. The girls and their respective 'mates' (friends) <sup>15</sup> were oblivious to the classroom situation and undeterred by any threat of punishment they might receive for disturbing the lesson, (the teacher turned a blind eye).

By fighting, the girls did not conform to the traditional expectations of what is considered to be 'feminine' behaviour. While some argue that the ideology of romance reinforces the passive acceptance of an oppressive social structure (McRobbie 1978a, 1978b), other authors beg to differ in that girls often actively assert their position with regard to proprietorial rights over male partners (Shacklady Smith 1978; Wallace 1987). Some commentators on the subject argue that the ideology of

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<sup>16</sup> In this school there were 'waring gangs' made up of different Catholic sects , mainly Irish . The girls belonged to different gangs.

romance is an expression of sexual desire and its complex inter-relationship with social status (Lees and Cowie 1981).

Nevertheless, all the variations of these cultural explanations still conclude that the ideology of romance in the end reinforces the powerlessness of young women's positions.<sup>16</sup>

The experiences of the second generation, Irish girls in many ways did seem to reflect the traditional cultural attitudes of their parents. To some degree the Catholic school environment reinforced and ensured by one way or another the traditional values. However, the migrant situation had introduced many new experiences for the second generation, which had the effect of modifying the traditional modes of thought prevalent among the girls.

A facet of this new social environment was the issue of inter-racial marriage, and inter-racial relationships, which often spontaneously arose in interviews. Many of the girls had black (Afro-Caribbean) boyfriends and wanted to discuss the issue.

" My parents would react if I came home with a black boy, but they would not be set in their Irish ways and make me marry an Irish boy. Eventually they would have to accept it. Although I'm Irish I'm not set in Irish ways."  
(Geraldine: aged 17)

" In Ireland you don't see many blacks, here you get used to it, learn to live with it." (Kathy: aged 16)

<sup>16</sup> The hostilities aroused between women by jealousy and the assertion of proprietorial rights over males during adolescence seems to inhibit the development of solidarity between female friends. In so doing this can be seen to have the effect of increasing the isolation of women and encouraging the nuclear family arrangement. This in turn decreases the support available for child care and so further inhibits the chances of full-time work and economic independence.

" I think it's not the colour but what the person is like ....but my Mun she didn't agree when my sister married a Malaysian." (Maria: aged 16)

" My Mum said its ok once they are Catholic. But say if you wanted to live with someone, not marry them, she'll go mad." (Eileen: aged 16)

Another aspect of change was the fact that many young people realised that they could not bring up a family on one wage. Some, though not all, second generation, Irish boys said they would want their wives to work. However, this topic often caused a great deal of argument, with the girls especially objecting. Even though the girls openly rejected the idea of working when married, change for the second generation girls was apparent in their willingness to challenge unacceptable aspects of the present-day, youth labour market, such as low wages, unemployment, and the YTS programme. It was an irony that signalled change that many girls who had expressed traditional values with regard to marriage and the family on the one hand, should articulate their dissatisfaction at their economic future on the other.<sup>17</sup>

The hardships of the migrant parents, in particular the mothers, had not gone unnoticed by their daughters. Second generation, Irish girls frequently made reference to their mothers' struggle,<sup>18</sup> and to the fact that they did not wish to suffer the same fate:

<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 9 for Kathy's comment to the YTS representative on low wages and 'slave labour'.

<sup>18</sup> By virtue of the time of immigration, the Irish families in the study were all young. The girls often had many younger siblings.

" It's thankless bringing up children. That all my mother has done, and you should see where its got her. Nowhere."  
(Ann: aged 16)

" I remember my mother having post-natal depression, so bad. Thats how I know how you can feel towards your children. I think marriage, children and all that is a waste." .(Marge: aged 16)

### Conclusion

The second generation girls, by upholding their traditional values, can be seen to be reproducing their unequal labour market position. The explanation provided by the notion of the 'culture of femininity' seems in this instance to be an appropriate analysis. This notion hinges on the subjectively-constructed ideology of romantic love and the acceptance of marriage as a culturally valued institution. However, as the second and third generations begin to question the economic and even cultural rationality of marriage,<sup>19</sup> as in some cases it is clearly happening, the causal explanation offered by this thesis for the reproduction of the female labour market begins to break down. If girls do not accept the ideology that ultimately confines them to certain sections of the labour market and especially the domestic labour market, then how can the perpetuation of a sexually (and also racially) segregated labour market be explained? Would a sexually divisive economy perish with the decline of Catholic

<sup>19</sup> Several girls contemplated single parenthood as an economically rational and viable life-style. (Although this was a more prevalent option among the Afro-Caribbean girls, the Irish girls were becoming increasingly open to the idea. Pheonix 1988a in her study of teenage pregnancy suggests that the attitudes of both black and white working class women were indistinguishable. Liebow 1967 and Farley and Bianchi 1985:26, have suggested that female headed families could be an economically viable strategy in the context of male unemployment. Many girls in my study, some with liaisons with black boys, thought that living together was preferable to marriage, and saw no personal stigma attached to such a decision (although they were aware of parental objections).

morality and the demise of the institution of marriage? Surely not. As the West Indian experience bears out, black women, regardless of their cultural orientation towards the ideology of romance, the institution of marriage, or their objections to racism still remain confined to a sexually as well as racially organised labour market. The explanation, it would seem, does not lie within a culturalist framework. The evidence seems to suggest the need for a more structural approach; a perspective that takes account of labour market rationale and highlights the perpetuation of sexual and racial inequalities.

## II. Work And Womanhood: The West Indian British Experience

While a general desire towards economic dependency prevailed among the young white working class women in the sample, there was no evidence that this cultural orientation existed among the black working class women that were interviewed.<sup>20</sup> Young black women of all abilities and social backgrounds, with a wide variety of career aspirations, reiterated their commitment to full-time work, and their desire for economic independence. On the basis of this evidence alone there is little justification for adopting an analytical framework that emphasises the centrality of an oppressive form of femininity, which the prevailing theories on the black female experience do. I do not wish to dwell on a discussion of the literature on black women

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<sup>20</sup> Other studies support these findings. See, for example, Wallace (1987:83) who found the white girls in her study ultimately expected a domestic life. Eggleston (1986:94) also found that white girls more likely to stop work when having a child. On the other hand Fuller (1982), Stone(1982), Dex (1983), Phizacklea (1983), Riley(1985) found young black women to striving for economic independence and more likely to engage in full-time work.

here as it has been dealt with in detail else where in the thesis (see literature reviews Chapter 2 and 3); suffice to say that it has resulted in the misrepresentation of the black female experience. What I shall attempt to do here is to present an alternative theoretical account of the positive labour market orientation of the young black women in the study.

The key to why this situation of positive orientation and commitment to work should prevail within what is often described as the psychologically and materially oppressive institution of marriage (Barrett and McIntosh 1982),<sup>21</sup> was provided by the girls themselves. The statements they made showed that they expected to work just as their sisters, mothers, aunts and grandmothers had done for generations before them, without, and this is the important difference, the encumbrance of male dissent. It was not uncommon to find among the girls in the study statements such as these:

" I would like just like to be an independent lady. Not dependent on any one, especially a man." (Joy, aged 16, aspiration: legal assistant)

"I don't want to rely on anyone. What I want is a good job as I would like my life to be as comfortable as possible, and have a nice environment to live in so my children can grow up with everything they require." (Laurie, aged 16, aspiration: journalist)

" I'll get married when I'm 30 or 35 in the future, after I've done something for myself." (Floya, aged 16, aspiration: data processor)

<sup>21</sup> Socialist feminist theorists have argued that marriage in the West Indian context is "no more than a prestige conferring act" (Phizacklea 1982:100). The issues surrounding the various cultural interpretations of the 'family', 'motherhood', and 'marriage', have been the subject of an ongoing black and white feminist debate. (see Barrett and McIntosh 1985; Ramazanoglu, Kazi, Lees and Mirza 1986; Bhavnani and Coulson 1986.

" My sister has moved out, got a nice little flat to herself  
 .....having your own place..a little job not getting  
 married, miss, just having your boyfriend... well living  
 ..no..well popping round to see you...that what I'd like."  
 (Debra, aged 16, aspiration: designer)

Anita, one of the girls in the study who became pregnant, spoke of her attitude to marriage :

" I know for sure that one thing is sure , that I don't want to get married ... he says we should, but I feel we are capable enough to make our own decisions and own plans after all we are adult people, why does everyone else have to interfere so much . If you ignore others you will be alright but in life you can't....marriage no way...we've put in for a flat though ... I'm not rushing into anything."

This did not mean as Riley (1985:69) seems to suggest in her analysis of similar types of statements, that young black girls were pursuing a course of aggressive assertion of their femininity (which in the case of black girls is interpreted as female dominance) at the expense of all else, especially permanent male relationships. Nor, as Fuller (1982:96) suggests a manifestation of a 'going it alone' strategy. In my opinion what the girls were articulating was a much more subtle ideological orientation.

Unlike their white peers, who had evidently inculcated the dominant ideology that women only take on major economic roles when circumstances prevent their menfolk from doing so,<sup>22</sup> the black girls held no such belief about the marginality of their economic participation and commitment to the family. Providing

<sup>22</sup> This, it must be stressed is essentially an ideology which is not necessarily borne out by the facts. Many white women, even though they adhere to the oppressive ideology that reinforces the perpetuation of domestic labour, in reality work full-time (See Brown 1984 : 46%). See also Moss and Brannen (1988), whose findings show that women with young children experience guilt when attempting to work.

for the children and the household was regarded as a joint responsibility.

Evidence of this ideological orientation was clear in the data. When interviewed on the subject of marriage and women's work, the young black women in the study agreed that women should work (regardless of child-rearing responsibilities) and often spoke of their mothers' working, which was discussed invariably in terms of hardship and sacrifice. However, they also stated that while they wanted to work, they did not wish for a repetition of their mothers experiences, and always gave a unanimous "no" to the question "would you like to be like your mum and do the same sort of work?"

The observation of positive commitment to the labour market was further supported in the finding that virtually all the black girls responded positively to the prospect of having a full-time career upon leaving school compared to 80 % of their white female peers. The following statements were common examples of the sentiments expressed by the girls:

" My mum has worked hard to give us things, and to bring us up. They want to give you all the things they never had .....I suppose I'll do the same for my children, I mean give them what's right" (Annette, aged 16, aspiration: nurse; mother: auxiliary nurse.)

" I think it is important for a woman to work , to provide for your family is an important thing to do." (Karen, aged 16, aspiration: computer programmer: father welder)

"...even if you have kids you have to work. I sometimes feel sorry for my sister's kids. She leaves them with a minder. She works in the council or, I don't know, something like that. they don't even know who their mother is...one day I heard Damian call the minder mum. I don't want that for my kids. But it's like this if you don't work what will you do? Stay home and knit? You'll be useless to everybody."

"If I don't work I'll go mad ... You've got to make something of yourself because in the end no-one cares".

"Its important to work and to bring up your family as best you can. If it is your family I think it is your responsibility."

" Work is as equally important in marriage, or your relationship. I don't care if its marriage or not, whatever, I think it's important."

Furthermore the West Indian boys in the study, had no objections to their future partners working <sup>23</sup>. They were in full support of their womenfolk being gainfully employed, as the following statements illustrate:

" My mum, she's a cook and she looks after me and my brother...I think if I got married, I don't see no difference, I don't see it any other way really." (Davis, aged 16, aspiration: armed forces)

" Any woman of mines got to see about herself anyway, it ain't gonna bother me, but I ain't keeping no woman that's for sure." (Maurice, aged 16, aspiration: electrician)

" You must be kidding ! ...of course she's gonna work. If she don't work she don't eat! (laughs) Anyway, I ain't getting married." (Leroy, aged 17, aspiration: plumbing/central heating)

The boyfriend of one of the young black women in the study, Anita who at the age of 16 became pregnant, had a distinctly supportive and encouraging attitude to her moving ahead in her career, as he explained:

" a woman must can and must do all she can...but I's believe having children is very important...its good to have kids young and enjoy your self....you dont have to take time out to do it or stop nothing ...Of course she will be set back though, and we have discussed this, I told her to not to stop school, exams are important...she can go onto college, you know, yeh, but she got to have "O" levels or she set right back and she'll have to start from the begining, I told her not to stop." ( Winston, aged 23, games supervisor at the local sports centre.)

<sup>23</sup> Eggleston et al (1986:95) show Afro-Caribbean boys least likely of all ethnic and white groups to want their wives to stay at home upon having a child.

The issue of relative economic and social autonomy between the sexes, should not be confused with the matter of the sharing of domestic labour or the permanency of conjugal relationships, as is so often the case. The one, economic independence, does not imply the other, marriage and housework.<sup>24</sup> That West Indian men do not equally participate in household tasks is well documented, as is the tendency towards instability of conjugal relationships (Justus 1985; Moses 1985; Powell 1986;).<sup>25</sup> These facts, however, do not impair joint responsibility toward consanguineal offspring or children within a consensual relationship. Relationships where joint responsibility towards the household within the context of relative autonomy between the sexes are a common feature of West Indian life (Sutton and Maikesky-Barrow 1977:

<sup>24</sup> Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow (1977:317) found in their study that the centrality of Barbadian women in the domains of kinship and domestic life did not conflict with either economic participation or active involvement in the non-domestic realms of community and social life. They argue that, as a consequence of slavery, the domestic sphere has a very different meaning to the black woman than the white. They write: " While much of the literature on sex-roles views the domestic sphere as an area of confinement that is associated with women and their dependent status, for the slave population, the domestic area was the one area of life that for both sexes was associated with human freedom and autonomy. Under the extreme conditions of slavery it acquired a special meaning." (p. 297)

<sup>25</sup> The description of the black family as having a 'male centred ideology is based largely on the evidence of black male non participation in the domestic sphere. It is important to note, at this point that there seems to be a contradictory state of affairs with regard to research on the status of the woman in the black family, which can result in a great deal of confusion. On the one hand, it has been argued that what exists is a matrifocal, female dominated structure (Fuller 1982), and on the other hand the family ideological orientation is often described as 'male centred' (Justus 1985; Moses 1985). These two fundamentally divergent theoretical interpretations of the ideological dynamics of the black family have evolved as a consequence of the confused interpretation of the two essentially different aspects of family life.

311-2; Dann 1987:25-30).<sup>26</sup> In the study there was no evidence that black men were considered marginal in the lives of young black women. 79 % of West Indian households in the study, to which the girls belonged had both a male and female adult sharing the parenting role (for white girls 90 % belonged to two-parent families). Of the 11% who had only one parent present, 2% were male-headed households, a feature not found among the white families in the study.

The existence of joint responsibility is more widespread than most sociological commentators of varying ideological persuasions care to acknowledge.<sup>27</sup> This can be argued on several counts. Firstly, as evidence of joint economic responsibility, there are almost equal numbers of black men and women in the labour market, compared to the relatively unequal situation among the white

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<sup>26</sup> It is also a common feature of black American life. The literature on the black condition in the U.S.A describes what in essence are male/female relationships of relative autonomy and independence between the sexes. However these relationships have been interpreted within an ethnocentric paradigm, and are described in comparative terms to the dominant white society's values and family structures. The language (eg.out-of-wedlock births) and particular choice of emphasis (eg.marriage instability and teenage pregnancy), and causal assumptions,(eg male unemployment and female labour market participation), betray this shortcoming and further pathologise the black family.(see, for example, the work W.J.Wilson (1987))

<sup>27</sup> Both conventional authors in race relations as well as more radical commentators have each had their own very different interests in perpetuating the myth of the demise of the black family. The conventionalists in an effort to secure the damaging notion of the weak black family, and the radical (often black) commentators in their effort to repudiate this thesis, argue that the black male has been disenfranchised from his right to work and this accounts for the high incidence of black male absenteeism and the resultant dominant black female figure. Although persuasive, this latter claim has serious repercussions for the maintenance of an essentially pathological explanation for black female economic participation.

majority.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, while a high incidence of single motherhood is reported among black families (ie. relative to white: See, for example U.K. Brown 1984; U.S.A. Farley 1984; Wilson 1987), the numbers are relatively small in comparison to the incidence of stable conjugal unions that do actually exist in the black community.<sup>29</sup> If these figures are considered in their correct context (ie. not a comparative black-white analysis as is the convention), family stability still remains the overriding norm among black families (ie 78% compared to 13% is a significant difference: Brown 1984.). Thus the majority image of most black men as feckless and irresponsible remains largely a product of media stereotyping and academic misrepresentation (Phoenix 1988b).<sup>30</sup>

The high incidence of single parenthood among, young black women, can more readily be explained within the ideological framework that stresses the relative autonomy and equality between the sexes in the black community. The existence of this ideology, encourages women to strive for compatibility rather than economic security (with its attendant values of duty and loyalty) within

<sup>28</sup> For figures showing the high incidence of black female labour market participation in the U.K. see, Brown 1984. For the U.S.A. see, Farley 1985.

<sup>29</sup> It should also be noted that there is no causal evidence to assume that single parenthood is the cause of black disadvantage (Phoenix 1988b).

<sup>30</sup> A clear example of what is meant by misrepresentation is shown in a recent New Society article (Williams 1986). In a national survey of young peoples' attitudes it was found, in sharp contrast to white youth, that the majority of West Indian young men were willing to share household tasks equally with their partners. Rather than seeing the value of such a finding, the authors are quick to dismiss it as a 'blip' in the results. They suggest the cause of the 'blip' is "the result of (the boys) observing too many hard-pressed mums."

relationships. Colin Brown's evidence (1984:37) that single parenthood is not only common among young West Indians, but also among older West Indians, indicates that single parenthood should be regarded in terms of a life-cycle phenomena, with people moving in and out of relationships seeking compatibility and friendship, and as Barrow (1986) suggests in the case of women, increased economic autonomy.

The young black women in the study did express a cautious yet positive approach to marriage and relationships:

" Eventually I'd want to get married, but you should be like best friends and live together..(another girl shouts out "you mean platonic.." all laugh)"

" Well, things have changed now... you can have kids but you don't have to be married....my brothers been together for 12 years and got 4 kids and they just got married . The girls were the bridesmaids and the boy's a page boy."

" The thing that worrrys me about marriage, right , is that the fact you are stuck with that one person for life...because a lot of girls rush 'this is the one for me, this is the one for me,' and all that, and rush into it "

Despite the acknowledgement that men in their lives could in the future pose problems, the young black women in the study frequently spoke positively about men and their attitudes. They did so drawing on their own experience and relationships with men, in particular their fathers, male guardians, brothers and uncles.

"I don't think really, looking after children hard if the man behave himself.....my brothers girlfriend got him under heavy manners right, no back chat ,you know, they got three young ones..." (Janet, aged 16, aspiration: secretary; father: bus conductor)

" Most men do understand the problems faced by women, I think so any way. I go to my dad whenever I have a problem." (Laurie aged 16, aspiration: journalist; father: telephonist.)

"...My dad wouldn't let me work (Saturday job). He says it will interfere with my school work, ask him for pocket money instead. I suppose it is for my own good but I feel he's unfair." (Janice, aged 17, aspiration: social worker; father: painter decorator.)

"Since my mum died my dad 's brought us up ....all he cares about is seeing us do well and going to college.." (April aged 16, aspiration: art therapist; father: British Rail ticket collector.)

Further evidence of black males assisting their partners to stay at work during the crucial and difficult time after the birth of a child is presented in the TCRU Day-Care study (Mirza 1986c). The black relationships in the study provided some of the most unusual and egalitarian forms of partnership. Several men willingly changed shifts to accommodate child care arrangements. One couple agreed upon a complete role reversal so that the wife, who worked in a bank at a more senior level than her husband, would not lose her promotional prospects. However, in some cases the men did not give much physical help (although they were deemed to be a source of emotional support), mostly because as one woman said "he's always out doing his own thing". But in these cases the women stated that despite their partners' frequent absences and the problems this caused, the partners did not obstruct their return to work, and if they failed to provide adequate financial and moral contributions, they did at least show affection for the children. In short, what the evidence revealed was that it was neither the men's absence or presence that affected the women's orientation to the labour market. Other factors, specifically the provision of childcare and the accessibility of relatives and the employer, were the crucial variables.

Studies in America, (Moynihan 1965, see Rainwater and Yancey 1967), the Caribbean (Smith 1962), and in Britain (Foner 1979), have persistently attributed the relatively high proportion of black women in the economy to the absence of a male provider or his inability to fulfil his role. This pathological explanation of the black family - that has come about from the belief that it is 'culturally stripped', essentially a hybrid of western culture (Frazier 1966, Little 1978), has failed to acknowledge that black culture has, evolved an essentially egalitarian ideology with regard to work.<sup>31</sup> An ideology that, as Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow (1977:323) observe, "emphasises the effectiveness of the individual regardless of gender". This argument is supported by the evidence that the proportion of black women in the labour market relative to their white female counterparts, is far

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<sup>31</sup> Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow regard slavery in a more positive way than traditional interpretations (See, also, Herskovits 1958; Billingsley 1968; Hannerz 1969; Ladner 1986) They suggest that the slaves brought with them traditions and cultural orientations derived from their West African background, which defined sex-roles as complementary and in relatively equal terms and gave women considerable public respect and independence. In the struggle against the plantation owner much of this cultural tradition survived as a form of resistance. After emancipation women joined the ranks of a new agricultural proletariat on equal footing with men. Thus as Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow observe women have had a long history in the labour force. A tradition that persists until today.

greater, a fact that is true for the U.K and the U.S.A..(see: Farley, 1984 for U.S. data ; Brown, 1984 for U.K. data).<sup>32</sup>

In addition the study revealed a notable lack of sexual distinctions about work among second generation, West Indian youth. Many girls said that they did not see any difference between themselves and their male counterparts in terms of their capacity to work and the type of work they were capable of.

"I think men and women have the same opportunities, it is just up to you to take it."

Of course women should do the same jobs that men do. If they feel you can't...them stupid..whose to say anyway, it makes me sick it does."

"men should do the jobs women do and women the jobs that men do. There's nothing wrong with men midwives, I think all men should find out what it is like to have a child, its the nearest they can get to it."

Young black women living in the West Indies expressed a similar point of view with regard to womens' work, as one girl illustrated when she stated:

"I think what is good for a woman is good for a man, there's no difference between men and women when it comes to work."

Further evidence of this trend to refuse to regard certain types of work as the sole preserve of men was shown in the results of the study. Black girls were far more likely to express their desire to do non-gendered work than their white female peers.

<sup>32</sup> The argument that high black male unemployment determines increased black female labour market participation cannot be upheld; it is a theory based more on a 'commonsense' assumption than fact. Black male unemployment is no higher than black female unemployment (In the 25-35 age group in the U.K., 17% black women are unemployed, as are 18% black men. In other age ranges the number is even greater for black females. See Brown 1984:190). The fact that males and females are concentrated in different sectors of the labour market and so have access to different employment (and educational) prospects is not a consequence of choice but rather due to the dynamics of a sexually segregated labour market (see Farley and Bianchi 1985).

This ideological position regarding work expectations cannot be the outcome of a 'female orientated' tradition (Phizacklea 1983). If it were a female-centred ideology, then it would be difficult to account for the obvious preoccupation many young black girls had for, as one Trinidadian girl explained:

"...the need for emotional support and strength from a man, you like to feel he rules, even if he don't..."

The young black women in the study, both in the West Indies and in Britain, often commented on the desire for male companionship. This, and the fact that many women treat men as "guests in the house" (Justus 1985), has been interpreted as evidence of a male centred ideology in the West Indian family structure. In effect what we are observing is an ideological orientation governed, not by male bias or female bias, but by the notion of relative economic and social autonomy between the sexes.

In home visits to the parents of the girls in the study, the statements by wives and husbands illustrated the existence of a measure of independence between the sexes, as well as joint responsibility towards the family. They frequently related stories and anecdotes that told of their independent, but equal, work roles.

One such example was the case of Mr and Mrs Burgess who had come to the U.K. 24 years ago. Between them they had brought up five children, the eldest being the child of a previous relationship of Mrs Burgess. They had both always worked and had an evident pride in their childrens' achievements (one daughter was a computer programmer, another a social worker, while the others

who were still at school were doing well). They lived on a bleak, run-down, post-war council estate in Brixton. She enjoyed, and got a great deal of satisfaction from her job as a canteen assistant, he found his work "on the buses" less interesting. Both wages jointly contributed to the family income, although each wage went towards different aspects of family expenditure. He explained in his broad Grenadian accent how he regarded the relationship:

" She does she work, she go in every day, come home every day. She do she own ting really. Half de time I ain't know what she get up to, always going out spending she money on Bingo or some ting so. I don't min once she leave me alone ....I's like to do me own ting too...ya know...."

Mrs Burgess had her own comments to make: in her equally broad Dominican dialect:

" he so lazy, girl, He could sit there all day an complain.. Nothing good enough, well just sit there then. I does go alone if I want to do anything .... I does pick up myself ....even go by self to de carnival.....I's have me work, I's like me work mind..".....

The indifference in attitude they now expressed towards each other after many years of marriage should not obscure the relative autonomy each partner enjoyed with regard to their own work and social activities. Despite their disagreements on other matters, neither partner interfered with the other's right to work. For Mrs Burgess her work was and always had been a source of pride and achievement, a realm of experience quite apart from her life at home. She enjoyed talking about her battles and victories in the work place:

" When I first came to England dere was so many jobs. I move from one to another. It took me four weeks to find my first job. I work for Lyons. Two pounds fifty I got...I tell you them days a shilling a lot....now I'm the only coloured face at work, but I put them in their place, I stands up for myself, I ain't gone to leave because of them few. Me an the Italian woman wer's the only outsiders so they want us out. They don like me because I'm better them them, I've

got better qualifications them and they's know it, especially that supervisor that how I got the work. She wanted to get rid of me always shouting at me, but now I've got my friends we get on well, laugh and ting, have a good time, like at de Christmas party... "

Considerable independence between the sexes does not presuppose the shedding of social attachments as it can do in other cultural contexts, rather, it necessitates and increases the involvement of both partners in the lives of their families. In spite of their separate economic and social experiences, Mr and Mrs Burgess jointly contributed to the family budget and participated in the upbringing of their children. However, just as each income financed a separate aspect of the household expenditure <sup>33</sup> so too did each partner perform a different parenting role. They both agreed that "life hard (sic) for the children nowadays", and that it is up to the parents to see that the children do not 'go astray' and were not out roaming the streets, and if they failed and the children were "bad", then it was the parents who were at fault. They had, especially Mr Burgess, a strong disciplinarian approach towards their children which, it became quite obvious, had alienated the children to some degree.

### Conclusion

The evidence presented here suggests that the cultural construction of femininity among Afro-Caribbean women fundamentally differs from the forms of femininity found among their white peers, and indeed their white migrant peers. Thus the theoretical arguments about the way in which gender disadvantage is reproduced become inappropriate in the black

<sup>33</sup> Karen Stone (1983) also records a similar tendency for the distribution of family income reported by the West Indian women in her sample.

context. What the young black women in the study were expressing was essentially an ideology that emphasised the relative autonomy of both the male and female roles. Ironically, the dynamic that has produced this equality between the sexes within the black social structure has been the external imposition of oppression and brutality. Afro-Caribbean societies in the Caribbean and in industrialised capitalist settings have not simply replicated the western pattern of sexual stratification.<sup>34</sup>

Like their parents and grandparents, the young black women in the study had not adopted the dominant Eurocentric ideology: an ideology in which gender is regarded as the basis for the opposition of roles and values. These young black women had, instead, a very different concept of masculinity and femininity than their white peers. In the black female definition, as their statements revealed, few distinctions were made between male and female abilities and attributes with regard to work and the labour market. As to why this particular definition of masculinity and femininity should result in greater female participation in the labour market is explained by Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow who write:

"...the distinct qualities of masculine and feminine sexual and reproductive abilities are not viewed by either sex as a basis for different male and female social capacities. And unlike the self-limiting negative sexual identities the Euro-American women have had to struggle with, female identity in Endeavour (a town in Barbados) is associated with highly valued cultural

<sup>34</sup> Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow (1977) argue that in the Caribbean slaves, in the struggle against ideological domination developed from their own cultural traditions, positive social and economic orientations as forms of resistance. Ladner (1986:269) argues in the Afro-American context that a similar situation arose, whereby the slaves resisted ideological and social domination by their slave masters.

attributes. Because the women are assumed to be bright strong and competent, nothing in the definitions of appropriate sex role behaviour systematically excludes them from areas of economic and social achievement." (p. 320)

## **PART II**

### SEXUAL DIFFERENTIATION AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE: THE YOUNG BLACK FEMALE EXPERIENCE.

In Part I the positive orientation of young black women toward labour market participation was established. If the notion of the 'culture of femininity' is not appropriate for describing the social processes involved in shaping young black womens' occupational choice , then the question remains, 'how can the obvious gender influences that characterise these womens' occupational aspirations and expectations be explained?'

Part II is an attempt to answer this question. Here I argue that the common processes held to structure gender disadvantage in this society <sup>35</sup> are further complicated by both the operation of racism and the distinct ideological orientation of working class, second generation, young, black women. In order to do so I examine the major influences which seem to account, in varying degrees, for (a) the distinctive, and (b) the differential occupational aspirations and expectations of young black

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<sup>35</sup> for literature that discusses women in terms of their position in the economic heirarchy with regard to the operation of patriarchy and their status as a reserve army of labour see, Hartmann (1979); Beechey (1987).

women.<sup>36</sup> This investigation, which I now turn to is carried out in the context of an analysis that takes into consideration the limitations of a racially and sexually segregated labour market on occupational choice.

#### I. Womens' Work, Or Work For Women?: The Traditional Female Occupations

There was a marked tendency among young black women to opt for careers, in what are commonly classified as traditionally female occupational preserves.<sup>37</sup> The 'so called' caring professions, for example, teaching, nursing, and social work, were preferred occupational choices.<sup>38</sup> Other white collar 'female' jobs were also favoured, such as 'office work', secretarial and clerical positions, (in particular bank jobs and personal assistants were mentioned). This tendency toward female-type occupations, also noted elsewhere (Griffin 1985), has contributed to the general assumption that black women are subject to the same forces of sexual stratification as young white women, but with the added dimension of racism (Fuller 1982). While the existence of a sexually segregated labour market does, undoubtedly have an effect on young black women, such assumptions belie the complicated processes that structure black female occupational choice. An investigation into the occupational aspirations and expectations of the young women in the study revealed a situation in which young black women, highly orientated toward the goal of

<sup>36</sup> By distinctive I mean in terms of their female peers' choices and by differential I refer to the comparative context of their male peers choices.

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 3: for a discussion on the types of occupational positions black women are actually to be found in. See Chapter 5 for details on numbers of black girls choosing caring occupations as classified by social class and S.E.G.

achievement through educational mobility, were confined to a sexually and racially limiting labour market.

Young black women did not seem to be choosing their specific 'gendered' occupations because it reflected an aspect of their subjective perception of their own black femininity.<sup>39</sup> Their choices appeared to be made on a much more rational and pragmatic basis.

When I examined the rationale behind the statements being made by young black women as to why they had opted for certain careers, I found what seemed to be an efficient and resourceful means of maximising their occupational mobility, within the existing constraints. Given the limitations afforded by (a) a racially and sexually structured labour market, and (b) their educational attainment (of which they were under no illusions), the young black women chose 'realistic' careers, those that they knew to be accessible and (historically) available to them. In other words the young black women in the study were expressing their desire for upward mobility within the recognisable constraints of accessibility. In the following, more detailed investigation of the characteristics of these 'gendered' occupational choices, it becomes clear as to what is the nature of and mechanism by which this 'rationale' operates.

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<sup>39</sup> Griffin, for example, argues that the rationale for black female occupational choice is the image that a specific job holds which she suggests the girls weigh up in the light of their subjective femininity. i.e. black girls do not choose to be secretaries because it suggests a particular form of white female sexuality and glamour.

### The Caring Professions

It is often assumed that girls choose traditionally caring occupations because they are an extension of their socialisation as carers for their family and community (Wallace 1987; Fogleman 1983). For black women it is further assumed that they are involved in these occupations because that is an area that has been historically considered to be black women's work (Parmar 1982). While there is truth in both these statements they do not provide an adequate explanation of the subjective occupational rationale evident among the young black women in the study.

'High 'status (and culturally prestigious) caring jobs,<sup>40</sup> such as social work and teaching, were not so much regarded as preferred careers because of the qualities inherent in the job, i.e. 'helping others'. These jobs were regarded more as a means of obtaining occupational mobility via the route of educational qualifications (necessary in these vocations),<sup>41</sup> within the confines of traditionally acceptable 'black women's work'.

The aspiration toward professionally-qualified, caring occupations was particularly true of young black women from

<sup>40</sup> Professions that required further education (FE) and/or higher education (HE) qualifications included: teaching, probation officers, social workers, specialist social workers (i.e. youth and community, education welfare workers). N.B. Despite its high status classification (SC1 II), general nursing was not considered as highly as other professional caring jobs. Because of the West Indian experience in the NHS, and its infamous tradition regarding pay and conditions it was not thought of as an upwardly mobile choice: specific nursing occupations, such as midwifery, paediatrics, radiography, etc, were.

<sup>41</sup> Holland and Skourous (1979) note that working class white girls also regard certain female professions as upwardly mobile relative to their mother's experience.

working class backgrounds who were found concentrated in the average and higher ability ranges in the schools, as the following examples illustrate:

" I have chosen to go to college at the end of the year because the job I want to do only happens at college and not at school. The course I want to do is social care and lasts up to 2 years. At my age now I would not go into a job because the payment at 16 is disgraceful so if I go to college for 2 years then I would leave and get a job after I know that I am qualified." (Dianne, aged 17; father: welder; mother: cook; ability range, high)

Dianne's statement clearly shows that her decision to do social care is based largely on the fact that for her it offers the opportunity to go on and enhance her financial status by virtue of increasing her occupational mobility. Educational qualifications are seen as part of that process and for black women social work is a known <sup>42</sup> and safe option in which to strive for such a goal.

The girls, however did not dismiss outright the caring aspect of the job. They often articulated their covert desire for mobility via further education qualifications within the overt context of 'helping others': Sharon's ambivalent statement illustrates just such a position:

"My plans are to stay in education until I get my 'A' levels. Then I plan to go to college to become a qualified social worker as I enjoy working with other people to try and solve their problems." (Sharon, aged 16; father stripper and cleaner LRT (separated); mother: education welfare officer)

The motivation for achievement through educational qualifications is, for young black women, reflected in their choice of social work jobs. The occupations they chose always required a course

<sup>42</sup> Career information as well as the school's ability to encourage girls to take up careers other than those that are already known to them is limited (See Chapter 9)

or several courses of rigorous professional training. Thus when we consider the reasons why the girls aspired to high-status, caring jobs, they were in effect expressing their meritocratic orientation within the constraints of a racially and sexually-divisive educational and economic system.

Often the girls' statements indicated that they saw these high-status, caring professions, not simply as a vehicle for self-advancement, but also as a means to obtain some degree of community advancement. They regarded these jobs as affording them opportunities to create better conditions for black people in Britain. Marion, who wished to become a probation officer was one such young woman to articulate this more politically-motivated sentiment:

"There are so many black people in prison because of the police. There is a need for black people in social work as so many black people have it hard.....what I would like to be is like Harriet Tubman, a black woman who had determination.." (Marion, aged 16, aspiration: probation officer)

Nevertheless, many of the girls' statements, though couched in altruistic terms, still retained a basic motivation; that of securing some form of educational and hence occupational mobility, as the following example shows:

" I hope to get a good job...I would not like a low grade job.I would like to work with the community. I hope to do law or social work, something to help the black community." (Eleanor, aged 16; mother: playgroup attendant; father: absent (died when 13yrs old of cancer) ability, high)

Not only were the young black women in the study rationalising their educational and labour market opportunities, but there was also evidence to suggest that this was true of their mothers. Many such mothers of girls in the study who were already involved in the caring professions, especially nursing, or some other

aspect of the service industry, were often to be found engaged in processes of retraining or to have already retrained.<sup>43</sup> In an effort to secure better employment and enhance their prospects, the black mothers were becoming involved in the higher status, specialist caring occupations, such as youth and community work, education welfare work etc. The tendency to try to move from one caring job to another in order to enhance ones prospects, seems to suggest that something more than just the caring motivation was involved in the decision-making process. If caring was the only reason for choosing an occupation then there would be less likelihood of finding evidence of this desire to change jobs among the older black women. These women were clearly using their existing knowledge and experience of the labour market in order to initiate, within the restrictions imposed by a lack of information about alternative strategies, some degree of upward mobility. This resourcefulness aimed at maximising opportunity was, among the mothers, not dissimilar to that being illustrated by their daughters, and adds further weight to the argument that the caring professions were (though not always perceived as such), a means of gaining occupational mobility for working class blacks.

As with the high status caring occupations, lower grade (in terms of objective status and pay) caring occupations, jobs often with a geriatric or child care emphasis, also had important meaning

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<sup>43</sup> 10% of the black mothers of the sample population were engaged in the process of retraining (this is in contrast the white mothers, none of whom were similarly engaged): This finding is in line with the national statistics that also suggest a large number of black women over the age of 24 are in education. See Labour force Survey (Employment Gazette 1987) and Brown 1984.

for young black women. These working class girls, who were to be found in the lower end of the ability range in the schools, would specifically opt for these types of caring professions. Caring professions that in contrast to the higher grades, required : (a) lesser qualifications (i.e. nursery nursing did not need the same entry qualifications as social work); and (b) were jobs that the first generation, migrant women were known to have been successful in obtaining (ie.SEN nursing).

These lower-grade, caring occupations were a realistic means of maintaining status for young black women not only of working class origin, but also from a middle class background. They fell within the range of limited and acceptable female occupations open to black women; those black women who were aware that they did not possess the necessary entry qualifications to go on to Further Education college courses such as the CQSW (for professional social work training).

That these specifically-recognisable, female, caring jobs (they were nearly always orientated towards child-care) were a way of maximising educational attainment and occupational status is illustrated by the case of Annette. Annette gave as a reason for choosing a job as a nurse simply: "because I like the job they do." She had no real idea of what the job entailed or why she wanted to do that specific job, only that it was the job she wanted. Annette came from a large family, with four younger brothers and sisters, no father was present and her mother worked as a cleaner in a West End hotel. For Annette, who was placed in the lower ability stream in her school, nursing was not an

unrealistic choice to make. It encompassed mobility, status, and the likelihood (based on her knowledge and experience of black womens' work), of her achieving such a career.

Vivian chose nursing for slightly different reasons than Annette. She, like Annette, was in the lowest stream of the 5th year (verbal reasoning score 3). However, unlike Annette, Vivian had a different family background. Her mother did not work, and her father was a 'businessman'. Thus for Vivian who enjoyed a middle-class, black, family life-style, nursing did not represent occupational mobility quite in the same way as it did for Annette. However, it did mean the realistic maintenance of status for Vivian within the context of her ability. Once again, the historical tradition of black women being located in this profession influenced her choice, in that it seemed a plausible and attainable occupational goal.

The rationale for choosing other types of lower-grade, caring occupations, such as nursery nursing, was not dissimilar to that of nursing itself. Quite simply these occupations were not subjectively regarded as low status by the young women who aspired to these child-orientated careers. They were seen as challenging, obtainable, fulfilling careers by working class girls, particularly those from the lower end of the ability scale of the school. Child-care was regarded as a full-time career, not a temporary stop-gap before having their own family. Nor was looking after children perceived as an extension of their femininity as was the case among many of their white counterparts. Given all the limitations, nursery nursing and

child-care vocations were a realistic and pragmatic aspiration as Louise's statement indicates:

"I want to go on to the YTS doing training for a nursery nurse of the age group 3-4 and 5 year olds. I want to do this because while I am at home I take care of this age group (sister's children) and have experience of feeding, changing etc. I also have child development in school to help me in my career." (Louise aged 16 ability low-average)

#### Office Work.

While the increase in white collar opportunities for black women has been the focus of much attention in the literature analysing the black condition in the U.S.A. ( Farley 1984,1985; Farley and Bianchi 1985; Wilkie 1985 ), it has been far less central in the analyses of black employment opportunities in the U.K. However, from the statistical evidence provided by the Labour Force Survey ( Employment Gazette 1987) and the PSI survey (Brown 1984), it is clear that white collar work, a growing sector that provides much 'womens' work', is also creating employment opportunities for black women.<sup>44</sup> The availability of jobs in this area of the economy, has had a marked impact on second generation, West Indian, female employment patterns. There has been a change among the second generation, reflected in their occupational aspirations. Compared to their mothers, who as migrant women, were confined to either intermediate occupations (SC 2; e.g. nursing ) or skilled and semi skilled work (SC 4; e.g. cooks, factory work etc), these young women had a wider degree of

<sup>44</sup> While more opportunities have been made possible by changes in the economy, it must be noted that racism remains a structural problem in this sector in terms of recruitment, promotion ,specific access to certain types of job, type of industry and employer prejudice. Thus in many ways what is often regarded as changes that have resulted in greater equality (Wilkie 1985), is an illusion rather than a fact. (see Chapter 3).

choice.<sup>45</sup>

Like the caring occupations, office work was related to the level of the girls' educational attainment as well as to their social background. Skilled, but mainly 'processing' office work, such as typing, secretarial, word processing and clerical tasks (especially working in a bank in that capacity), were careers aspired to by young black women of working class origin. Girls, particularly with parents in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations, and who were also defined as lower achievers in the school, saw these jobs as a means of getting on within the constraints that surrounded them. As Maureen explained:

"I want to get a reasonable exam result for my job ...I want to be a secretary as it is a good sort of job to have."  
(Maureen, aged 16; mother: dinnerlady; father: currently unemployed (used to work in a chocolate factory) ability, low (VR3)

Thus these types of office jobs regarded as upwardly mobile choices for young women whose migrant parents had been, or still were, located in the often unpleasant, badly paid, sector of unskilled/semi-skilled manual labour in the U.K. The office jobs chosen by the girls were in contrast clean, and as one girl put it, "...in a nice environment...", and they also offered a reasonable salary as well as a degree of status among the black community. These jobs were also pragmatic choices, for not only did they present attractive prospects to the girls as far as pay

<sup>45</sup> However this opportunity for increased access must be regarded in the context of female youth unemployment: young black females, between 16-24 years have one the highest rates of unemployment. For example see Brown 1984: 190) :West Indian women 16-19 :50%, compared to 46% for West Indian Males, and 23% for white females.

and conditions were concerned but they were also attainable in terms of the necessary qualifications. As Lisa explained:

" I would like to work as a bank clerk or secretary....I would not like to do anything that is low grade which I never dream of doing." (Lisa: aged 16, mother: clerical officer L.A.; father: mechanic. Ability level, low (VR3))

While many girls chose the processing type of office occupations, others opted for higher grade, administrative office work. These included such jobs as legal secretary, personal assistant, bookkeeper, and local authority positions that required specialised training like housing officers etc. Choices such as these were made by young women with a low to average school record whose parents, and mother in particular, were to be found in the higher social class occupations (ie. teachers, nurses, social workers). These administrative jobs were often chosen as careers in contrast to the care-orientated occupations of their mothers and sometimes sisters. Such positions were seen as occupations that they could realistically aspire to within their educational limitations, and yet offered the prospect of Further Education college courses, status and a bold departure from their mothers' often difficult experiences in their welfare-orientated occupations. Several young black women were influenced more directly in their career choice toward administrative occupations by a parent, most often a mother, who had also achieved a high-grade office position within her working career. However, this pattern was only observable in a minority of cases.

Office work, it is argued, reinforces the oppressive nature of female employment (Cockburn 1987), by embodying sexist images of women that, even though they can be seen to objectively degrade and oppress them, are subjectively aspired towards by many women

(Griffin 1985). However, office occupations were not chosen on the basis of 'glamour', the reflection of their femininity, or because they offered a chance of meeting a husband, as it has been suggested. Unlike their white peers, young black women regarded office work as providing status and prospects in a field previously denied them because of racism. In contrast to the pervasive image of office jobs as degrading women's work, which are often seen as only temporary positions before marriage, Rose describes her perception of a career in office work:

"I would like to be a private secretary to a legal firm (solicitors) or in the civil service....I wouldn't like to be in a job that was boring, tedious, unsatisfying, and low paid. Or any place they treat women like dirt, especially black women....I want to be an independent lady. Not dependant on any one, particularly a man." (Rose: aged 17, mother: senior administrative assistant; father: civil engineer; ability range, low-average (VR3))

Rose was under no illusions about why she wanted her office job.

#### Skilled And Semi-Skilled Manual Womens' Work

Hairdressing and catering, although objectively classified as low status women's work,<sup>46</sup> were not subjectively regarded as such by the relatively few black girls in the study who chose these jobs. As with the case of office work, these jobs were not chosen primarily because of the specific forms of femininity grooming and cooking implied, but also because of the opportunities such jobs provided for girls faced with very limited occupational

<sup>46</sup> See the Registrar General's Classification OPCS 1980: both occupations come under SC4: S.E.G 7)

choice. These manual service occupations <sup>47</sup> were selected by girls who had the lowest attainment records in the school, girls who quite often expected to and in fact received none or very few, low-grade CSEs. These girls often indicated that child development and/or home economics was the only CSE they hoped to pass and in both schools were placed on YTS courses geared toward such occupational destinations as child care.<sup>48</sup> However inspite of this divisive influence on their career choice and their often unhappy and unsuccessful school record, these young black women still adhered to the ideology of credentialism. They remained positively motivated by the possibility of further educational opportunities outside their present schooling experience. As Angela explained:

"I want to leave school, then I want to go to college then I wouldn't might (sic) do catering." (Angela: aged 17; mothers occupation: "done work gose to collage" (sic); father, works in shop. Ability level, low(VR3)).

Some girls, while attracted by the image of the job, still emphasised the training element, as the following example illustrates:

I want to go to college and study professional hairdressing and modelling as it is something I always want (sic) to do." (Paula: aged 16; ability level, low(VR3 )

Her mother being a domestic worker in a hospital, Paula's aspirations toward modelling, about which she was emphatic, must be seen in the light of her knowledge and experience of unskilled

<sup>47</sup> N.B. working in a shop was never mentioned as a career in this occupational category of manual womens' work. It was, however, a popular choice among young white women of a similar social and educational background. In contrast to their white peers, shop work was considered by the black women as low status temporary work, not suitable for committed labour market participation.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 9 for a discussion of YTS (Youth Training Scheme) course content. (also Austin 1987; Cockburn 1987)

black womens' work, a fate easily hers without any qualifications.

The nature of this motivation, which could so readily be labelled as a form of 'escapism', must be qualified. The choice of 'female-type glamour' jobs was not, as is commonly believed, a form of female fantasising on behalf of the girls in the study. The young black women were not projecting into the job any feminine desires they might have about their womanhood nor were they attempting to reaffirm their sexuality. These jobs offered the hope of success and a modicum of achievement without requiring many educational skills, which although they were well aware had been denied them, they still struggled to achieve.

This is clearly illustrated by one particular case. Tony, a young, bright and articulate girl who had been in 'Care' all her life ( two foster homes and three childrens' homes), stated her preference for an acting career. While this occupation is not classified as unskilled or semi-skilled work, it would be easy to assume that her reasons for choosing acting were based on escapism from the harsh realities of her experience. She had been put in the lowest ability rank, had a reputation for being difficult and disruptive, and had gained very little form her schooling. Nevertheless, Tony seriously aspired to an acting career as a realistic and pragmatic (and for blacks acceptable) means of expressing her obvious learning ability, so far untapped and unrecognised by the teachers in her school. She complained bitterly that drama was not a subject offered in the school curriculum saying: "All I want to do is go into acting." She had

no illusions or regrets about what some would consider her 'deprived background'. In response to the question 'who would you most like to be like?' she wrote, "NOBODY ONLY TONY SMITH !"

## II. Anyone's Work? Non-Traditional And Non-Gendered Female Occupations.

In this section I investigate the tendency to choose 'non-gendered' occupations which, while apparent among young black women was less obvious among their white peers. 'Non-gendered' occupations, in contrast to 'female' occupations are jobs that are not traditionally considered to be 'women's work', but are also jobs that are not in practice the sole preserve of males either, even though they are clearly dominated by men. These jobs not only include many of the traditional and established professions such as doctors and lawyers, but also many of the new jobs, such as those associated with computing, precipitated by the restructuring of the labour force, largely as a result of the introduction of new technology and changing economic needs.

### Special Interests: Specialised Careers

Many young women had special interests from which they wished to develop specialised careers <sup>49</sup>. Girls that had aspirations

<sup>49</sup> This tendency is often referred to as, 'talent'. Talent, however is a term not chosen to describe these girls' preferences as it implies some form of inherent, genetic capacity or ability for a particular skill. For the literature on the classical interpretation of talent see: McClelland et al (1958) Talent and Society.

founded upon their preference for a specific sport <sup>50</sup>, language, or for a specialised subject such as music, art or creative writing, were confronted with a particular dilemma with regard to the limitations of their schooling (see Chapters 7, 8 and 9). In order to succeed in their chosen career, they, more than any other group, required the information, assistance, resources and encouragement that only an educational institution could provide. This dependency appeared to put these girls at a severe disadvantage in pursuing their occupational career. As a consequence of the schools not being able to fulfil the girls' needs satisfactorily, 'luck' more than any other factor seemed to be influential in determining their career. Because the girls' interests were not only beyond the schools' scope and commitment, but also their parents' material resources <sup>51</sup>, it was down to 'luck' if they found out the necessary information to develop a career, 'luck' if a teacher should take a special interest in them and 'luck' if they received any recognition for their ability and achievements.

Thus more than any other factor, what guided the young black women who wished to pursue a specialised career was their particular sense of determination, as the following examples show. Avril, who was 18 years old, had a special interest in

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<sup>50</sup> Sport is an area of skill and interest that in relation to black youth has often been attributed to teacher stereotyping and the presence of inherent, genetic black athleticism. See: Cashmore (1981,1982), Carrington (1983) and Carrington and Woods (1986). Even though females are mentioned by name in these androcentric analyses, sport has yet to be discussed in the context of the 'phenomenon' of high black female aspirations evident for all aspects of educational opportunity.

<sup>51</sup> Parents were seen to give as much moral support and encouragement as they could; see: Chapter 5

drawing and painting. She was from a single parent family. Her mother, a nurse had died when she was 13, and Avril lived with her father, who was employed as a painter/decorator. More than anything else Avril wanted her career to be built upon her love of art, as she explained:

I want to study art, and then to make some sort of practical use of it...what I'd really like to do is study art therapy...but whatever I do I'd like to be best at it".

Avril, on her own, had researched her career path thoroughly. She told of how she had found, "little joy" in the school's career advice programme, but had finally found a suitable art course at, Goldsmiths' College. In order to meet the entry requirements she was staying on at school to do her 'A' levels. Because her father supported her fully and she was a determined, organised young woman, Avril was able to overcome the odds, and in particular the indifference of her school, in order to successfully pursue her interest and career.

Unfortunately, Avril's case was not an uncommon experience. Another young black woman with a particular capacity for art also found little encouragement from her school. Francis did not only encounter indifference, but also disbelief from the teachers at her school when she expressed her serious ambition to go into fashion design. The attitude of the school toward her wish to be a 'designer', was that it was unrealistic, particularly for a black woman. Debra, confident and convinced of her own ability, persevered in her chosen ambition. She, like Avril, had to make her own enquiries, and eventually applied for a course at a London School of Fashion, from which she has since graduated.

Similarly, Dianne, without any encouragement from her school successfully pursued her career in interior design at the London School Furniture (She subsequently graduated with a very good pass and has since gone on to further studies ). 'Luck ' appeared to play a major role in determining the careers of the young black women who wished to develop, from their special interests, specialised careers. To have 'luck' as a central factor in shaping their future, is both an uneconomic and unfair means of rewarding the enthusiasm, interest and skills shown by these girls.

An example of the schools' indifference toward its black female pupils who desired non-traditional careers is seen in the case of Tony. Tony demonstrates the frustration of many black girls who felt that they were not being taken seriously. She wanted an acting career, but did not have any other sources for information and support than those provided by the school (she had been in 'Care' most of her life), and was unable to fulfil her ambition or put to good use her obvious energy and enthusiasm.

In contrast to the young black women who displayed a particular interest in academic and/or artistic careers, was the experience of the girls with athletic and sporting inclinations. These girls were not only encouraged by the staff, they were also favoured. It was not uncommon to hear them referred to as, 'polite', 'hard working', 'talented', etc.). However, as Laurie experienced, there were constraints put upon her which limited her ability to exploit her interest and skill to its full. Laurie was the school's top tennis player. She excelled in the

sport. Her career aspiration was to be both a sports journalist and to, as she put it: "play the professional tennis circuit." But while her obvious ability in the sport was widely acknowledged, the teachers held quiet reservations (only expressed in the staffroom) regarding her ability to succeed in such a competitive field. These were articulated in such statements as: "she's good...but you, know...its very competitive out there...", which was founded upon their understanding of tennis as a sport for the privileged: a sport which black people do not have a 'tradition' in. Among the teachers there was an objective hierarchy of 'respectable' sports for black people, and tennis was not one of them. Laurie, it was commonly held, was over-confident in her aspiration to become a professional tennis player and unlike other, less skilled but nevertheless white girls in her year, received little real encouragement. With the best of intentions the teachers attempted to divert her from a career path that, in their estimation was futile. As far as they were concerned it required money and social status, none of which Laurie had.

It is clear then, that a major influence on young black women with 'high' occupational aspirations, was the teachers' subtle preconceptions regarding the acceptability of black girls in various subjectively-defined, 'socially elite' occupations. This is further illustrated in the case of those girls who displayed a particular interest in creative or journalistic writing. Young black women who wished to develop their writing skills into a career - one girl was already writing for a local newspaper - curbed their aspirations in the light of their knowledge of the

difficulties of succeeding in this profession if one was black. Many girls stated their desire to be 'black journalists', not always because of a feeling of political commitment, which some expressed, but rather because they felt that they would not be accepted as anything else within the media.<sup>52</sup> When it came to encouraging the girls to go into journalism, and especially with regard to 'mainstream' rather than 'black' journalism, the teachers remained indifferent, offering little or no practical advice on such matters as college courses, believing too that journalism is a 'tough profession', particularly if you are black. The girls, it was clear, had their ambitions restricted, not only because of their own preconceptions, many of which were shaped from hearsay, but because of the limitations imposed by others about what was a feasible career route for black women.

In conclusion there seemed to be a belief among the teachers that to recognise the presence of specialised skills and special interests among young black women was to condone 'elitism'. This was clearly a misguided interpretation of black achievement. The discouragement of enthusiasm and ability, was justified among the staff with the rationale that, 'they will only be disappointed if they strive too high'.

#### Higher Educational Aspirations and the Professions.

Like those young black women with an interest in developing specialised careers, those who chose the 'professions' or opted for a degree course, found little encouragement from their school

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<sup>52</sup> For research on the experiences of black journalists in the U.K. see B. Ainley (Phd in progress: University of London Goldsmiths' College).

either in terms of attitudes or in information <sup>53</sup>. They too owed much of their educational achievement and career orientation to personal motivation and perseverance. Most of the girls, who chose professional careers, were from working class backgrounds <sup>54</sup>. As Jackie, a working class black girl who had secured eight 'O' levels and was now taking three 'A' levels, explained:

"I would like to do a degree in psychology, preferably at a polytechnic...I expect to be a psychologist or some career in the science world . Something professional". (Jackie: aged 18; mother: cook; father: welder).

The types of careers many of these girls chose were distinctive compared to the traditional professions their indigenous white, (nearly always middle class) peers aspired to. The young black women in the study were choosing degree courses leading to traditional often male dominated professions such as lawyers, doctors, accountants, business managers, journalists, and there was even one pilot. Whereas their white counterparts, who unlike them were mainly middle class, opted for degrees that would enable them to become linguists, teachers, or most popular of all, selected higher degrees not directly related to any profession, such as literature and 'the arts'. This observation

<sup>53</sup> The educational standards of the schools in the study left much to be desired as far as contemplating university careers were concerned (see Chapter 7). The schools were not geared to the level of examination results required by the girls to enter higher degree courses. Several girls did not receive, on the first and often on the second attempt, the necessary qualifications to proceed in their chosen professions. Many girls were in the process of re-sitting 'O' and 'A' levels to that end, or stated that they will be attempting to enter these professions by alternative routes other than the one offered by the school(i.e. they would be pursuing a college or polytechnic course).

<sup>54</sup> Similarly Tomlinson (1983b) found that most of the young black women in her study of higher education were from working class backgrounds.

is supported in the findings of the 1983 National Child Development Study (Fogelman 1983: 275). The evidence of this research suggested a pattern among white women graduates (nearly always of middle class origin) of choosing 'female type' professions such as teaching, or high status caring professions, especially social work and hospital careers. In contrast, the NCDS suggested that the boys, very much like the black girls in my study, were more likely to opt for such traditional and prestigious professions, as medicine and the law.<sup>55</sup>

The orientation of the young black women in the study towards their professional qualifications was very different from that of their white counterparts. With their educational background it was logical for these high achievers to wish to extend their education and, at the same time, (as we have already witnessed among their black peers who aspired to the 'caring professions'), to maximise their credentials within the given constraints of a rigidly-defined and male-orientated professional hierarchy. Ruby's direct and determined statement when considered in the context of her family background reveals just such a rationale:

"I would like to stay on at school and do 3 'A' levels. After I would like to get into a University and get a degree in Law. I intend to be a barrister and practice in London".  
(Ruby: aged 16; father: clerical worker in Grey's Inn Law

<sup>55</sup> There is a general concern that not enough black women enter the teaching profession in Britain. As my evidence suggests, not many black women make a conscious choice at 18, if they have the ability and determination to attempt a higher degree, to enter the teaching profession. They are more likely to choose more lucrative professions if given a choice. For historical and other reasons higher degrees in education (including the PGCE) are not such an attractive proposition to black girls who have managed to reach this level in their academic career. (See, also, Chapter 8 for black teachers' views and their entry into the profession).

Society (works with Q.C's); mother: (retired) play group assistant.)

Ruby was influenced by her father's job and saw this profession as a realistic way to maximise her educational ability. It entailed status prospects, social commitment, and not least, some degree of financial reward for her effort.

What was clear in the study, was that the black girls did not want to undertake a higher degree for the sake of 'self exploration', nor for the luxury of extending their education. Nor as Tomlinson (1983b:79) points out did they wish to pursue their university career because they saw themselves as either 'victims or superwomen'. Higher educational opportunities offered the prospect of both enhancing their career status and their capacity to earn a good wage. This did not mean that the girls were ruthlessly pursuing a professional career at the expense of all else. Many girls did express their commitment to helping others through their own achievements, as the following statement suggests:

"I want to be a doctor, not necessarily a doctor in a surgery, but active as in helping the people who have most need of it. Back home I would like to help them, especially those who cannot afford treatment because most doctors are private and private means expensive." (Levine: aged 17)

However the lack of career advice for girls wishing to enter the professions or wishing to take up a higher degree meant that many bright young women made their choices from the traditional professions or found themselves insufficiently advised when it came to deciding how best to apply their educational skills. A situation that the following example illustrates:

"I know that I do not want a job just yet. I want to get into a degree course somewhere, but I haven't ...I mean I don't know what to do..". (Francis: aged 18)

Other girls did wish to choose more specialised professions but were aware of the possible prejudice they could face. In the following case although Floya was from a middle class background, she was aware that her prospects could be hampered by racism. She opted, not for her chosen career, but a career that she knew, from experience (her father was in that profession), to offer slightly less resistance.

"I would love to study archeology or the classics,....but that's way out there... I'll never get into Oxford and all that you must be kidding, (in posh accent) La,de lala (all laugh)....but I'd like to do a BA degree in business studies, accounts and that, then go for a certified or chartered accountant degree". (Floya aged 16, father: certified chartered accountant, mother: unpaid houseworker.)

The desire to minimise racist experiences had the effect of cancelling out any innovative attempts in non-traditional professions that had not been tried and tested. Racism in this context (and in the context of the other careers so far discussed in this section) can be regarded as an external pressure which ensured the reproduction of certain professions from one generation to another.

#### New Technology and the Aspirations Toward Non-Traditional Female Occupations.

There is a common assumption that young black women 'naturally' gravitate toward non-traditional female work (Griffin 1985). Their desire for woodwork and other conventionally-defined 'male' subjects at school is often cited as evidence of this uniquely black female tendency (Riley 1985). Their relatively higher uptake and enrolment on 'trade' and access courses, leading to plumbing, electrical and carpentry training, is also used to indicate this trend (Cockburn 1987).

However, the evidence presented so far in this chapter suggests that the majority of black women do opt for what can be described as the more traditional black women's careers. Nevertheless, there was some evidence that black girls were far more likely than their white peers to move willingly into traditionally male occupational preserves. Why should this be so? To date the explanation for this 'phenomenon' has centered around an argument which suggests that this willingness is a form of resistance; a conscious statement of 'blackwomanhood' (Griffin 1985). However, in my opinion, the willingness of young black women to undertake traditionally male work is the outcome of two aspects that are related to their orientation to work.

Firstly, as discussed in Part I of this chapter, there was no evidence of any cultural constraint that inhibited a woman from aspiring to any occupation that she felt competent to train and undertake. Secondly, all the evidence so far suggests that young black women are primarily motivated in their career aspirations by the prospect of upward mobility. A job, therefore is an expression of the desire to move ahead by means of the educational process. The belief in the promise of a meritocracy and the rewards of credentialism spur black women on to take up whatever opportunities that may become available and accessible to them, especially opportunities that entail a chance to increase their further educational qualifications.

An example of the determination to succeed whatever the odds, can be seen in the case of Marion. After undertaking a three year course in social care at the local college of further education

(Brixton), Marion was unable to secure a job. The local college, however, offered an access course which trained women to become electricians. Marion, a resourceful and serious person, decided that rather than joining the ranks of the unemployed, she would enrol on the course. Her decision must be seen in the light of a course being offered in an accessible college. The question arises, as to whether Marion and the other black women really wish to do electrical work, and whether this demand gives rise to the courses. Or, as seems more likely, was it the accessibility of such a course and the prospect of gaining further credentials the reason for its uptake?

With the recent growth of new technology, jobs needed to service this industry have become available. However the mystique of the computing world had not deterred some young black women from venturing into this male-dominated preserve. These young black women liked the type of work and saw it as an opportunity to express their ability, regardless of gender. They were not put off by its image, as Veronica explained:

"I would like a job in medical research and computing...I want to be a person who can be accepted at any job he or she wants".

Another example of young black women's confidence to move away from traditional female occupations, as well as, in this case, black occupations, was illustrated by several girls (and boys) who expressed their aspiration for a career with the police and

in the 'British Armed Forces'.<sup>56</sup> They were convinced of their choice. They did not feel that they should be excluded from aspiring to these professions just because of the army's racist and sexist track records, after all as one girl pointed out she might be black but she was also British<sup>57</sup>. A job in the armed forces offered the girls an attractive proposition. The possibility of ascription, security, excitement, travel, and most of all the promise of equal recognition for equal achievement among men and women, as well as among black and white<sup>58</sup>. It was clear that it was the image more than anything that attracted the girls. They identified most strongly with the latter aspect of the army career, that is the hope of equality. For, despite the cultural orientation within the black family that suggests the relative autonomy between the sexes, black women still have to struggle for even a modicum of respect and equality within the work place. The girls that opted for an army career were from the average to lower ability range within the school and were aware that they could look forward to a less fulfilling career than the one the army could offer, as Trudi explained:

<sup>56</sup> The police and the army were considered in two different lights. Many girls expressed their dislike for the police, an opinion based largely on experience (32%). However one girl desired and eventually did go on to join the police. The Army, by contrast, was seen as far more remote in terms of its oppressive function and role. The girls that chose this career saw it more in terms of a good solid career.

<sup>57</sup> Several studies (Smith 1977; Brown 1984; Ullah (1985), suggest that compared to young black men and young white men and women, black women are the least aware of racism prior to their entry into the labour market. However, when they do inevitably experience it, they react the most strongly against it.

<sup>58</sup> The 'promise' of course is very different to the reality. There is clear evidence of racial harassment in the Armed Forces. See for example the recent reports: "Soldier Accuses Army of Racial Discrimination." Guardian 27.1.88.

"I would like to join the WRNS or the army as a cadet. I would not like to work in any kind of an office...what I want is an interesting job that pays a good wage and that I like to do and will get respect for doing". (Trudi: aged 18; mother: works in a hostel for women ;father (step): teacher, Head of physics in a secondary school; ability average, in 6th form has obtained 4'O'levels and 2 CSEs).

### Conclusion

As in the earlier part of this chapter, where it was established that the labour market orientation of young black women cannot be understood in terms of an ethnocentric cultural paradigm, the evidence presented in Part II suggests a similar line of argument. Part II which addresses the issue of the rationale behind certain career aspirations, concludes that the career choices being made by the young black women in this study were related to their specific experience of the labour market and the educational system. Clearly what these girls were doing was attempting to achieve upward occupational mobility through a strategy that rationalised the various constraints that they encountered.

One major constraint was the existence of a racially and sexually segregated labour market which ensured limited occupational opportunities to young black women. The black girls chose careers that were 'gendered' not so much because of the nature of the job, but because that was the only type of work in their experience and knowledge that was available to them. However, in choosing these jobs they used the stated educational requirements as a vehicle for obtaining more or better qualifications, in order to enhance their career prospects and satisfy their desire for credentials. Their willingness to move into non-gendered careers can be largely explained by the combination of the notion

of relative equality between the sexes (discussed in Part I), which meant that there was no cultural limits on attempting to do non-traditional female work, and the motivation to succeed ,which encouraged the search for opportunities wherever they were or however they might be defined by others.

## CHAPTER 7

OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS: DO SCHOOLS MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE?

In this chapter I shall consider one important part of the schooling experience; that is the nature and effect of institutional constraints on occupational choice. In this analysis of the data on the educational system it is important to consider the daily running of the school, its efficiency, its use of resources, its objectives, aims and approaches to the schooling of its pupils, and its orientation to the labour market. Such an analysis asks the question 'do schools make a difference?', and calls for a detailed comparative investigation of the schools and institutions concerned.

Rutter (1979) and his team in their study Fifteen Thousand Hours asks the question, 'do schools make a difference?'<sup>1</sup> Rutter and his colleagues found that individual schools do make a difference on the basis of how they are run. Discipline, uniform, punctuality are some of the indicators they employed to measure in what way a school can achieve a better outcome. They conclude:

"Secondary schools varied markedly with respect to their pupils' behaviour, attendance, exam success and delinquency...even after taking into account difference in intake. This suggested that, contrary to many views, secondary schools do have an important influence." (p. 205)

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<sup>1</sup> There is a substantial body of literature that explores this issue of the influence of the school, see for example, Summers and Wolfe 1977; Gray 1981; Reynolds 1982, 1985.

Mortimore and his team (ILEA 1986), in a more recent study on junior schools reaffirm Rutter's findings <sup>2</sup>, they write:

" One of the three major questions addressed by the Junior School Report was 'do junior schools make a difference to educational outcomes?' It is clear that schools do make a difference and that that difference is substantial."  
(Part c: p. 31)

Not all studies accept this interpretation. Jencks (1972), like Coleman (1969) before him <sup>3</sup>, not least because of the distinct variations in examination result, provides evidence to the contrary, and suggest that schools in fact make very little difference to educational outcomes. Jencks writes:

"We cannot blame economic inequality on differences between schools, since differences between schools seem to have very little effect on any measurable attribute of those that attend them." (p. 8)

He goes on to observe that:

" Some schools are dull, depressing, even terrifying places, while others are lively, comfortable and reassuring. If we think of school life as an end in itself rather than a means to some other end, such differences are enormously important. Eliminating these differences would not do so much as to make adults more equal, but it would do a great deal to make the quality of children's (and teacher's) lives more equal." (p.256)

The evidence presented in the following pages suggest, from a comparative evaluation of the two schools in the study, not least

<sup>2</sup> Mortimore et al (ILEA 1986) in their study The Junior School Report (recently published in book form entitled School Matters (1988), identify twelve factors that affect cognitive outcomes for the pupils in the schools . These were; (1) Purposeful leadership of the staff by the headteacher. (2) The involvement of the deputy head. (3) The involvement of the teachers. (4) Consistency among teachers. (5) Structured sessions. (6) Intellectually challenging teaching. (7) work-centred environment. (8) Limited focus within sessions. (9) Maximum communication between teachers and pupils. (10) Record Keeping. (11) Parental involvement. (12) A positive climate. (see p. 128-132 part C). They also point to other significant variables such as what they call "given variables" i.e. buildings, intake resources, class size, equal opportunities policies etc.(p. 45 Part C)

<sup>3</sup> See also Boudon (1973)

because of the distinct variations in examination results, that there were considerable differences in educational outcome between the two schools <sup>4</sup>. In order to address the issues that the conflicting theses of Jencks and Rutter raise, we must consider to what degree are the differences in educational outcome between the schools a consequence of the school itself, in terms of how it is run, or due to the variations in the social and cultural background of the pupils within its classrooms.

The evidence in the first part of this thesis, which looked at the familial and socio-cultural characteristics of West Indians in Britain, suggested that whatever the racial, sexual, and class constraints of the British labour market, young black women remained highly motivated to the goal of academic credentialism. Thus the fact that their educational performance did not necessarily reflect their academic potential indicates that there could be a connection between the schooling process and educational performance. I shall now turn to an investigation of the way in which each distinctive school affected the educational outcome of their black female pupils.

#### St. Hilda's vs St. Theresa's: A Case of Mediocrity vs Selectivity.

St. Hilda's 1984 overall examination performance for CSE and 'O' levels showed a markedly different pattern from that of St. Theresa's. The Band 1 pupils at St. Hilda's performed much less

<sup>4</sup> Both schools had different historical backgrounds: St. Hilda's always had been a secondary modern whereas St. Theresa's was once a Grammar school. This factor still impinged on the daily running of the schools. The influence of differential regimes has been the subject of much debate See Torsten Husen 1977; Reynolds, Sullivan, and Murgatroyd 1987.

well than the Band 1 pupils at St. Theresa's.<sup>5</sup> However the differences between schools were far less marked when the results of the lower ability level pupils were compared.<sup>6</sup> What seemingly characterised the results of St. Theresa's was a form of 'academic selectivity'. This apparent selectivity was the outcome of the obvious nurturing of those pupils in Band 1 at the expense of the less able pupils in Band 2, and especially those in Band 3.<sup>7</sup> St. Hilda's displayed a different type of regime, one that neither specifically encouraged nor cared for those of high ability or those of less ability. This form of 'academic mediocrity' did not produce academic excellence or even everyday enthusiasm among its Band 1 pupils or its Band 3 students.<sup>8</sup>

The black girls were influenced by the overall regimes in each of the schools that produced these distinct educational patterns. Similarly Mortimore et al (ILEA 1986c:39) found that schools which were effective in promoting progress for children of a group, (whether pupils of a particular sex, social class or ethnic

<sup>5</sup> St. Theresa's: 65% of Band 1 pupils received 5 or more CSE's or 'O' level grade A-C. St. Hilda's: 19% of their Band 1 pupils received the equivalent grade.

<sup>6</sup> Although a notable difference still remained between the two schools; 32% of St. Hilda's Band 2 pupils received 1-4 CSE grade one or 'O' level. Whereas 44% of St. Theresa's Band 2 pupils received the same grade. Band 3 pupils fared badly in both schools, again those at St. Hilda's being worse off. At St. Hilda's 28% of the pupils left before sitting their final exams compared to 6% at St. Theresa's. Of those who remained 24% at St. Theresa's received the lowest graded result of CSE 4-5; compared to 16.7% of Band 3 pupils at St. Hilda's.

<sup>7</sup> For example this is illustrated by the fact that the performance scores of the Band 1 pupils were only 28.8 points higher than those in Band 3.

<sup>8</sup> Here the performance score were only 18.9 points higher for the Band 1 pupils than for the Band 3. A much less obvious distinction than for St. Theresa's.

group), tended to be effective for children of other groups. Thus in the same way those schools which were ineffective for one group tended to be effective for another.

It is argued that a successful school must have a positive ethos and that ethos, it is suggested, emanates largely from the influence of the headteacher ( Rutter et al 1979; Mortimore et al: ILEA 1986). In the schools in the study the influence of the headteachers was notable in terms of its effect on staff, policy, and pupils. Furthermore the distinctive regimes in either of the schools, which greatly affected educational outcomes, appeared to be directly related to the attitude and orientation of the individual headteacher. The evidence gathered that indicated this causal link between educational outcome and headteachers' leadership was obtained not only from the heads themselves in interviews and conversation; but also from written reports <sup>9</sup>, interviews with staff and staff meetings.

#### St. Hildas': A Case of Academic Mediocrity.

The HMIs noted in their 1984 Quinquennial Report that at St. Hilda's:

"The underachievement of able pupils (i.e. Band 1 at 11+ entry) is a major problem which all teachers should tackle" (p.2)

The report goes on to recommend that in order to rectify the situation i.e. to stretch the more able and support the less able, the headmaster, Mr Madden, together with his three deputy headteachers should:

<sup>9</sup> Official reports such as HM Inspectorate Quinquennial Report 1984 (St. Hilda's); St. Theresa's Quinquennial Review 1977-1982 presented to the Board of Governors.

" ...reconsider their overall management of St. Hilda's, with regard to leadership, oversight and supervision of staff." (p.2)

In a not dissimilar argument from that outlined by Mortimore et al (ILEA 1986), what the HMIs appear to be suggesting in their recommendations, is the need for a more purposeful leadership from the head. They were supported on this issue by the staff in general, who often complained about Madden's relaxed and often ineffectual approach to his responsibilities as head of the school.<sup>10</sup> The teachers' complaints focused on aspects of St. Hilda's that were highlighted in more general terms in the Quinquennial Report as areas of weakness in the regime. I shall now turn to a consideration of these shortcomings within St. Hilda's that accounted for its overall state of academic mediocrity.

(1) Discipline

The head, Mr Madden, was a small, pleasant, middle-aged man with a sense of humour <sup>11</sup>, as he demonstrated on our first meeting in his office:

" You are probably wondering what this is (points to a bottle of blue liquid on his desk), well its my secret weapon, Chewing gum remover! I look for gum on desks, walls, I find it invaluable as a head...I can go round with the excuse that I am looking for chewing gum ...its PR . It helps break down the authority image of the head. I get to know them and they me. It is important that you are not seen as some one up there".

Whatever the outcome of his unconventional approach to public relations within his school, he was considered by both pupils and

<sup>10</sup> Studies by Grace (1978) and Jones (1988) suggest that there is often a great deal of conflict between staff and head teacher.

<sup>11</sup> As it transpired it was not a sense of humour universally appreciated by all.

staff to be a somewhat eccentric personality <sup>12</sup>, as one member of staff said:

" The pupils don't like him, they think he is a bit of a fool. There is no real contact or understanding between them and him." (Mr Gavin: Mathematics teacher)

Being a large, inner city comprehensive school there were a series of observable consequences that arose from his unusual attitude to discipline, control and authority. It was apparent that discipline was a real problem at St. Hilda's <sup>13</sup>. The Quinquennial Report had this to say with regard to the matter:

" A school policy needs to be developed...we noted a feeling that procedures with regard to difficult children need to be strengthened." (p.6)

Staff did indeed often complain about the lack of a referral procedure. For example, for over two years Dr Ashraf had had a troublesome fifth year class. Three boys were particularly disruptive and unpleasant. Despite several complaints to the

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<sup>12</sup> His eccentricity was further illustrated by his response to the presence of a 'flasher' on the school premises who had been 'showing himself' to the girls and female members of staff. This had been going on for over a week but when reported to Madden and suggested that the police should be brought in he laughed and said, " Not to worry, I'm sure its harmless. He probably just likes little children, thats why he comes."

<sup>13</sup> St. Hilda's was a school that had its fair share of social problems; a reflection of its situation in a declining area of the inner city. However, many of these problems in the school were exacerbated not only by Madden's ineffectual approach to discipline, but by his lack of awareness about everyday matters. For example, he was not in control of the violent local gang wars that spilled over into the school (there had been several fights and even a stabbing nearby. There was also tension between pupils of rival Catholic schools in the area. The alarming rate of non-attendance was another issue. In one fifth year class at least six pupils were non-attenders. There were four pregnancies in one year, and glue sniffing was a serious problem, as was vandalism.

Head no action had been taken, because among other things <sup>14</sup>, as Dr Ashraf explained, there was no proper system of punishment in the school:

" They should have been removed, made to sit somewhere in the public eye but there is no such facility. There should be a room with some sort of supervision . But there is no room, no teacher, no central organised system..... they just carry on two years making life hell." (sic)

There was a great deal of evidence to suggest that the lack of discipline in the school affected not only the morale of the staff but also presented a problem to the pupils who were constantly having their lessons disrupted by those who chose to do so. I recorded many incidents of fights or bad behaviour in the lessons (e.g. jumping on tables and swearing, walking about etc.). Often teachers would turn a blind eye and proceed with the class as a means of coping with a continually recurring situation. One teacher described how she felt about the lack of discipline and the unpleasant school environment it created:

" When I first came here I felt ill. I used to go home and throw up. This place was and is awful... In the corridors, you notice, no pupil 'sees' you, yet alone talks to you. There is no friendliness here, this really struck me when I first came . In fact I would describe it as a hostile place". (Ms Phillips: Head English Dept.)

## (2) Homework

Discipline was not the only shortcoming at St. Hilda's. There were other aspects of Mr Madden's leadership that could be seen to be directly related to the mediocre educational outcomes so evident at the school, as the Quinquennial Report indicated in its discussion about school work and in particular homework:

<sup>14</sup> See the section on black teachers in Chapter 8. Here part of the reason given by Dr Ashraf for the non-response to the racism his class was the lack of solidarity he felt with the Head and his colleagues which stemmed largely as a consequence of his 'race'.

" The detailed specifications for homework for each year group should be established by the deputy head teacher for curriculum matters. Present procedures are unsatisfactory....Evident slackness in this area may well be contributing to the underachievement of many pupils." (p.3)

The lack of structured homework was apparent. During lessons very few pupils were given assignments or, if they were they rarely completed the work, a weak excuse often accepted as adequate. One teacher complained:

"Mr Madden said once, 'give homework', but then you won't believe this, he said, ' give homework because it keeps the children off the streets and because parents like to see it and it gives a good image for the school.' Well, I always thought homework was for the benefit of education not just a function of discipline or for the image of the school." (Ms Cole: Religious Studies teacher)

Ms Bell, another teacher pointed to a consequence of this relaxed approach to homework for the pupils concerned:

"You find that they just cannot cope with homework. They even need help to fill out their homework sheets. They have no idea how to organise their learning."

### (3) The Curriculum

Under the Madden regime there were other educational practices that went on which, as the Inspectorate stated, were not only detrimental to the educational performance of the pupils in general, but the Band 1 in particular (where 25% of the black girls were concentrated). Again they write:

" We think the abandonment of the compulsory practical subject is a retrograde step...low performance of Band 1 pupils may be caused by this factor (if the teaching is not carefully adapted to different examination syllabuses)."

A report by Hargreaves (1984) to the ILEA reinforces the need for a structured curriculum, the wisdom of which was clearly being ignored by Mr Madden's alternative strategy. Despite the adoption of a less structured curriculum, the pupils both at the third year stage of option choices and later during the crucial years of the fifth and sixth form often found themselves without

the support necessary to successfully maintain such a policy. On the whole pupils often found themselves ill advised (see Chapter 9). Furthermore pupils were not encouraged to take a science subject. Madden's influence over the curriculum was significant. He refused Ms Cole the Religious Education teacher permission to have any comparative input into her lessons, adhering to his conviction that multi-racial education was unnessecary.

Moreover, recent issues in curriculum development were notably absent at St. Hilda's, apparent in a lack of innovation in the teaching content and method. The many lessons that I observed were often dull and uninteresting, the outcome being bored, non-responsive or sometimes disruptive pupils.

#### (4) Examinations

At St. Hilda's there was an obvious absence of an 'exam ethos'. During the months preceeding the final summer examinations the young black women in this school often complained about the lack of support and assistance (see Chapter 8: The 'Liberal Chauvinists': Anita's experience). During this usually tense time of the school year, the atmosphere at St. Hilda's, in the classrooms, staffrooms and school generally, seemed remarkably relaxed and 'panic free'. Ms Ward, a recent addition to the staff of St. Hilda's had this to say about her fifth year English class, in which several Band 1 black girls were:

" The fifth form I just left was so advanced comparatively to this, much more serious. The whole school was 'geared up' for the exams, here no one seems to care. I wish I still had my old 'O' level class, with this lot it is a lot more boring, I can tell you. I have to do all the ground work as they have done nothing so far. Only the poems on the syllabus and it is March already. Nothing, absolutely nothing. It is boring for them too. They have no idea, one girl said to me, 'why do we have to do all these poems? I know the one I want to answer in the exam.' So unrealistic, they have no idea about exams, what if that one doesn't come up."

The lack of 'exam fever' apparent in the other school in the study was not only notably absent from the pupils but was also reflected in the staff room. The staff in general were not anxious about the performance of 'their' pupils as were their colleagues at St. Theresa's. In fact the exams were not even discussed, except in the context of their being a nuisance. Staff expressed openly their annoyance at having to come in during exam time when there was no teaching to do. This lack of commitment toward the pupils was widespread. In the staff room, in sharp contrast to the other school in the study, the welfare of pupils', either individually or generally, was hardly ever discussed, as were school issues or policy <sup>15</sup>. It was evident that teachers were also less than conscientious about their teaching tasks in other ways too; getting off early or avoiding any extra duty assigned to them (during school hours). One teacher remarked:

" Few teachers are comitted here. They say why bother? Some teachers are just bullies here and such bad teachers, they are awful to the pupils. Its a wonder they get anything out of them. Some staff go home early on a Friday and no one says anything. Madden, I doubt he even knows. Yesterday I stayed 'till 11.30 (pm) and the day before, 9.30 (pm). I get a headache by Friday I'm so exhausted, I think what's the point." (Ms Reed: Social Studies and Career Mistress)

This general malaise, it could be suggested, can be attributed to the lack of accountabilty of the staff to the Head.

Communication between Madden and his colleagues was restricted by

<sup>15</sup> There was very little professional interaction between staff, who on the whole sat day in and day out in the same mutually exclusive groups. If teachers were not pursuing their own individual tasks of marking or lesson preparation, they were to be found engaged in lighthearted exchanges about non-school events. i.e. The 'lads ' ( a group of young male teachers) always sat together and discussed football, TV etc. but never pupil welfare or school issues.

his practice, even though he claimed otherwise, of a hierarchically-structured system of authority.

(5) Decision Making

The unequal, but badly organised distribution of power within the school not only affected the level of staff accountability but also their involvement in the decision making process. The Quinquennial Report noted several times the marked lack of staff enthusiasm and involvement in matters concerning consultation and decision making. The HMIs observed:

" The Academic Committee appears to be less successful in dealing with its areas of concern. Although the meetings of the Committee are open to all staff, few teachers who are not Heads of department attend." (p.6)

For that matter, staff were rarely present at any meetings that were not compulsory. As one teacher explained, Madden himself did not attend more meetings than he had to.

" Madden, he is so incompetent, he doesn't talk to any one or discuss anything with anyone and no-one with him.....There are so many committees set up for us to see to. That's his job-but because he is so useless its left up to others and in the end no one really cares." (Mr Jarvis: Biology teacher)

(6) Leadership

The effect of poor leadership by the Head on the staff of St. Hilda's was acknowledged in the Quinquennial Report:

" We take the view that work of the teachers could with advantage be subject to more co-ordination and supervision....once decisions are taken it is essential they are adhered to by all. We noted a lack of uniformity". (p.7)

The HMIs proceed to give examples of how this lack of leadership can filter down and impinge on the quality of the teaching. Following on from their previous statement quoted above they write:

" Perhaps some examples would make the point. We found it suprising that in a school where underachievement of able

pupils is a priority, so many teachers ignore the homework time-table. One such fifth year pupil who had attended regularly, had been set only seventeen home-work sessions out of a possible fifty-nine during the first half of term. Equally disturbing, in an authority which is generous in its allocation of capitation is that some departments are apparently short of such basic items as text books." (p.7)

This was not the only way in which the impoverished leadership provided by Mr Madden manifested itself. The lack of inter-departmental communication it produced led to an absence of efficiency brought about by the limited and often irrational pooling of financial and other resources. The Quinquennial Report suggests that this failure had much to do with the role of the 'head' in co-ordinating change. They write:

" The Resources and Academic Committees could link with the Heads of Department and Year Committee. There is in our view no substitute for a headmaster meeting regularly with his Heads of department and the pastoral Heads at properly constituted meetings to consult about major matters, to establish school policy and procedures, and to ensure full implementation."

The outcome of "this unfortunate division between the academic and pastoral life" within the school, meant that truancy and the high rate of post-sixteen school leavers, (a major problem in the school), was considered neither the responsibility of the pastoral department nor the academic body. Inadequate record keeping also meant that effecting the school's smooth change over to mixed- ability teaching was greatly handicapped.<sup>16</sup>

Mortimore et al (ILEA 1986d:36) suggest that inadequate leadership can bring about instability within the school. This appeared to be the case at St. Hilda's. Though some teachers had

<sup>16</sup> The schools move to mixed ability teaching did show Madden's overall desire to aim at the equalisation of educational outcomes. As Bellaby (1977) remarks true comprehensivisation cannot take place without the eradication of streaming.

been there for many years <sup>17</sup>, especially those with a strong Catholic affiliation, staff turn over was high. On the whole few teachers had been there long, and in the eighteen months that I was there not only was absenteeism high, but several members of staff also left. Some left, not to be replaced. For example the Computing and Business Studies Department had no teacher for a year after the previous member of staff had become unwell. The pupils in this class had had no tuition during that year, had worked on their own and were now being entered for the examination. The Religious Education teacher left one month before the final examination. It was two weeks before a supply teacher was sent in to replace her. There was an obvious lack of concern about the urgency of replacements by the Headmaster.

The fact that the staff lacked a 'common theme' as one teacher suggested, could be put down to the lack of good leadership. Indeed Mr Madden showed little or no interest in many contemporary issues, as the HMIs observed:

" The school does not appear to be tackling with sufficient vigour the range of problems encompassed by the Authorities' Policy Papers on multi-ethnic education...in several year groups children of West Indian origin were over-represented in the lower streams." (p. 3)

As already discussed earlier in this Chapter <sup>18</sup>, the issue of MRE was regarded as unnecessary by Mr Madden, a point which he made quite clear:

<sup>17</sup> Mortimore et al (ILEA 1986) suggests that teachers who remain more than seven years in one post reach a point of stagnation. Indeed the teachers who had been there a long time were characterised by their rigidity and inflexibility when it came to change. Several of these teachers were also notable for their racism, suspicion and lack of communication.

<sup>18</sup> See also Chapter 8.

" We know what we are about here ...we don't need any one telling us how to run our affairs."

Madden's lack of support for this issue filtered through to the rest of the staff who, taking their lead from him, hardly ever attended any MRE meetings. One member of staff, who later left the school, commented on the general state of affairs at St. Hilda's regarding this lack of innovation as symptomatic of a broad state of apathy:

" There is no direction here, you don't feel part of a movement . My department never does anything together."  
(Mr Lewis: Social Studies teacher).

The headmaster only involved himself in matters that he found relevant, and it appeared that the most important aspect of the school was its religious function. Madden attended to his duties rigorously in this respect <sup>19</sup>. The Quinquennial Report did remark on the positive orientation of the school in this regard:

" We would like to record that the ethos of St. Hilda's is clearly one of a Christian school." (p. 2)

### Conclusion <sup>20</sup>

From the evidence presented here it could be argued that 'academic mediocrity' at St. Hilda's was the outcome of lack of a purposeful leadership, which in turn affected staff morale, standards of teaching, and the overall school climate. This

<sup>19</sup> Madden's infrequent visits to the staff room were nearly always on matters concerning church related matters ( he had a particularly close working relationship with the religiously-involved members of staff with whom he formed a definite 'clique' i.e. Sister Margarita). The only occasion during my time 'in the field' that I witnessed Mr Madden get angry over an issue, was over the embarrassingly poor attendance at the Wednesday afternoon Penitence Service.

<sup>20</sup> In the re-organisation of Catholic schools that took place in 1984 (for 1985), Madden re-applied for the post of Headmaster but failed to secure his old position.

causal observation is very much in keeping with Mortimore et al findings that:

" Indicators of the heads' positive leadership, especially in connection with academic matters were significantly related to teacher behaviour ...positive school climate was closely linked to various aspects of teacher behaviour." (Mortimore et al: ILEA 1986d:32)

St. Theresa's: A Case Of Academic Selectivity.

" There's a major problem at this school, that you can't help but notice. This school has never faced up to the fact that it is now comprehensive." ( Mr Ellis: Advisory Teacher for 38 schools in Southwark and Lambeth)

Mr Ellis' observations were not unfounded. Evidence during my time spent at St. Theresa's revealed the presence of a two-tiered system of education. It was clear that the quality of education received by the girls of high ability was markedly superior to that received by those of less ability. Not only did the examination results reveal this dichotomy, but so did the attitude of the staff and in particular the orientation of the headmistress, Ms Grey.

(1) Recruitment

In the school's Quinquennial Review (1977-1982) published and presented to the Governors in 1984, Ms Grey's underlying attitude toward the change over from a grammar to a comprehensive system is apparent. In the following extract she expresses her reservations when describing the 'new intake':

" During the past five years the nature of the intake to the school has changed radically; our pupils now come from a much wider range of social and ethnic backgrounds than formerly and we are taking our share of disturbed and difficult pupils." (p.5)

She goes on to elaborate on the way in which this change has affected the make up of the school and inadvertently suggests ways to remedy the situation.

" The proportion of pupils whose families are of Afro-Caribbean origin has greatly increased and is now well over 50% ; as a Grammar school it was less than 10%. The majority of our pupils now come from working class families....some middle class parents do not care for the present social and ethnic mix of the school..." (p.28)

Ms Grey suggests that a way to counter the falling numbers of pupils applying, is to demonstrate to parents, that inspite of the new intake, "the school continues to provide a good education." It is implicit in this statement that 'good' schooling means 'grammar' schooling.

Many members of staff (many of whom had been there before the 1977 re-organisation) also were of the opinion that the racial and social intake was in itself a cause of problems for the education of the pupils. Ms Warr the Religious Education teacher made this very clear:

" Another problem is presented by the large intake of children from West Indian Pentecostal Churches...This has created a teaching problem for the department staff and a learning problem for the children concerned. At present the problem remains unresolved." (p.129)

Statements such as these show that there was little willingness on the part of many to adapt to the changes demanded by a new and different pupil intake. This lack of flexibility, the desire to resist change and retain the characteristics of a grammar school, was a central feature of St. Theresa's. Comprehensivisation was continually associated with the 'new and difficult' (mainly black) intake. Ms Grey and her staff often referred to the social and cultural problems now facing the school since its change over:

" Most West Indians are one-parent families, the girls have a lot of cooking and working to do and that influences their school work. We have many problems now, particularly with the fifth (33% black). Groups of them are being very

naughty, disruptive, and their parents are needed."  
(statement by Ms Grey)

The entry requirements of St. Theresa's that ensured that the majority of lower ability pupils were more likely to be recruited from ethnic minority backgrounds <sup>21</sup> reinforced the staffs' image that black pupils have learning difficulties.

(2) The School Climate

It was the 'bright' girls that benefited from the on-going grammar school ethos that characterised the school and pervaded the staff-room. As Mr Ellis observed:

" One plus about this school is its grammar past. It has its good sides. It is self-assured about itself as a school."

Ms Grey was a direct 'no nonsense' sort of person. She had been at the school for well over fifteen years, the last seven as Head, previously having served as Deputy Head. Though she had taught when St. Theresa's was a Grammar school, she had presided over its comprehensivisation. Many members of staff who had been there before its change-over still remained. The staff room which was a small and friendly place was a hive of activity with a great deal of pre-lesson preparation and activity going on. Staff conversations which were often involved, concerned among other things issues about pupils, the school etc. Ms Grey had a

<sup>21</sup> The entry requirements set up a system that ensured the concentration of ethnic minority groups lower down the ability scale. These requirements were hierarchically stated: (1) That the girls must be Church of England. If not they must be (2) A practising Christian. (3) Have a sister already there. In Band 3 they would take non-Christians (i.e. Muslims) and any other candidate that did not fulfil the the first three requirements. These criteria were not often met in that order by the West Indians. As most West Indians tended to be Pentecostal that reduced their chances considerably of being in Band 1 (Most of the Band 1 pupils who tended to be C. of E. were white). Because of the comparative youth of the black population in the UK many girls were the eldest sibling so they were not recruited by the 3rd criteria.

close and informed relationship with her staff and exercised a great deal of influence over them. She would find time in her busy schedule to come to the staff room regularly to discuss matters of school policy or to inform herself about an individual pupil's welfare. However, in this particular environment of the staffroom, the interchange of opinions and ideas did not encourage innovation but, on the contrary, reinforced the existing consensus which favoured the grammar school ethos. Mr Ellis whose job as an advisory teacher (English), covering thirty-eight schools made him particularly well qualified to comment on one positive aspect of the regime:

" This is one of the few schools I like to teach in, maybe it is because of Ms Grey's caring and professional approach."

However, not all the staff were complacent about what they considered to be a 'regressive' school ethos that ignored the positive aims of comprehensivisation.<sup>22</sup> Some younger members of staff recognised the rift this 'old fashioned' way of conducting school affairs caused between the pupils and the teachers as one member of staff explained:

" There is a lot of distrust between the girls and the staff...they each live in different worlds. You often hear the word 'snob' in the corridors when the girls refer to the teachers." (Ms Land: Geography teacher)

<sup>22</sup> Bellaby (1977) elaborates on the problems the move to comprehensivisation presented to teachers of different persuasions: "many teachers were now working in comprehensive schools and trying to adapt their old approach to somewhat new circumstances, few had received formal training. Thus no common philosophy took root. Instead differences in approach, often between young and old teachers and in some cases between erstwhile grammar and modern school teachers, became magnified into doctrinal disputes ." (p.23) The result of this as Reynolds, Sullivan and Murgatroyd (1987) observe has been the setting up of 'pseudo-comprehensives' trying to offer a traditionally grammar school education and ethos to the full ability range.

The resistance to change at St. Theresa's brought about only the alienation of pupils but also resulted in an estrangement between staff and parents, as one teacher observed:

" There is a problem of misunderstanding between parents and teachers at St. Theresa's. It stems from different ideas that each have of the school and what to expect from the school." (Ms James: English teacher)

### (3) The Curriculum and Teaching Methods

In 1984, seven years since the 1976 comprehensive reorganisation of the educational system, there was little evidence at St. Theresa's of any willingness to compromise the heavy academic emphasis of the curriculum and traditional teaching methods of the past. While the high ability girls received much attention from the staff, who enjoyed the challenge of their presence, the lower ability pupils were less fortunate. Streaming, which ensured the hierarchical separation of low from high ability pupils reinforced a divisive system of education that was the hallmark of St. Theresa's.

In sharp contrast to what was available to the more able pupils, academic concessions to the less able were limited. The lessons of Band 3 pupils throughout the school were often observed to be educationally unproductive and difficult to teach. Rather than re-evaluate the situation and in particular the teacher's approach to difficult classes, the school's immediate reaction was to withdraw academic privilege, as the following example shows. The Head of the Modern Language Department explained that the second and third year pupils were no longer to be taught French. Her reason:

" because of the disruptive behaviour of the pupils. They just cannot concentrate during listening work."

A decision such as this had serious repercussions for the pupils concerned who were being denied access, without appeal, to learning an important foreign language so early in their secondary career. This decision was made on the basis of one teacher's evaluation, the truth of which was never questioned.

The school's policy with regard to homework also reflected its biases toward the more academically inclined. In the 'top' ability groups homework was set for each lesson. In contrast homework for the lower ability sets was given less regularly which was, as outlined in the Quinquennial Review, "when practical and necessary or to complete work already begun in the class." (p.127)

If an academic future for a pupil was not possible then the school's policy was to move to the other extreme and react by withdrawal from lessons, substituting special education or remedial classes for normal lessons. Non-academic courses were also set up mainly for the benefit of the less able. These courses - Personal and Social Education, Looking Forward, Clerical and Office Skills - were ill conceived, poorly organised and badly staffed, as Ms Wallace, a teacher committed to developing the Looking Forward programme explained:

" There is insufficient time to develop the course and limited opportunity to discuss the course with other staff."

The Quinquennial Review did remark that in general, at St.

Theresa's:

" The curriculum focuses too much on academic work and not enough on practical sessions." (p. 25)

However, the timetabling priority of these practical sessions were such that they were not accessible to the more able pupils. Even the less academic (albeit 'female-centred') subject options such as Child Development and Office Skills were not available to girls who were engaged in the academic curriculum. Personal and Social Education which was a 'pastoral' course scheduled for everyone, was viewed as 'prep' time by the more academic, and permission not to attend was common.

It was apparent that the school's policy was, rather than adapting and improving the teaching and learning within the mainstream exam-orientated curriculum for the less academic pupil, to present the less academic option as the solution. In the Quinquennial Review, the Head Mistress justifies this approach in the following way:

" The course begins to fulfil a need for the less academic option choices as many of the comprehensive pupils seem under intense pressure and are finding it difficult to cope" (p. 96)

However, during the several months that I spent at St. Theresa's it was apparent that these non-academic, practical sessions were not conceived in the best interests of the pupils concerned. They were in effect no more than 'containment periods', for what were perceived to be 'difficult' and 'disruptive' girls. Those defined as less able were separated off from the others put into classrooms and supervised minimally. In these lessons they learnt little or nothing as hardly anything was taught, although these girls did receive an internal school certificate for completion of a minimum course requirement.

Resources allocated to these more practical sessions were clearly limited. The secondary status of these courses meant that the budget allowance was minimal, there were no rooms allocated for these subjects and there were no qualified staff to teach them. Teachers that were 'free' were sent to supervise or teach these classes. I was readily allowed access to these lesson times for interviewing purposes. On several occasions I was asked to sit with them and supervise the session as no one else was available. I was given the advice:

" Just talk to them. They feel no one cares. They think school is against them and everything is against them. In general they feel the authority of the school weighs down on them." (Ms Wallace : English teacher and Head of Careers).

Although they had been relegated to the 'educational dustbin' at St. Theresa's, there was no evidence to suggest that these girls were incapable of learning. Despite being clearly alienated from the staff, I found them articulate keen and interested. They willingly participated in my research, and despite warnings from the staff to the contrary, they had their own opinions on political and social issues.

#### (4) Discipline and Control

On matters of discipline Ms Grey had a firm and active policy which was supported by the staff. It was an aspect of St. Theresa's regime that was of central concern. In the Quinquennial Review the largest section was devoted to the school's policy on matters of discipline and control. In the daily events of the school this emphasis on discipline was evident. The school office was a busy place, full of parents and girls, many of whom were awaiting disciplinary procedures. A central reception area of the school housed a bench where offending girls sat in punishment.

In sharp contrast to the attitude at St. Hilda's, truancy was dealt with uncompromisingly. Parents were summoned immediately to discuss the matter with Ms Grey and the Education Welfare Officer. While I was at St. Theresa's there were several cases of truancy, one of which was going to court. Other forms of disciplinary procedures included a rigid detention policy, and girls were often put 'on report', rather than being suspended. The school also had an abundance of rules for the girls to comply with, ignorance was no excuse for non-adherence.

It was evident that the formidable regime with regard to discipline was associated with what was regarded as the 'new and difficult intake', most of whom were black. This was clearly stated in the Quinquennial Review by Ms Masters, the Head of Pastoral Care:

" The all-ability intake has brought a much greater proportion of girls whose behaviour has given serious cause for concern." (p. 19)

Ms Grey exerted a powerful control over discipline problems in her school, as the following example illustrates. Elderly residents from a nearby (all white) council estate complained to the school that they were being 'harassed ' by gangs of black girls. Although this claim was never substantiated (there was a tuck shop on the estate that the girls frequented, much to the annoyance of the local residents), Ms Grey responded by giving the lower school and those classes in the upper school with a notorious reputation for being difficult, detention for a week. This blanket action which the uninvolved girls found unwarranted caused much resentment and did little to resolve the situation.

It created a undercurrent of hostility and distrust between the staff and the pupils and both parties increasingly regarded the other with suspicion.

The outcome of the overtly disciplinarian and punitive approach of the school toward the 'all ability intake' was to reinforce the system of 'containment' which was already evident in the non-academic and academic dichotomy of the curriculum.

(5) Multi-Racial Education

Unlike Mr Madden, Ms Grey was more astute when it came to matters that reflected on the school's 'good reputation'. This was illustrated in Ms Grey's approach to MRE in her school. Both in interviews and in the Quinquennial Review she paid much 'lip-service' to the ILEA's policy of MRE. Ms Grey told me of a Church of England project that was to be undertaken in the school.<sup>23</sup> The project's aim was to investigate the 'successful' destinations of young black women who had attended the school during the last ten years. Ms Grey was acutely aware of how to manipulate the political rhetoric that surrounded the issue of race in schools to serve her own interests. In sharp contrast to her obvious feelings about the decline in the school's standards with the introduction of a more multi-racial intake she said about the project:

" It is a worthy and positive cause. It aims to counteract negative stereotypes of West Indians. It is very important that the successful stories are told."

Ms Grey's confirmed her support of MRE in the Quinquennial review as follows:

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<sup>23</sup> The project was organised by the Southwark Diocese under the overall supervision of Archdeacon Woods, who himself is black.

We need to find time to explore a number of cross-curricular issues, in particular our policy for multi-ethnic education and our methods and assessment of pupils in line with recent ILEA initiatives." (p.7)

However, inspite of these statements there was no evidence at St. Theresa's that MRE was an active priority in the way Ms Grey suggested. On the contrary, the staff in general were uninformed and unconcerned about the issue. For example, when the sixth form mistress and senior member of staff, Ms Carter, was asked about the performance and aspirations of her black female pupils she replied, "to tell you the truth I've never given it much thought."

#### (6) Single-Sex Status <sup>24</sup>

An aspect of St. Theresa's that contributed to the particular climate of the school was the fact that it retained its single sex-status after comprehensivisation. Some staff felt that the school benefited from being exclusively for girls:

"It is important that this is a single sex school. Girls are more assured and confident in an all girls atmosphere. But as we know schools cannot make up for what goes on in the outside world. Ultimately there is little a school can do to change sexism, and, I should point out, sexism can still exist in an all girls' school." (Ms Bernard: Music teacher)

Other teachers however felt it to be definite drawback, as Ms Tinker, a science teacher, explained:

"I was surprised when I came here how difficult girls are. I preferred teaching at Bishop John (large all boys comprehensive nearby). The boys were better behaved. The girls are brasher here. There is a strong sub-culture among them that you can't get through to them. People talk about Bishop John, its reputation and all, but I felt there was a

<sup>24</sup> The problems and advantages of single-sex schools are debated in Dale Mixed or Single Sex Schools. There are those that suggest it is of positive benefit, particularly those belonging to the religious lobby, especially Muslims. (See Swann Report (DES 1985:504-9). Others, including feminists writers suggest it has serious drawbacks in some particular contexts especially with regard to access to systems of power: see Okely 1987.

lot more staff support there and it was a lot more rewarding to teach."

There was evidence at St. Theresa's to suggest that the all girls learning environment was, on the whole, beneficial. Unlike their counterparts at St. Hilda's the girls were more likely to do traditionally male-defined subjects (e.g. sciences were popular) and did not have to contend with their marginalisation in the classroom. At St. Theresa's it did appear that the satisfactory performance of the Band 1 girls could be related to the fact that they were in an all-female learning environment, however being in an all-girls school did not account for the comparatively unsatisfactory performance of the less able pupils. This suggests that the discrepancy in educational performance between high ability and low ability girls at St. Theresa's was due to other factors than the single-sex nature of the school.

Thus in summing up it was found that at St Theresa's, while the high ability girls, regardless of social class fared well within the grammar school ethos of the school, the lower ability pupils experienced five years of what can only be described as 'custodial education'. These lower ability girls, who were defined as 'difficult', were not only subject to rigid rules and restrictions, but were further 'contained' by a system of streaming that ensured their separation and placement into non-academic courses, withdrawal from normal class, or second-rate attention in their academic lessons. This duality in treatment between the high ability and low ability girls was reflected in the notable discrepancy that existed in the examination results of those classified as able and those defined as less able to cope with academic work. Black girls fared poorly in this

inherently inequitable regime not least because the method of recruitment ensured that a disproportionate number of them entered the school in the lower ability grades.

Conclusion: Can Schools Compensate for Society? <sup>25</sup>

Because examination results impinge dramatically on career destinations, the quality of a pupil's performance is a significant determinant. My findings did suggest that, with regard to examination results, the school that an individual pupil attended did make a difference. The difference I observed between St. Hilda's on the one hand, with its record of academic mediocrity, and St. Theresa's on the other, with its apparent selective regime, could be attributed to an overall difference in school leadership and hence ethos. A consideration of this evidence could suggest, that a school in isolation, can, if it is well run, affect pupil outcome. Indeed this is a proposition put forward by Rutter (1979) who concludes:

" Schools can do much to foster good behaviour and attainments and that even in a disadvantaged area, schools can be a force for the good." (p. 205)

While schools clearly do make a difference it is quite another thing to suggest that schools can compensate for society, as Rutter et al seem to suggest. Micro-studies of the school, such as those of Rutter and Mortimore, are in danger of ignoring the wider social and economic forces that affect the school's independence as a social institution. My general conclusion must therefore be that, while a great deal can be discovered about more effective teaching and learning from studies such as one presented here, such research by no means presents a solution to

<sup>25</sup> Basil Bernstein (1970) in a 'New Society' article with the same name considers the issue and concludes that schools cannot.

the endemic problem of inequality that is an integral feature of schools in British society. In order to arrive at a more productive analysis of the way in which wider social influences impinge on the maintenance of social inequality, we need to turn to a more detailed evaluation of schooling in Britain in terms of its effects on occupational choice.

**CHAPTER 8**THE OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE PROCESS: TEACHER EXPECTATIONSRECONSIDERED

Of the many theoretical perspectives that have contributed to the debate on the nature of the educational experience, two ideological camps are distinguishable.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand there are those that emphasise the institutional level, the structure, operation and functions of schooling; on the other hand, there are those that find analysis at the personal interactive level more important. These theorists, who emphasise the inner workings of the classroom, focus in particular on the relationships between teacher and pupil.

Attempts to describe the black educational experience have been characterised, in the main, by research designs ideologically disposed toward the latter perspective, with early studies investigating the causes and effects of negative black self esteem. However this chapter, rather than focusing on the influence of the teacher on pupil self-concept, examines the effect of inappropriate and poor teacher assessment on educational outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> There are several identifiable theoretical approaches to the study of education (Karabel and Halsey 1977:1-87). To divide these theoretically complex bodies of work into 2 camps is to some degree a crude exercise. While recognising this, it is, however, one that is made here for the convenience of analysis.

### Teacher Expectations: A Theoretical Overview

" Most of these girls will never succeed....they are just unable to remember, the girls just can't make it at this level ('O'level and CSE), never mind what is demanded in higher education. Even so our girls are more closetted, they are thinking and more articulate than in other schools, that is not a hard observation to make. In other schools, you can see it for yourself, there is what I call 'brain death ' among them ...unable to think for themselves".

(Ms Wallace: English teacher and Careers mistress, St. Theresa's. A statement made in response to a question on the future of certain black girls in her 5th form class.)

Statements such as this illustrate that teachers can often make, with authority and confidence, morally, intellectually and sociologically unacceptable comments. This opinion expressed by Ms Wallace was by no means uncommon among teachers when discussing their black students. 75% of the teachers in the study made at least one negative comment about the black girls in their care during informal conversation and formal interviews that I had with them.

Teachers provide easy targets, offering tangible and powerful evidence against themselves. It is not surprising that they are assumed by many social commentators to be the central link in the transmission of social and racial inequality. This is a convenient and obvious causal assumption to make as Tomlinson (1981a) observes:

" Teachers have provided easy targets for critical attack, without sufficient attempts being made to locate them, historically or culturally, within the contradictions of a society which offers both a rhetoric concerning multi-racial, multi-cultural harmony, and a reality of pragmatic intolerance and hostility" (p. 56)

In a society where opportunities clearly differ between children of different races, sexes, and classes, often too much is

expected of teachers to bring about social change through educational innovation. As Grace (1978) suggests teachers, while autonomous actors in the social process, are nevertheless limited by the social, economic and political structures in which they are located. He explains:

" While teachers are undoubtedly caught up in a massive apparatus of control, urban teachers were never entirely determined or rendered the social puppets of this apparatus". (p.215)

In recognising the wider situation, I do not wish to imply that the teacher's influence in the classroom is not important. I am, however, suggesting that a theoretical perspective which emphasises a teacher's ability to discriminate and categorise pupils at a personal and individual level is problematic. It appears to be too simplistic a causal mechanism; for it would be logical to assume that if a teacher's attitudes and expectations were positive and high, and discrimination eliminated from his or her actions, underachievement of ethnic minority pupils would then disappear.

The literature which addresses the issue of pupil teacher interaction falls within the most recent tradition in the sociology of education: the interpretative perspective.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Under the 'umbrella' of interpretative sociology there are a number of strands and sub-categories, variously called 'symbolic interactionism', 'phenomenological sociology', and 'ethnomethodology'. These all share a common heritage in German Idealism, developed in social science in the work of G. H. Mead (see Reid 1986:31 for overview).

A central proposition of such research is that pupils tend to perform as well or as badly as their teachers expect.<sup>3</sup> The teacher's prediction of a pupil's behaviour, it is suggested, is communicated to them, frequently in unintended ways, influencing the actual behaviour that follows. The literature appears to assume, not unreasonably, that the most important element of the schools for the teachers is the other actors with whom they are intimately concerned; that is the pupils.

However, the interactionist sociologist, by focusing attention on the consciousness of social actors has narrowed the scope of sociological enquiry to a point where the kinds of explanations they can offer for social processes are found seriously wanting (Mirza 1984). By reducing any manifestation of conflict and resistance in the classroom to a social psychological phenomenon, they investigate, at a personal level, the inability of pupils to conform to a rational 'working consensus'. In order to explain the difficulty most individuals have in sustaining a relationship of 'harmony' within the 'working consensus', the interactionist approach employs Merton's (1957) notion of the self fulfilling prophecy and the mechanism of labelling.

The causal assumptions contained in the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy and the concept of labelling are inherently

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<sup>3</sup> For example see Becker 1952; Kelly 1958; Lippit and White 1958; Goodacre 1968; Kelly 1968; Lacy 1970; Keddie 1971; Nash 1973; Taylor 1976; Hammersley and Woods 1976; Hargreaves 1976. For studies dealing specifically with race see Datta, Schaefer and Davis 1968; Rosenthal and Jacobsen 1968; Leacock 1969; Rist 1970, 1973; Katz 1973; Rosenberg and Simmons 1973; Rubovits and Maehr 1973; Brophy and Good 1974; Coopersmith 1975; Bagley et al 1979; Schofield 1982.

problematic, not least because of the difficulties both these explanations present with regard to the interpretation of data, as Tomlinson (1981a) points out:

" A major problem in research which links teacher expectations, attitudes and opinions with poorer academic performance is that the links are difficult to provide empirically; they are largely logical". (p.57)

Thus it is only logical to assume that if teachers hold stereotyped opinions and expectations of black children, this may lead to different teaching techniques and classroom treatment, which works to the detriment of certain childrens' education. However, recent research has challenged the very basis of this approach, the existence of negative black self-esteem, highlighting in particular the ethnocentricity inherent in such interpretative accounts (Mirza 1980; Stone 1985).

Interactionists also find the concepts of conflict and power difficult to explain and manage within their framework. If, as it is argued, individuals are seen as having the freedom to define reality and act upon their definitions (Hargreaves 1976), then the question arises, from where does the ability come which allows some individuals to make their definitions count more than others? The issue is never addressed, not least because the perspective is too narrow to generate sociological accounts of the social structure of the classroom. Interpretative accounts assume rather than question the power of those in a position to define and so impose the dominant reality, or even more narrowly ignore it. They assume that interaction occurs on the basis of democratic negotiation between interested parties who are political equals. Sharp and Green (1976), in a critical appraisal of the interactionist methodology, however do show that

it is possible to discuss the operation of power within the classroom. They give the following explanation:

" The ability of the headmaster to influence the actions of the teachers, the ability of teachers collectively to protect themselves against the felt threats of parents, lie not in their linguistic and conceptual superiority but their position in the power structure. If they are linguistically and conceptually superior it is only because those who have power in the macro structure define it to be so and have been given available sanctions to reinforce their definition of reality against others". (p.223)

The failure to address fundamental issues such as power as well as the matter of ethnocentricity in the interpretation of data, has the effect of rendering many of the existing studies on teacher expectations open to question. However, the theoretical perspective which I am proposing for the analysis of teacher-pupil relationships, while drawing on data gained from what can be described as interpretative insights, nevertheless focuses firmly on a structural consideration of schooling. This perspective has as its emphasis the actor's consciousness in terms of his or her relative access to social and physical resources. It becomes obvious from the discussion of my findings that the constraints pupils experience with regard to their occupational outcome is related, to some degree, by their teachers' power to affect their decisions and control their access to resources. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge in any interactive situation, the fact that resources, whether they be materially defined, the physical power to coerce others, access to facilities for the achievement of one's goals, together with the institutionalised power to direct, are unequally distributed in society generally and so have implications for the analysis of social processes in the micro-situation of the classroom.

### Racism And Reaction: A Teacher Typology.

I now turn to investigate the way in which young black womens' occupational expectations and aspirations can be influenced by their teachers' evaluations of them. The findings of this study revealed many shades of teacher reaction to the race, gender and social class of their pupils. In the following pages I attempt to analyse some of the attitudinal characteristics I found among staff in the schools, and assess the outcome of their specific beliefs and values on the black female pupils in their classrooms. Five general teacher reponses were identified.<sup>4</sup> These were grouped as follows: (1) the 'Overt Racists' (2) the 'Christians' (3) the 'Crusaders' (4) the 'Liberal Chauvinists' and (5) the 'Black Teacher'.

#### (1) The 'Overt Racists'

As many as 33% of teachers interviewed in the study held what can only be described as overtly racist opinions. It appeared that at the 'grass-roots' level of the staff-room, many teachers remained untouched by the vigorous anti-racist debates and campaigns that

<sup>4</sup> Peter Green ( DES 1985:46-56) in his study of teacher attitudes distinguishes four types of teacher response in the classroom: toughminded, tenderminded; idealistic, naturalistic; conservative and radical. However my study fundamentally differs from that of Green's in two ways. Firstly, my typology is defined not so much by the observed teaching approach, but more by the teachers' orientation to the race of their pupils. Secondly, rather than focus on the effect teachers may have on the self-concept of their pupils as Geen does, I emphasise the importance of material constraints and pupil strategies, largely found to be the outcome of negative teacher assessment.

taking place around them.<sup>5</sup> In spite of attempts to inform them to the contrary, these teachers held fast to their convictions as to the intellectual and cultural inferiority of their black pupils, often expressing open resentment at their presence in their country and their school.

Examples of overt racist sentiment and practise were not always confined to isolated incidents or statements, but were often the consequence of long standing, bitter feuds between certain members of staff and pupils, situations fuelled by racist action and pupil reaction.

Mr Davidson was a young history teacher who derived a definite pleasure from taunting the black pupils, particularly the boys. One black male pupil reported the following incident, apparently one of many, in confidence:

" Mr Davidson called me a wog. Me and my friend we turned round and saw Davidson looking at us and then he said get inside. Because we were standing outside the history class. He also said to another person "don't drop peanuts or coconuts on the floor", the peanuts belonged to a white boy behind him who was also eating peanuts. But Davidson said nothing to him after school, he kept me and other black kids." (sic) (Davis:aged 16: aspiration: armed forces)

Mr Davidson's obvious dislike of black pupils was not confined to verbal abuse of black males. Females were not immune from his disdain, which I discovered to my cost, when I had a door knowingly and sadistically slammed in my face. Neither was his

<sup>5</sup> During the period of my field work (1983-84), the issue of racism in schools received a great deal of media attention, not least as a result of the publication of the ILEA's Anti-Racist Statements and Policy Guidelines (ILEA 1983), and the 'controversial' activities of the GLC. The various arguments of the anti-racist debate have been documented. For a general appraisal see Troyna 1987, while Palmer 1986 presents the protagonists view.

overt racism hidden from the other members of staff, many of whom harboured similar sentiments but were less forthcoming about them. Mr Davidson openly voiced his disapproval of the Multi-Racial Working Party, announcing his intention to boycott the meetings. He also claimed, in his capacity as history teacher that:

" African history is so boring ...I had to do it at college, it was part of the course . Old civilisations are boring and the discussion of slavery is monotonous in school teaching ...it has no bearing on anything".

The opinions and actions of Davidson were extreme. But how far can such attitudes be dismissed as exceptions to the rule and isolated incidences, as extreme case so often are? While Davidson's racist behaviour was more overt than that displayed by others, incidents of overt racism were by no means an exceptional occurrence. Many members of staff deeply resented the presence of black pupils in their school and often articulated this point of view.

The school secretary Ms Simpson had a reputation that preceeded her. The girls in her school constantly complained of the way she reacted toward them: keeping their parents waiting, not answering politely, and generally being as unhelpful as possible. There is always the matter of character misrepresentation in such reports and I was careful not to believe everything I was told. However, I witnessed an incident in the corridor that confirmed the girls' reports to me of her negative attitudes toward them.

During a class change-over, at the end of a period, Ms Simpson pushed past me, making her way angrily toward a group of black

girls walking slowly and chatting away loudly among themselves.

Obviously enraged, she shouted loudly:

" WILL YOU STOP THAT AT ONCE!.....Honestly, the way you people conduct yourself you wouldn't think you were part of civilisation!"

As she turned and walked toward me again she muttered:

"I just don't know, things were so different before they came...honestly..."

Almost bumping into me she agitatedly added:

"Oh, get out of my way." (and then rushed off).

Ms Bland an art teacher for many years, explained how she felt about her black pupils:

" I'm fed up with them. Everyone is fed up...only they wont say it ,my dear.... You can be sure that things have changed now, every evening, I dread it , I really do,my dear. All that pushing and shouting, you know, at the bus stop. Well, we've all got to get on. If we pushed like them they'll get annoyed, I'm telling you....but I just push back, and why not. They are so loud and inconsiderate. Only yesterday, the noise! You would think they were the only ones, I think they think they are the only ones...and you dare not say a word. ....They are always talking about being black, chip on the shoulder, haven't met one who hasn't, my dear...always talking about being black....Why can't people be people. Everyone's so over sensitive nowadays! All this about golliwogs, for instance, banning golliwogs! I ask you. I love my golly, and you tell me what is wrong with that.... Imagine in Brixton they wanted to put up black angels, did you hear? Black angels how ridiculous! Why give them a race? Angels are angels, they have always been white, why change now...Its only going to make things worse my dear.....all this advice...Yes,that ILEA business. ...telling us what to think....well my dear I honestly feel at times to give up my job....after all these years forced to give up my job, imagine?"

Sister Margarita, a nun and first year Head at St. Hilda's had a reputation both in the school and in the wider community (young mothers at the local youth centre made reference to her attitude), for not only being a difficult and often unpleasant, humourless person, (she was very strict), but also as one colleague called her, 'a bit of a bigot'. Her particular

attitude was one that was characterised by ignorance and intolerance, as the following incidents illustrate.

Sister Margarita was called to interview some prospective parents to the school. However the school secretary on delivering the message that they were on their way up, also whispered to her that they were 'black'. Sister Margarita immediately became agitated and said to the secretary, "I'm busy, tell them to wait". Eventually, after some time, she did go. However when she returned she exclaimed, surprised, to several colleagues, " Do you know he was a doctor...a black doctor!" Sister Margarita's limited racist perceptions had, in this instance received a jolt.

Even though Sister Margarita herself was humourless and stern her ignorance often caused amusement. When the education officer of the borough came to the school, Sister Margarita was taken aback when he, Mr Henry, who was himself black, struck up a conversation with her about a mutual acquaintance, another nun. Sister was visibly surprised by the connection, and to the amusement of many of the staff spoke clearly and loudly to Mr Henry as if she were speaking to a 'foreigner' who could not understand English.

Amusing though Sister Margarita's naive and ignorant attitudes might be, she often displayed the depth of her convictions, making what she felt to be logical assumptions about the black children, over which she had considerable authority.<sup>6</sup> For

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<sup>6</sup> As the First Year Head and the only ordained member of staff, she had a close working relationship with the head who clearly admired her 'formidable' teaching and organisational skills.

example during a staffroom conversation about the possibility of a school sports day, Sister Margarita expressed her concern saying:

" You can't have a sports day, things just wouldn't be fair, all the blacks would win all the prizes and that would cause only trouble".

This prompted the sharp reply from a colleague who said, " So it's alright if all the whites win!"

The existence of several studies that have also found overt forms of racism prevalent among teachers in schools, suggest that the presence of this form of racism is more widespread than is often recognised (DES 1985; Wright, in Eggleston et al 1986, 1987).

Apart from the situations mentioned so far, passing references to assumed inherent characteristics of black students were often to be heard in the staff-room and openly stated to me. For example, one pleasant and helpful young male teacher (he was doing an MA in Education), warned, "you have to watch them (i.e. black girls), they can be sly". Another explained, " they are angry and frustrated with their lot, and can get very hostile when they get into a group".

The evidence suggests that the work of the scientific racists (see Chapter 1) has permeated normative thought and belief about the inherent inferiority and superiority of the various races and cultures to a significant degree.<sup>7</sup> People do make, and find it necessary to make generalisations about people from limited information in every day life. However the type of assumptions

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<sup>7</sup> For literature reviewing racial stereotypes see Perkins 1979; Banton 1983; Barker 1981.

being made by certain members of staff about black pupils were clearly negative and thus had consequences for the black student.

(2) The 'Christians'

The 'Christians' were a distinctive group that lived up to their name. These teachers were identifiable by their capacity for compassion towards and conviction about the equality of their fellow black brothers and sisters.<sup>8</sup> The particular concept of equality employed by the 'Christians' led to a consensus that, in general, characterised this attitude: that is the 'colour-blind' approach to the education of the black child. What guided this approach was the philosophy that, "we are all the same ...there are no differences, and there are no problems": a celebration of 'sameness'. As one teacher pointed out, "we see them as pupils first not if they are black or white".

The following extract from the school newsletter of St. Hilda's, written by the headmaster Mr. Madden exemplifies this 'Christian' orientation to the black presence in British schools.<sup>9</sup> He writes:

<sup>8</sup> It must be noted that this orientation was by no means only found among practising Christians; it was an attitude that extended to non religious teaching staff and was identified by the philosophy of colour blindness not Christian belief.

<sup>9</sup> This Newsletter caused outrage among black parents and pupils in the school who felt it was offensive. One parent for example found being likened to French accents and Italian clothes particularly offensive, while others felt it stupid and shallow. Teachers, however although they too felt it was a rather awkward statement put it down to the 'hamfisted' 'eccentricity' of Mr Madden and were therefore prepared to overlook it.

Headmaster's Letter to Parents: Spring Mid-Term 1984

Dear parents,

Multi-Ethnic Education

I am convinced that you like me, wonder what this is all about? What are these words, ethnic, racialism, discrimination, minorities, equal opportunities, the British Movement and the National Front, etc. etc. and etc. White parents and white teachers pride themselves on treating all children, whatever the colour, in the fairest way possible. After all we are all Catholic men and women and we all know the story of the Good Samaritan in the Gospels where the foreign visitor took great care of his enemy, the badly injured Jewish traveller.....I could go on extolling our virtues but it would be incorrect.

Today in our schools, in our neighbourhood, in the place where we work, in the pubs, discotheques and everywhere we go, we will have children and adults who are not white and who may have different ideas about many different aspects of life etc. to which they are fully entitled. I think the general attitude from white people at best is to tolerate them and their differences although we really like charming French accents or chic Italian style shoes. To be honest with ourselves we haven't really tried to come to terms with these black children and adults and all you have to do is to look around the school or perhaps look at the number of black teenagers who are unemployed....."

This extract illustrates not only the 'well intentioned' nature of this ideological perspective, but it also highlights the gulf of experience that exists between the white staff and the black pupil: a "them and us" situation mediated by the belief in tolerance and understanding as a solution to the endemic problem of racial discrimination.

However this attitude in itself although limiting was not necessarily harmful to the pupils. What gave this particular 'Christian' orientation its negative impact was the reaction it engendered from the teachers to any form of positive action that aimed to redress racial discrimination. At St. Hilda's, for example, the setting up of a multi-racial working party was

objected to on the grounds of a general consensus that all pupils were treated equally in the school and that therefore there was no racial discrimination, in spite of evidence to the contrary.

An example of this general attitude was illustrated in a staff meeting at St. Hilda's, where a report submitted by the MRE working party <sup>10</sup> led to a discussion of race and racism in the school. In the meeting there was a great deal of hostility toward the suggestion that there was any form or practice of racism at St. Hilda's. When the representatives of the school's Working Party outlined their draft statement on how racism manifests itself in the school and how it should be tackled, the statement was met by non-reponse, with many members of the staff choosing not to participate in the discussion.

The staff's negative response to the Working Party's suggestions was largely directed toward the ILEA and what was considered to be its interfering insistence that racism is a problem for schools in London. They articulated their resentment:

" We are fair here, I think this is an unwelcome imposition from the ILEA. I believe we would have come round to a discussion of the matter in our own time...I don't feel we needed to be told. I think we are being pushed..." (Mr Gavin: Mathematics teacher, St. Hilda's)

" What do they (ILEA) mean by black ? They try to give us their ideas of what black is...I think it is a bit of a cheek really. Don't you? Well its all well and good but

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<sup>10</sup> The MRE working party at St. Hilda's constantly met with opposition. The working party's status was under threat, not least by the Head, who felt it was an unnecessary committee. In several instances he went out of his way to obstruct the holding of meetings, giving no time allowances to the staff involved. He himself only attended one meeting when the multi-racial Inspector of the borough came to review the school's progress on the matter.

its a lot of talk , they don't give us much back-up or help, do they ?" (Ms Prime: French mistress, St, Hilda's)

" Think its down to this...the authority has told us we must do something so we must not quibble with the authority, we must be seen to be doing something". (Mr Sutton: Head of the Fifth Year and D&T teacher)

The resentment stemmed from the strong belief that racism was not present in the school nor was cultural diversity an issue they needed to address, as several of the staff explained:

" I really don't think we are as affected as other schools. We are all Christians here. That is our culture , and our way of life, black and white, I really can't see that there has been a spread of any other different culture ". (Ms Cole: Religious and General Studies teacher)

" We don't need to know where they come from...colour is not important. I'm not interested in peoples backgrounds, I treat everyone by their own worth as individuals". (Mr Simpson: History teacher and Third Year Head)

" There is no need to go out of your way to find out information about them, It could be regarded as prying, but if they offer information that is another thing". (Ms Phillips: Head of English )

The conclusion to this discussion of race in the staff meeting was an interesting one. It was decided that there is no need for guidelines or disciplinary action for racist behaviour in the classroom. It was felt that dealing with such issues was an individual matter. There was also a strong feeling among the staff that they did not need to be told how to conduct their internal affairs not only because that was tantamount to interference, but also, as one teacher explained, it could lead to problems when, as they agreed, there were none:

" By talking about racism, making it an issue coloured pupils can get aggressive. I've seen it at St. Joan's ... the atmosphere is so tense. You feel threatened just going in there. Teachers have been attacked there, terrorised, I've heard. I don't want that here, not here. We have a happy and healthy atmosphere here". ( Ms Cole: Religious and General Studies teacher)

The refusal to recognise the existence of racism and the effect that this oversight might have on black pupils can again be illustrated by the response of Mr Madden, the Headmaster of St. Hilda's, to my application to undertake to do research in his school.

Mr Madden was very keen and interested about my wanting to do research in his school, and in particular my emphasis on black girls. He explained:

" I suppose you know and indeed we are very proud that we have several black girls here doing very well....we are pleased about that. It is good that you are here. I understand that there is a lot of interest in the performance of black girls. As you will see we are doing fine, very well. There is very little that I can tell you as everything is fine, as it should be , may I say. You know we don't make special cases and I am sure when it comes down to it that is why they do so well."

However, the truth was far from Mr Madden's claims. While there were several black girls in the top achievement stream of the school as he had said, these girls did not owe their placement in this Band 1 stream to the policy of non-recognition upheld by Headmaster and his staff. The educational achievements of the black girls in the school were in spite of and not because of the schooling they received. During my months of fieldwork, as the final examinations of the 5th year became imminent, it became clear that all was not well with the black girls in the top stream, as Anita, one of these girls explained:

" I hate streaming, I hate it ,miss, I wish they never had it." Anita explained that she felt that 'they' (the school) did not care about her or the others like her, that all the school wanted was for them to be seen to be doing well, "they's just want to be looking good ... They keep on and on at you... you must do well , you gotta do well....so much all the time I tell you. I so fed up... They expect so much from you".

Anita was almost in tears when she described the pressure she was under with the exams coming up, saying, " they think it so easy miss, they think it so easy, you know".

The teachers did have high expectations of their Band 1 pupils, but the evidence suggested that at the same time there was a limited amount of support and educational preparation for these pupils <sup>11</sup>. In spite of the girls' obvious need for assistance during this crucial time of their educational career <sup>12</sup>, the teachers remained steadfast in their belief that no special case should be made as all pupils were held to be the same.

The following statement by Ms Phillips, an English teacher, illustrates the rationale that resulted in this 'Christian', colour-blind attitude among the staff:

" You can see that Anita is very good at her work. She and the others (Veronica and Donna, two other Band 1 pupils) are all bright but they will get together and talk...well I don't want to say anything for peace sake, you know...they can be so disruptive and then I'll have a situation on my hands where they all don't concentrate in the lesson. Its better not to say anything , at least that has been my experience. I don't want to rock the boat, as it were, you know... They seem to manage quite well in their own way...They did not come for the test (mock 'O'level paper), now that got me angry...its a waste of their time and mine. But I did set my own paper . They did well so I entered them (for the 'O'level) on good faith...."

For 'peace sake' Ms Phillips did not want to push the girls academically by insisting on their concentration and participation. She was satisfied to leave the girls to their own

<sup>11</sup> A research study by Rubovits and Maehr (1973) showed that in fact gifted blacks get the least assistance.

<sup>12</sup> Further evidence of the girls need for assistance was illustrated by the fact that their mock results were considerably below average, with many young women absenting themselves rather than fail.

devices even though she was aware of their potential. Often Ms Phillip's lessons were unruly and disorganised; on the whole difficult learning forums for the pupils. The colour-blind approach of this teacher was neither useful to the staff nor to the pupils and as this example showed, clearly jeopardised the educational outcome for all concerned.

Furthermore the unwillingness to take a strong stand on educational issues concerning the black child for fear of 'rocking the boat', a basic characteristic of the 'Christian' attitude, had the effect of both misleading and misinforming black parents about the progress of their children, as the following example illustrates.

Marion's mother had been under the impression that her daughter's progress at school was satisfactory. Marion's reports all indicated that she was working well - "Progress Good" was what was written in the annual reports. Ms Dale, Marion's mother was therefore very surprised when she was called to the school for a formal meeting to discuss Marion's poor levels of attainment.

" I thought she doing ok. They said she doing good ,and doing good is doing good, not so. But now the teacher say I must understand that doing good is a relative thing. Marion was doing good for Marion, not just doing good."

Ms. Dale felt that she had been misled about her daughter's progress, because, as it transpired, the teacher concerned did not want to disappoint her black pupil. The effect of this teacher's 'kindness' was not only upsetting for both Marion and her parents, it was also detrimental to her long term progress. Marion was unprepared for her exams and eventually had to give up

two subjects in order that she might be able to cope with the rest of her work.

This form of patronisation was not an isolated incident. Other cases occurred where in order to avoid disappointment or to encourage their black pupils, teachers were found to be giving the wrong impression of a child's progress. In Tony's case this was a particularly misplaced gesture on behalf of the teachers concerned.

Tony was a young black woman who had been in 'care' most of her life. To encourage her the staff at St. Theresa's had, as in the case of Marion, given the impression in her school reports that her progress had been good. Eventually this strategy began to have negative consequences and the Head of Year had to ring up the home Tony was at and tell them, much to their surprise, that her progress was not as thought and was in need of some strong re-evaluation in order to rectify the situation with regard to her future.

The evidence was clear, the 'Christian' approach despite its benevolent and passive characteristics, can have negative consequences for black pupils. By adopting a 'colour-blind' perspective, the staff and the schools concerned created an atmosphere where ignorance and fear remained unchallenged. Any reference to colour was, among the 'Christians' an accepted taboo, as its very mention implied that there existed racial differences.

### (3) The 'Crusaders'

In contrast to the 'Christians' the 'Crusaders' were prepared to acknowledge that racism was present within educational establishments. This group of teachers held strong beliefs that this racism among their colleagues and the pupils they taught should be challenged. These teachers were therefore dedicated to action; that is action of a political sort and indeed action as sanctioned and prescribed by the ILEA.<sup>13</sup>

Comparatively the 'Crusaders' were few in number, just 2% of the teachers in the study lived up to the reputation as active 'anti-racist campaigners'. The distinctive characteristics of the 'Crusaders' were their colour (white), their youth and their commitment to their cause. This latter aspect that in particular identified this group, the commitment to their cause, was characterised by a strategy that sought to 'educate' fellow colleagues into the wrongs of the past and the injustices of the present. Ms Wallace, a teacher at St. Theresa's, shared her sweeping radical views when she explained enthusiastically:

" What we need to do is eradicate, get rid of this white elitist education we have, leave it behind, I ask you what relevance is Shakespeare nowadays? That goes for everyone not just for the black kids."

Not surprisingly, in view of reaction of the majority of teachers to the issue of race (already discussed), together with their often dogmatic approach, the 'Crusaders' found little sympathy for their cause among their colleagues. The experiences of

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that a recent study by Troyna and Ball (1985: 321) challenged the assumption that the publication of a policy statement in itself can precipitate change in school practice. Evidence here suggests that the ILEA's policy recommendations did indeed have a limited impact on the staff concerned.

Rachel Spencer, a young Drama teacher at St. Hilda's, illustrates the frustrations and futility of the often overzealous and misguided campaign that was the hallmark of the 'Crusaders'.

In accordance with the guidelines of the ILEA's directives on anti-racism (1985), Ms Spencer had been engaged for several months in the difficult (but voluntary) task of setting up a multi-racial working party in her school, St. Hilda's. One day totally exasperated with her struggle she explained:

" We are breaking ILEA policy, actually going against it by not doing anything positive. We must do something".

She had come up against several obstacles in her attempts to establish the working party, not least because of the Headmasters own objections. His dissent was grounded in the fact that he felt the working party was an intrusion and violation of the school's private affairs by an outside body, the ILEA, mediated by Ms Spencer. Mr Madden also felt, like many others that racism was not an issue. As Spencer explained her campaign was frustrated at every turn:

" Madden has no interest in working parties...so he does not attend , not even to give any moral support. So you can imagine this lazy lot do not bother to attend , maybe one or two out of how many of us? Thirty or so? Well I suppose there are no promotional prospects in attending...so why bother? No one's going to stay on till 5.30 when they can go home at 4.00 if they don't have to are they?<sup>14</sup> Even at lunch time there is a problem. I'm really fed up, dealing with people that just don't care. Yesterday I wanted to call a meeting at lunch but because some of them wanted to play football they said I can't have it at lunch. Everyone moans, they can't come at that time or at this time. They don't seem to understand that it is school policy I am talking about. No one has shown any interest in that plan of mine to speak to the 5th and 4th years.....You won't believe this, Madden actually said that I cannot go to the meeting that I arranged with Mr Bacchus (Borough MRE

<sup>14</sup> During my time at St. Hilda's there was an ongoing strike over the issue of overtime.

inspector).<sup>15</sup> Guess his excuse? There is no one to cover for my lesson...A bit weak I think."

Ms Spencer was not the only member of staff at St. Hilda's to experience the frustrations produced by the apathy of colleagues. Mr Mahon in a final effort to arouse some support for the MRE working party and its anti-racist campaign had this to say:

"What we should do is send a report to the inspectorate saying 'we find no racism here and that we have resolved all our problems about racism', that will get them going. What a laugh the authority will have. This will be a miracle school, the only one in London to have eradicated racism".

While Rachel Spencer saw her colleagues as suspicious, backward and inherently prejudiced, they on the other hand regarded her and the other committed anti-racist campaigners in a not too serious light, as somewhat eccentric and going through a 'phase', a bit of a nuisance. Ms Spencer was aware of how she was being patronised by her fellow teachers:

" They see me as a tizzy young woman with a bee in my bonnet about this race thing, who gets upset easily. They try to put you down, Mr Madden is always saying things like 'don't worry dear....don't get upset dear'".

Making 'Crusaders' less threatening by evaluating them as harmless 'radicals' was a way some members of staff at St. Hilda's had developed to deal with the often uncompromising demands of the 'Crusaders'. For example, it was not uncommon to find some teachers making fun of their colleagues on the basis of their dress, appearance, age or sex, as this teacher explained:

" No one takes Rachel seriously. She gives the impression of being so disorganised and inefficient, but I suppose she gets there in the end. I want to tell her what I think, well what we all think, but I haven't got the heart, just look at what she has got on today! She tries so hard I suppose I just can't. It is the image one gives that achieves results. It is so important, even though Rachel,

<sup>15</sup> Eventually I stood in for Ms Spencer's drama class so that she could go.

she is doing things, people do not see her directions." (Ms Cole: Religious Studies and General studies teacher)

There was little doubt the 'Crusaders' were dedicated to the cause of anti-racism, however their actions were not always in the best interests of the black pupils in their care. Often because of the futility and frustrations of their campaign, a great deal of the 'Crusaders' teaching energies were concentrated on their staffroom campaign. It was also clear that the well-meaning but self-conscious treatment of black pupils in their classroom did not satisfy the immediate needs of the black students. The multi-racial input of the 'Crusaders' into classroom work did not appear to have much effect on the black pupils in the lesson, though, it must be said it did make these lessons and teachers more popular and liked. These teachers were regarded as more caring, less strict, and more approachable <sup>16</sup>. For example, though one young black woman described Rachel as 'sweet', but this did not mean that these teachers had the trust or confidence of the young black women in their classes. The young black women explained that they often felt patronised and were aware of these teachers efforts to be 'nice'.

" You think he is nice and all. He'll come up and speak to you nice, but you can't trust him, he'll stab you in the back". (Verne :black girl, 5th Year St. Hilda's talking about Mr Sutton the Fifth Year Head).

The black girls stated clearly that they did not feel the classes of certain 'Crusader' type teachers the best, although they were the most pleasant to be in. The girls frequently articulated their desire for more structured lessons. For example Mr Mahon's

<sup>16</sup> Green( DES 1985:52) found that with tolerant teachers who used the indirect teaching method, black girls received more than their fair share of attention and also recieved less criticism about their work.

relaxed approach to his English lessons in which he invited 5th years to contribute by recounting their own experiences was met by bemused non-participation by the young black women in the class. These girls who sat throughout the lesson in the back of the classroom looked on while others carried on doing 'prep'. One girl said what she thought of the lesson:

" I never can understand what he is on about. What he want to know all that for?" (sic)

Other pupils found their teachers' efforts to include in the lesson what they considered to be socially-relevant 'black ' experiences amusing, as Brenda explained:

" Miss it was a laugh, Miss Spencer made Verne be a social worker, right, and then I was sent to her as I was caught missing school, right, ...It was funny miss." (Anita talking about her 5th year drama lesson)

Not only did the girls in this group have no experience of truanting, they had never been near a social worker. Ms Spencer had assumed that such experiences were a reality for the pupils in her class, an unwarranted assumption.

Ms Spencer's perspective on the lesson was markedly different from that articulated by the black girls in the class as she explained:

" It was a very good session, the black kids got into it. Its important that the material is socially relevant for them. I think they could really understand what it was all about, it was good."

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that the outcome of the 'Crusader' anti-racist campaign was less productive than they themselves believed. The efforts of these well-intentioned teachers were lost on both their colleagues as well as their pupils, the former alienated, and the latter they neglected, if not misunderstood. A statement which is more indicative about

the way they went about things and the attitude of their colleagues rather than to the salience of their message.

(4) The 'Liberal Chauvinists'

Unlike the 'Crusaders' the 'Liberal Chauvinists' were not campaigners for social justice. These teachers did however attempt to 'understand', (albeit only within the context of their own perspective), the cultural, class, and gender characteristics of the various minorities they came into contact with. Armed with information, mostly gleaned from secondary sources such as television, books, travels, friends, rather than personal experience, these liberally-inclined teachers were often convinced, with a curious arrogance that characterised the 'Liberal Chauvinists', that when it came to their students, they knew best. There were many examples of such liberally orientated staff in the schools in the study. Approximately 25% of the teachers held beliefs that would classify them in this category.

There were many different types of 'Liberal Chauvinism' to be found among the staff in both the schools. Each form having its own unique characteristics and therefore specific outcome for the the young black women who found themselves on the receiving end of this type of 'unintentional' racism. Turning to an examination of one of these forms of 'Liberal Chauvinism', I cite first the case of Mr Sutton.

Sutton, the Fifth Year Head at St. Hilda's, believed that he, better than any other member of staff 'understood' 'his' black female students. In his efforts to 'understand' the young black

women in his classrooms, Mr Sutton had become preoccupied with the issue of the sexuality of the black female pupils in the fifth year, as indeed were many other members of staff. It seemed that for Mr Sutton the answer to everything, when it came to young black women - success, failure; good or bad behaviour, happiness or sadness - lay in an explanation, that had as its central causal concern, the dynamic of black female sexuality. In the fifth year at St. Hilda's there were several Band 1 black girls who were not achieving as expected, he explained:

" I do feel ethnic monitoring of at least keeping a record of black pupils could help us understand what's going on better. It has occurred to me, just by looking at the reports that something is very wrong, very wrong indeed: how much is actually concerned with behaviour and not achievement. In a few weeks these girls suddenly do badly...so much going on inside them. What I mean is that they are maturing becoming young ladies. It seems at this point their performance slips... as if school is, well beneath them. Yes, I do think many of them begin to feel that school is beneath them".

The fifth year reports of the black female pupils, written by Sutton and other members of staff, reaffirmed the popular notion linking sexual maturity to levels of achievement.<sup>17</sup> In these reports, which make often overtly sexist comments regarding particular feminine characteristics, behaviour is employed as the medium through which achievement and maturity are assessed. The following extracts from the school reports of young black women in the fifth year illustrate my point:

" Sandra must learn to behave like a woman if she is to be treated like one..." (Mr Farr: Fifth Year class tutor commenting on Sandra, aged 16)

" Very able and mature girl capable of doing well in future years. Her attitude to work and manner and punctuality are all worthy of mention. Well done!" (Mr Sutton: Fifth Year Head commenting on Verne, aged 16)

<sup>17</sup> Douglas in his study "All Our Future" (1968:190), makes the link between adolescent maturity and achievement.

"Charm and good manners are as commendable in a young women as work and punctuality!" (Mr Sutton: commenting on Donna, aged 16)

" It is clear from this report that the staff and I feel that Francis is maturing gradually. I hope the sensible approach has not come too late". (Mr Sutton: commenting on Francis, aged 16)

" Sandra is a good girl who has to work hard to do well. She has responded well recently to appeals of mature behaviour. With the world of work looming on the horizon, and a change in behaviour she is capable of passing a number of subjects in the exams..." (Mr Sutton: commenting on Sandra, aged 16)

It was not uncommon to find members of staff in both school complaining, generally of the 'naive and immature' approach all fifth year students had toward their exams and to their future.<sup>18</sup>

As one teacher explained:

" They simply do not take them seriously (exams). They have no idea of what is required of them in the real world." (Mr Gavin: Mathematics teacher St. Hilda's)

However, when discussing black girls the teachers would also complain more specifically about boyfriends, aggressive and unruly behaviour, and in general, assertiveness, which was often interpreted as being 'cocky'. It appeared that the girls' status as young women had contradictory outcomes in the way they were regarded. Being mature on the one hand was seen as the explanation for responsibility and taking school work seriously.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Hudson (1984) in her study of femininity and adolescence observed that teachers often use the discourse of adolescence (as opposed to femininity which is employed by social workers) for talking about girls' behaviour. This they do because the nature of their contact with teenagers is organised on the basis of age rather than gender most of the time. However in my study it was apparent that most teachers related to their black pupils primarily on the basis of various sexually-derived images they held with regard to black people, and in particular the sexually permissive stereotype of black females. Thus not only did the age or adolescence of these young women come into play but a more important consideration was the perceived nature of their femininity.

On the other hand a 'developed' sense of maturity was regarded as a reason for lack of concentration and dissatisfaction with schooling. In this regard the black girls could not win. Their sexuality was perceived to be continually at odds with their educational achievement. Whether 'developed' or not, it was clear that their sexuality had to be contained.<sup>19</sup>

This need to move toward a containment of black female sexuality was never more apparent than in the case of Anita, the young black fifth former who became pregnant just before she was to take her final exams. The reaction to Anita's pregnancy revealed that the control of black female sexuality presented a constant and underlying concern with regard to the schooling of young black women. The 'scandal' of Anita's pregnancy became known when her father rang the school to say that she would no longer be attending. Mr Sutton was as intrigued as he was excited at being in on the 'scandal'. He explained in hushed tones:

" Anita has disgraced herself....I had a suspicion when she begun to miss so much school, it wasn't like her. Don't tell any of the others , keep it between us, if they know , well other parents , the school..what a waste,honestly these girls will get themselves into such situations. Anita was such a lovely girl".

The shame of the event was evident <sup>20</sup>. Mr Gavin, who was also a form tutor for the fifth year had this to say of the incident:  
"What a pity... I was very disappointed in Anita".

<sup>19</sup> Foucault (1976) has demonstrated that an analysis of sexuality can be revealing. He argues that the particular discourse on sex that emerged in Europe between the eighteenth and twentieth century reveals the exact procedures of power in society. In secondary schools, he observes, the surveillance of sex was a constant preoccupation for those in authority (1976:27)

<sup>20</sup> This shame was not shared by Anita or her boyfriend who regarded the matter in a totally different light. See Chapter 5

The outcome of the pregnancy was that the staff who had previously confessed a interest in Anita's academic ability as one of the most promising students of the fifth year, washed their hands of the matter. They made no attempt to assist her in her studies or to advise her on her educational future. The issue was not to be discussed and Anita was warned not to come to school in her 'state'. Because the obvious expression of her sexuality had caused the school embarrassment, Anita was now regarded as being an immoral individual, and as such a bad influence on her peers.<sup>21</sup> The perceived 'understanding' by the 'Liberal Chauvanists' toward their black female pupils was short lived when Anita's situation was judged from their own moral (and cultural) standpoint.

However the theory pertaining to black female sexuality was only one of a number of 'informed' beliefs held by the 'Liberal Chauvinists' to explain the educational performance of the black girls in their classrooms. Ideas about the nature of the cultural and family background of West Indian female pupils were also culturally 'distanced' and as such often misunderstood (Driver 1977). For example it was not uncommon to find that many teachers felt that their black pupils possessed a cultural handicap that inhibited their successful educational participation. This belief, it must be stressed emanated from a so-called 'informed' perspective that these teachers thought they had about West Indian life' and was therefore different in kind

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<sup>21</sup> In a similar incident at St. Theresa's the pregnancy of a fourth year black girl was also suppressed.

than the attitude displayed by the 'Overt Racists' who held a similar but more genetically-orientated view.

In staffroom discussions teachers, who regarded themselves as informed, often showed a complete lack of understanding when it came to the cultural values or social lives of young black people. There was often surprise (and horror) at the extent to which young black girls helped and were expected to help with household chores. Some 'progressive' members of staff, most of whom were women themselves, felt it was a handicap to the girls' educational advancement. In one instance a mother, who was herself an educational welfare officer, was summoned to the school to be told to stop, "putting upon her daughter." Ms Parker, believing, in her estimation and using the yardstick of her own experience, that this was indeed not only an endemic but also detrimental aspect of West Indian culture, decided that this was an explanation for Sherry's (high ability) recent deterioration in her work. She took matters into her own hands saying:

" She (Sherry's mother) is one of those that believes you must work hard to get anywhere, you know, to work and work to better ones self. I think she's too hard on Sherry. She drives herself so hard , she's now started fainting during school time. It is emotional stress if you ask me. I understand the father left home, then came back and he treats them very badly, they have no beds at the momment, and if Sherry does not help at home she gets no food. A bit of a problem don't you think? It is difficult to know what to do. We are considering sending her to the school psychologist".

Whatever the cause of Sherry's distress over her school work, the pathological sensationalism of Ms Parker's explanation displayed in this extract had clearly been fed by the impoverished images she had of cruel black men and over-ambitious black women. Yet

Ms Parker had derived her explanation from her own evaluation of West Indian culture.

It was apparent that pictures of black pupils coming from, on the whole, socially deprived backgrounds, and thus in need of care and assistance, were being pieced together from information teachers read or saw and understood within their own cultural framework. These assessments of their pupils had important consequences for the black girls in their care. Their ideas impinged on the expectations and attitudes they had toward certain girls who became labelled as problem children or not from the impressions that they derived, from often very limited contact with the parents of the girls.

Lisa and Deborah both had parents that came regularly to the PTA at St. Theresa's to help out. These girls came from what were considered to be middle class, professional, black families, (i.e. the father had the professional job and not the mother), and were regarded by Ms Parker as, "lovely young ladies." In contrast to Sherry's mother, she described Lisa's mother as, " Well dressed and attractive, keen people, worth meeting."

On the other hand, Miriam was seen as deviant, not least because of her parents:

" Miriam is not reliable.... her mother, well, she is nice, but so disorganised. If you ring they never know where their daughters are or what they are up to....still in bed sometimes and they have to boot them out. I understand they never pay their bills, electricity is turned off, no bath etc..."

Here social problems were turned into character deficiencies.

Whereas in the next example, Mr Scott claimed a black mother, who had principles, had in effect 'personality problems':

" She thinks all books are 'racist'. I hear she's crazy anyway, tears the books up and throws them away. She's one of those real 'hardliners'. I think her behaviour is affecting her daughter."

If on the other hand, black parents were less assertive, for whatever reason, it was interpreted as measure of their cultural and educational 'backwardness'. Mr Gavin, for example had this to say of the parents of a West Indian pupil who was in 'trouble' with the school:

" ...they are very decent people, but they never come to school. They are a bit overawed by the whole thing".

The issue of black parental 'fear' of the educational system was often brought up in staff meetings to account for the poor parental participation in all aspects of schooling. In contrast, the matter of the school failing in its role to encourage parental attendance was not emphasised. It would seem that the black parents could not win: they were equally a 'problem' whether they spoke out or remained silent.

Unrealistic expectations and overambitiousness was another aspect of West Indian 'culture' that the 'Liberal Chauvinists' preoccupied themselves with. It was felt, among the staff that these demands were imposed on the children of West Indian households as a matter of course. The staff tended to regard the hopes of parents for their children not as considered aspirations, but as symptomatic of what they 'knew' to be the unrealistic cultural orientation of black families (an over ambitiousness that also determined what they considered to be the

unacceptable levels of discipline in West Indian households). Thus the common complaint of 'too high aspirations' among West Indian parents was met with a general concern among the 'Liberal Chauvinists' that the daughters of such unreasonable parents should be preserved from such demands, as the following example shows.

" Linda's mother is very strict, one of those religious West Indian families you know. She even says 'God bless you' when you ring. Now, she wants Linda to do 'A' Level RE, but she hasn't got a clue about her daughter. She's not even up to grade 3 CSE. She lives in another world, both of them." (Ms Parker: Fifth Year Head at St. Theresa's, discussing Linda aged 16)

Ms Wallace, Careers mistress, counsellor and English teacher at St. Theresa's felt deeply committed to 'her girls'. She was indeed a dedicated teacher with a long standing reputation for 'caring and helping', yet she too harboured her convictions about the 'hopeless' position concerning the future of most of the black girls with whose charge she was entrusted <sup>22</sup>. She was prepared to discuss her concerns over individual fifth year girls:

" Miriam is being unrealistic...She is not equipped academically or as a person to do probation work or any sort of social work, she will only be disappointed, yet another case of one who wants to be but won't be. But how do you deal with these situations, you tell me , it is very touchy." (Four years later, in a follow-up study, Marion had completed the social studies course she had wanted to do at the local FE college in Brixton).

Laurie, I would call a fairly competent sort of girl, but she needs to focus more clearly on what she really will be able to do". (Laurie was an outstanding tennis player with high hopes of becoming professional but this was considered unrealistic by the school (see Chapter 6). She also had excellent academic credentials).

<sup>22</sup> It should also be noted that Ms Wallace was engaged on a part time MA in Education ,and was particularly interested in the issue of gender in schools.

Of Rubina, who wanted to study law and showed every indication that she was capable academically of pursuing such a career, (she already had several CSE and 'O' level passes from her previous year in the fifth form), Ms Wallace was not prepared to offer any undue encouragement, she said:

" She may go on to do 'A' Levels, but she is so ambitious, may be a bit too anxious ..."

Ms Wallace's pessimistic assessment of these high ability and achievement orientated young black women was not shared by the black careers officer, Ms Forte, who visited St. Theresa's on a regular basis to interview the girls and counsel them on their future choices. Ms Forte had views of her own, contrary to Ms Wallace, concerning the girls' capabilities:

" I think Mariam is fully capable of undertaking a social work course....Ms Wallace presumes sometimes that these girls have less of a mind than they really do."

Ms Wallace, however, remained adamant about the way in which she saw things. In a meeting she confidently explained to Ms Forte and myself the cause of black disadvantage:

" We have our fair share of deprived girls here. You know who they are: they miss work, always absent, truant, come late, sometimes its quite appalling. Then they turn around and say to you, "Can't do it ...will you help us ", How can you if they do not help themselves? They feel once you are here you have to think for them. They just have to learn to do it for themselves. They are on the verge of entering the world of work, the real world we are told, and they have not a thought in their head about anything yet alone a career".

Opinions such as these were clear obstacles to the girls' educational progress. Ms Wallace's attitude set up in the classroom a situation of cause and effect. The astute girls in her class often minimized their efforts and involvement in her lessons, and in doing so increased the amount of attention she as a teacher felt necessary to give them. However this was only one way in which such negative teaching attitudes affected the girls.

It was far more common to witness more obvious and direct negative assessments, as the following example demonstrates.

Ms Andrews a third year mistress explained that one of her third year students, a black girl was insistent on taking history as an examination subject for the future. However she felt:

" Andrea is just not capable and she has been strongly advised not to. She is disorganised and a lazy girl, and slow. Even if she were able to do the CSE she could not complete the course work. She wants to do it so badly but we know she'll fail. I cannot allow it."

Such concern could easily be regarded as a honest assessment, advice that in order to avoid disappointment, sensibly takes into account the limitations of a pupil's ability. However, when another teacher's evaluation of Andrea is taken into consideration, this assessment begins to seem unfair. Another teacher revealed:

" It is not that she (Andrea) is lazy or not able to manage, it is just that she tries too hard. For instance she'll rewrite four lines in one lesson just to get it right and looking good."

Tomlinson (1981b:59) has found that many teachers do operate within a framework of stereotypes which are more often reinforced than negated by pupil response. She argues that it was not uncommon to find that teachers regarded their West Indian pupils as generally slow, docile and underachievers on the one hand and hyperactive and anti-authoritarian on the other. In the case of Andrea the primary response of the teacher was to categorise her as slow and lazy. This meant that the teacher overlooked and failed to encourage the qualities of perseverance and commitment that Andrea obviously had. Thus rather than attempting to develop her potential, Ms Andrews labelled Andrea as lazy and

slow relegating her to the category of 'difficult and problematic'.

Sharon, a bright fifth year pupil at St. Theresa's found herself in a similar situation to Andrea, although unlike Andrea she had been classified as over-ambitious rather than slow. Ms Parker, her form mistress explained:

" She is aiming far too high. I think it is fair to say that all the staff are concerned, she will only be disappointed in September. But we feel she is only capable of 5-6 CSE's. There were tears all round when we discussed (with her mother) that she will have to really drop one subject."

Ms Parker's rationale for giving Sharon this advice was obvious. She explained that her family circumstances were such that over-loading Sharon with work was wrong :

" Her mother works nights, she's a nurse I believe. There are many social problems in the family, I think the father left and there are small children involved. Sharon has to help out and we just don't think she can cope."

Sharon desperately wanted to do all the subjects she was trying for as they were necessary for her to gain access to the social work course she wanted to enrol for the following year. Parker, however, in the girl's 'best interests' felt the course should not be her primary consideration, and rather than offer any support or understanding strongly advised Sharon to give up what was to her a very important course.<sup>23</sup>

In conclusion, there were numerous examples of teachers' negative assessments, most of which were based on what they believed to be 'informed judgement' . These negative assessments often led to

<sup>23</sup> As the Destination Questionnaires subsequently showed, Sharon did eventually complete her social work course despite Ms Parker's strong reservations to me four years earlier.

the curtailment of opportunities that should have been available to the black girls in the study in view of their ability and attainment.

In the following extract the beliefs of Mr Sutton sums up the characteristics and indicates the shortcomings of those who had held a 'Liberal Chauvinistic' approach:

" I get on well with her (Gina), you have to understand her, if she feels someone is against her she reacts in a violent way." <sup>24</sup>

#### (4) The 'Black Teacher'

There is an expectation that with a positive policy of recruitment toward black teachers, not only will it present a more representative picture of the population of the inner city, but that they will also be placed in the forefront of the demand for a more progressive and egalitarian educational system. However, in the schools studied the black members of staff, who numbered only four, did not participate in the obvious arena that had been constructed to encourage such change . The anti-racist campaign, which on the whole was monopolised by the 'Crusaders', did not attract black support, as Mr Green, a young black male teacher at St' Hilda's explained:

" I just let them get on with their business. I don't bother with them. They feel they know what it is all about so who

<sup>24</sup> Gina was a black fifth year student at St. Hilda's who had a reputation for being particularly difficult, which in some ways she was. However she was prevented from pursuing a number of courses that she showed an interest in because the teachers of those lessons did not want her there. As a consequence she could not do textile design and needlework, two subjects she really wanted to do and was reasonably good at. The rather weak reason put forward by the textile design teacher being: " She makes no effort in maths: and maths and design are clearly related."

am I to say. I find it just gets on my nerves, I keep well out of it".(sic)

This negative feeling about the 'liberal white tokenism' that dominated the race issue in schools was articulated by the other black teachers:

" The ILEA has set about 'investigating' the 'problem of race'. Everyone is rushing around 'investigating race', talking about 'running out of time', having to do it now. A curious way to go about things." (Ms Lewis: Biology Head of Department, St. Theresa's)

It was not that these black members of staff did not sympathise with the need to reassess the issue of race in the schools, but that they shared <sup>25</sup> a definite and alternative perspective on the nature of the black educational dilemma and the solution to that problem. This orientation was clear from the statements these teachers made about the role and development of multi-racial education. For example, when Ms Lewis was asked what she felt about multi-racial education and equal opportunities policies she said:

" So what about them? What needs to change, if you ask me, is ourselves and our attitudes as teachers, rather than the girls."

As a science teacher in an all girls school, Ms Lewis had particular views concerning the issue of equal opportunities and science teaching for all the girls whether black or white:

" ...more importantly than multi-racial education the way certain subjects are taught to all pupils regardless, should be looked at. The way science is taught should be looked at. It is often the way science is approached that prevents girls from seeing it as useful or enjoying it....nothing is that difficult if it is taught properly. Why should physics or chemistry be defined as difficult or more challenging than other subjects. All subjects require different skills and approaches, if it clicks, if it is enjoyable, and if you have got the knack, then why should it be difficult..."

<sup>25</sup> N.B. The black teachers appeared to 'share' this common orientation even though they were not all from the same school and thus did not know each other.

In this school, like everywhere, they say and encourage only 'clever' girls to do chemistry and physics 'O' level. Why should science be reserved for the 'clever' girls. Why should you be 'clever' to understand maths ...it is just our own values about cleverness linked to science. Now equal opportunities are recommending as a positive policy that 'clever', more able girls do physics and chemistry at 'O' level and then go on straight to do 'A' level biology. This is their way of trying to make more girls take part and do more science, but it does not get to the heart of the problem."

The opinion that black pupils should maximise their learning capacity during traditional and structured classroom contact hours was also a common theme among black members of staff. For example Dr Ashraf, an Asian science teacher at St. Hilda's had this to say about mother tongue teaching:

" There is a lot of emphasis on Spanish, Italian languages here, being Catholic many come from those parts. Its a waste. Asian languages in school is wasting the childrens' time when they could be learning other things to get them a job. It should be done at home, we don't need the school to tell us who we are or what to speak. Time in school should be spent on learning".

As the issue of role models is often discussed in relation to the recruitment of black teachers, an aspect of that is worth investigating is pupil response to their presence. It was apparent in the schools that the race of the teacher was not as significant as the quality of their teaching and their ability to communicate with the girls. Of course the race of the teacher did automatically increase their ability to empathise with the girls and so increased their popularity, as the girls explained:

" Ms Lewis, she's a good teacher. She makes you work, but she's always fair".(fifth year black girl)

" She's never picks on anyone , not like Ms Webster...best of all she never shouts at you". (fifth year black girl commenting on Ms Lewis)

The feeling was mutual, the exchange between black teacher and black pupil showed no elements of favouritism or special

recognition; they were regarded simply as pupils by the teachers and teachers by the pupils <sup>26</sup>. Mr Green demonstrated this when he warned me about several black male students in the school:

" Those boys, they are trouble makers. They try to disrupt everything for you. Just ignore them and keep out of their way that is what we all do".

Similarly, Ms Lewis explained that she did not give any particular preference to the young black women she taught just because she herself was a black woman. She explained her philosophy on the matter, a philosophy that was in marked contrast to that expressed by many of her white colleagues and documented earlier in this chapter.

" No matter who we are we can only do what we can ...there is no point in trying to be or do what you can't. No matter if you are black or white we all have limitations. The important thing is to recognise what those limitations are in terms of your academic ability and work on your strong points."

Being a black woman and having a black perspective on issues concerning the pupils was as the case of Ms Forte, the careers liason officer at St. Theresa's, of immense value when it came to advising and understanding the girls' needs. In her realistic appraisal of the career situation for young black women she was able to relate the desire for certain jobs to family background, the migrant experience and social class influences among West Indians. As a Black female careers officer Ms Forte felt she was in a difficult position, but she did not give the girls false hope or misleading information just because she felt that black women should aspire as high as they could, she explained:

" As a careers officer my role is to prepare them for a job. To broaden their interests and to provide information, but

<sup>26</sup> Ray Rist (1970) comments on the fact that black teachers responded in the class in such a way as to show no difference between black and white pupils.

also to be aware of how we as careers officers can affect their opportunities....It is difficult to assess what job they would like and how to give advice. You can't say, "no, you can't be such and such". You have to be realistic, it just may not be possible. Ultimately, it's your job to help them stop wasting time to be a doctor by giving them realistic advice. Some girls for example, are late developers. You have to then just give them the facts and help them make their mind up. If they want to work hard give them the time and don't say you can't. They may feel you are discouraging them if you don't give them alternative advice, but then as a black officer, and this goes for black teachers, we are perceived as part of the system, the authority. It is very frustrating."

Another distinctive feature of the black teachers in the study was that they were all involved in further study of one sort or another in an effort to enhance their own career prospects. Mr Green, the social science teacher at St. Hilda's, left the school during my time spent there doing fieldwork. He moved to a larger more 'progressive' comprehensive school. His immediate aim was job satisfaction though he also had his eye on the future by studying for a part-time MA in education. Likewise Ms Forte sought to forward her career, even though she was a trained social worker she had been also studying for a part-time MA (at the University of London, Goldsmiths' College), which she had just finished. She described her reasons for continuing her studies:

" I've been going to evening class for the past five years. It was so difficult sometimes but I can say now "I've done it". I am proud, but it was a sacrifice. It was worth it. I came to England when I was 13 and it has always been a struggle, I've always had to work hard. But this degree now means that I can move on ... this job is just not stretching enough and now I want to try something else." (sic)

Ms Lewis too was highly motivated. She had achieved the status as Head of Department in her school and was much respected as a competent teacher and colleague. Like the black girls they were teaching, these black teachers were resourceful in building up their careers by whatever means available.

On the whole everyday working relationships between the black members of staff and their white colleagues were amiable. However, in one instance racial strife in the classroom caused one black teacher to complain about the lack of support and understanding among white colleagues. Dr Ashraf, a chemistry teacher at St Hilda's had been having a great deal of trouble with one particular fifth year chemistry group. The racism of the pupils was evident as he became the object of their abuse. The class constantly made fun of him, mimicking his 'Indianess' and calling him derogatory Indian names. The pupils even began to boycott his lessons and taunt him that they were not going to attend the final exam. These events caused Dr Ashraf much distress. He had appealed to the Headmaster, Mr Madden, and the staff but found not only disbelief but little sympathy and support. They, he felt, regarded him as an incompetent teacher and was aware that the non-entry of substantial numbers of fifth formers for the chemistry examination would fuel that belief. However though Dr Ashraf had outstanding credentials <sup>27</sup> and was a dedicated teacher, he was aware of the lack of recognition and racism he had suffered not only in the job market, but also from his colleagues, who judged him primarily on his accent and ability to speak English. The lack of support over the fifth form incident, he felt, was a further insult to his integrity. He was aware that in the staffroom he was regarded as very much an outsider:

" I feel very alone. I can't tell anyone anything. I am aware that a lot of what is going on is because I'm Indian

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<sup>27</sup> Dr Ashraf had a PhD from India, had completed two years postdoctorial research at Chelsea College and a PGCE course at Twickenham.

and everyone else here is Catholic. Parents, teachers, together they will say I'm not able to manage the class. Parents, they especially have a lot to do with it. They influence their children at home and that is why they feel they can come here and say and do these things like this."

The irony of this incident was that it took place in a school, St Hilda's, in which the staff were most vociferous that racism was not present among them.

In conclusion the experiences and values of the black teachers in the study differed radically from that of the white teachers. On the whole the black teachers were more in tune with the needs of their black female pupils, often offering a more positive solution to the education of the black child.

#### The Pupil Perspective: A Challenge to the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy.

So far the evidence presented in this chapter does suggest that teachers do have interpretative schemes upon which they make predictions concerning pupil ability. The findings of this study, however do not uphold the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy as a central explanation for black under achievement. There appeared to be two major reasons why the this causal explanation failed to provide an adequate understanding of the observed classroom process. Firstly, there was nothing in the evidence to suggest teachers were successful in eroding black female self-esteem. Secondly, the findings do not show that teachers transmitted their apparent negative expectations to the black pupils they teach. I shall now turn to an examination of the data to substantiate these two claims against the operation of the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Firstly, there was no indication that young black women had negative feelings about being black or female. As previously discussed (See Chapter 5) the girls greatly valued their cultural and racial identity. 48% of young black women, in answer to the question 'who is the person you most admire' indicated that this person was themselves.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore when the qualities of the person each pupil indicated as the person they most admired were analysed it was found that 55% of the black women had chosen a person who was black, as did 50% of the young black men. The young black women also frequently chose a female person as 'the person they most admired' ( 11% chose their mother; 5% a female relative; 9% a female historical figure).

Secondly, there was no evidence of young black females suffering any form of psychological damage from being 'put down' as a consequence of their teachers' negative evaluations of them. Clearly the girls did not accept the negative evaluations of themselves and their academic abilities as the following example shows. Ms Wallace, when describing a predominantly black fifth year class designated as of 'low ability', said:

" These girls have absolutely no motivation. They feel you are here to think for them."

Yet these same girls said of their teachers:

" They hold you back. Teachers always put you down, then they say 'you can't manage...' ( Dianne: aged 16)

<sup>28</sup> This reponse of 48% was in marked contrast to their white peers who in answer to the same question were far less likely to indicate themselves. (e.g. only 25% white females and 16% white males indicated that they would like to be like nobody but themselves). Black males, like their female counterparts were more likely to indicate themselves i.e. 50%.

" When you come you sit a test and then after that they never give you a chance to prove yourself." (Tony: aged 16)

The young black women, when interviewed were aware of their teachers negative feelings towards them:

" You feel the discrimination, they try to hide it but you can see through it. They try to say 'we're all equal', but you can tell: they talk to you more simply." (Maureen: aged 16)

" Some teachers show that they wouldn't like to teach you. I feel this attitude is absolutely wrong. They are paid to teach pupils, not to pick and choose who they would like to teach." (Karen: aged 17)

While resentful of these attitudes, there was no evidence that they were psychologically undermined by this differential treatment. On the contrary the girls often challenged these assumptions about their ability and confronted the situation openly, as this student's account reveals:

" My maths teacher really treat us differently. One day I was stuck on a question, I called him over he said 'Oh, you know how to do this...' afterwards this white girl which he likes quite alot, she was on the same question as me, she did not understand it then he really did explain it to her and he said 'Selma you can listen now if you want to'. Then I said 'never mind'. He never tells her off. She goes and talks to the other pupils but when I get up he starts to shout at me... then I say ' Why don't you tell her'. He always picks on mostly all the black girls." (sic) Selma aged 16)

An outcome of this pupil awareness of negative teacher evaluations of them was what Townsend and Brittan (1973)<sup>29</sup> observed in their NFER study; that black children refuse to present their real selves in school. It was apparent that the black girls would avoid asking for help, like Selma did in the example above. The girls would only approach certain members of staff known to be compliant, or only participate keenly in certain lessons taught by such sympathetic teachers. They would

<sup>29</sup> Also reported by them in an article by in 'New Society' 10 February 1978.

also avoid choosing certain subjects if the teacher was recognised as being difficult, as this statement made by fifth year pupil at St. Theresa's shows:

" I like English, but I know Mrs. Webster hates me . I'll just end up failing. No one wants to do English because of Mrs Webster." ( Angela: aged 16)

It was a fact that in many cases the girls' academic energies were often diverted to strategies aimed at avoiding unpleasant scenarios within the school environment, rather than in the activity of learning.

If the explanation for how teachers affect pupil performance does not lie within an understanding of the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy, the question remains as to how exactly does teacher-pupil interaction function to disadvantage the black child? The evidence seemed to suggest that the process of discrimination operated by means of the teachers' access to physical and material resources, restrictions to which would result in the curtailment of opportunities.<sup>30</sup> Clearly teachers do have the power to effect changes and limit or enhance pupil opportunity (Cicourel and Kitsuse 1977). As an outcome of their power within the institutional infrastructure teachers are in a position to enforce their prejudices by restricting access to information and educational resources, as Sharp and Green (1976) argue with regard to pupil-teacher relations in their study of a progressive primary school. They found that even in a setting based upon a child-centred ideology, the power of the teacher to shape pupils' identities and create a stratification system within the classroom is enormous, as they explain:

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the cases of teachers, Sutton, Parker and Wallace in the previous section on teacher typologies.

" The teacher is crucial to this process not simply because she is a reality definer but because ...she can be regarded as a scarce resource in that she possesses and can transmit the means whereby the careers of pupils can be facilitated or held back." (p. 219)

Paul Willis (1977), on the basis of his study of life in an urban comprehensive, argues that the authority of teachers is not merely a consequence of their being given control over pupils by the state, but must be seen as a part of a collection of assumptions about what education entails, an educational paradigm. Teachers, he notes, control the use of space, property and time, dictate the rules of interpersonal relationships, and most importantly, see and represent themselves as controllers of what is implied to be the scarce and valuable commodity of knowledge.

The analysis of both Sharp and Green and Willis differ from the interactionist perspective of the classroom. These authors employ an alternative explanation of intra-classroom processes that relate outwards into the school as a whole, into the community and beyond society. Bernstein (1971) also places his argument within an understanding of the wider structure of social relationships. He argues that even the ritual order of schools, which serves as a symbolic representation of the prevailing value system of the institutions works to 'deepen respect for impersonalised authority relations'. The school assembly, house rituals, the prefect system, setting and streaming practices all remind pupils of their place within the hierarchy and, more importantly, that a hierarchical structure is a legitimate operation. The bureaucratic and hierarchically-structured order which characterises school is seen by Bowles and Gintis (1976) as

the main dimension by which a pupils' personal development and learned behavioural characteristics are nurtured in a specific way. They argue that pupil socialisation takes place in a climate which celebrates deference to authority and is based upon relationships of dominance and subordination; this being highly functional for the social order of the work place.

What this discussion indicates is that the presence of a pupil perspective, not recognised within the interactionist framework, can, however, be accommodated in studies that emphasise the importance of power and control in the classroom. In my own study it is clear how such a perspective can increase our understanding of events. For example a major theme of this chapter has been to attempt to reveal the differences between what teachers as educationalists think and how they actually operate. Thus, as in the case of the 'Crusaders,' it was shown that teachers outwardly committed to an ideology of multi-racial education were unable to truly operationalise their strongly held convictions because of a setting that was not conducive to that type of thinking.

### Conclusion

The evidence of this study has shown that while young black women, (who clearly displayed their positive self-esteem), challenged their teachers' expectations of them (expectations that were often characterised by overt racism on the one hand or unintentional racism on the other), they were in no position in the 'power hierarchy' to counteract any negative outcomes of these interpretations. All too often the recognition of these

negative assessments led the girls to look for alternative strategies with which to 'get by'. These strategies, such as not taking up a specific subject or not asking for help, were employed by the girls as the only means of challenging their teachers' expectations of them, and as such were ultimately detrimental to the education of the pupils concerned. However the attitudes and orientations of black teachers presented a positive example of how some of the processes of disadvantage could be avoided. These teachers neither patronised nor misinterpreted their black students' reactions and were insistent on the maintenance of high standards of teaching and learning.

## CHAPTER 9

INFORMATION, ACCESS AND ADVICE: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES AND THE  
OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE PROCESS.

It is widely reported that young black people, both male and female, are more likely to use the services of the official recruitment agencies when seeking employment in comparison to their white peers.<sup>1</sup> For young blacks occupational placement is least likely to be the outcome of social networks, family relationships and other informal channels.<sup>2</sup> The occupational location of the parental generation of these youths, the migrant generation, can be seen to contribute to the weaknesses of such internal self-perpetuating recruitment practices.

In the 1950's West Indians found work in what in the 1980's have become declining and restricted areas of the economy.<sup>3</sup> Occupying such a disadvantaged location in the economy reduces the opportunity of working class West Indians to reproduce their labour market networks. Furthermore the prevalence of racism in tandem with the hierarchical nature of work place structures affects the influence most West Indians have on recruitment practice. The reliance on formal and official information this engenders, makes young black people particularly vulnerable to

<sup>1</sup> For example, see Beetham 1967; Smith 1977; Lee and Wrench 1983; Sillitoe and Meltzer 1985; Austin 1984, 1987; Brown 1984; OPCS 1987; Cross 1987a, 1987b; Jenkins 1986.

<sup>2</sup> The use of these informal networks are more successfully employed by whites : what Lee and Wrench (1983:60) call the "Lads of Dads" system.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3 on the employment location of West Indians and the changing nature of the economy.

the quality and type of information they receive. Young black women depend on such sources to gain vital access to information on two counts. Firstly, to find out about new occupational and career possibilities, jobs previously not accessible to an earlier generation, and, secondly, to secure recruitment to a specific job.

In order to address these issues, in this final chapter of the thesis, I deal with an investigation into the nature of and access to occupational information and advice available to the young black women in the study. Such an analysis requires an examination of the role of the school in its ultimate function, that of occupational placement. Thus I look at the way the various services and agencies that are involved in the process of occupational placement for the school leaver operate. The Careers Service and agencies like the MSC are investigated. I also examine the provisions within the schools. Careers lessons, courses that focus on vocational preparation, such as Personal and Social Education programmes, and YTS orientated schemes are given detailed consideration. I also investigate the type of advice and information received by students while they make crucial choices in their school career during their third, fifth and sixth years.

#### The Careers Education Programme.

One official information resource available to young black women in school was the Careers Education Programme (CEP). Both of the schools in the study complied with the now formalised but nevertheless minimal recommendations set out in a report

undertaken by the HMI in 1973 (DES 1973). This report, apart from an increased concern in preparing the school leaver for the transition to work, showed no ideological shift from the previous 1948 and 1965 statements on the role of careers advice.<sup>4</sup> The core of the career guidance philosophy remained, " a clear understanding of self in the important task of making the appropriate personal decision" (Schools Council 1972:38). Thus the 1973 brief emphasised the development of school leaver/pupil self-awareness, occupational awareness and decision making. Tasks such as letter writing, personal appearance, interview techniques, and acceptable employee behaviour formed the focus of the Careers Education Programme.<sup>5</sup>

It was apparent that in the Programme the labour market was assumed to be static, occupational location being determined largely as a consequence of individual choice (within, of course, the context of personal constraint). In the face of rising unemployment and the reproduction of racial and sexual divisions at work the philosophy of the Careers Education Programme is

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<sup>4</sup> The 1965 report on careers guidance in schools (DES 1965) was not dissimilar in its recommendations from those embodied in the 1948 Youth Employment Training Services (Daws 1968). For a history of the development of the Careers Service see VanDyke (1985:chapter 4). For a critical review of the literature see Clarke 1980; Browne 1981.

<sup>5</sup> For example, St Theresa's in a report outlining the main aims of their Career Department state that the goals of their Programme were: (1) To develop self-awareness, appreciation of their own strengths and weaknesses and tactics for improvement. (2) To enable pupils to make realistic decisions about choices within the curriculum. (3) To develop an awareness of the world of work- its restrictions, responsibilities and challenge.

clearly in question (Ainley 1988).<sup>6</sup> Caught up in the contradictions of a Careers Programme, which suggests on the one hand that advice should be based on individual choice, and placed within institutions that on the other hand, "have few pretensions toward an academic education," (Tomlinson 1987:98) are well meaning teachers and careers officers.

(1) CEP : Provision in the Schools

Both St Hilda's and St Theresa's offered a poorly resourced and ineffectual service. The schools did comply with the HMI minimal requirements to provide career guidance in the 13+ curriculum. However because provision remained only in the form of recommendations with guidelines, standards of the CEP varied greatly in quality and quantity between each school (VanDyke 1985).

A universal feature of the CEP programme was, however its status on the periphery of the school curriculum. The Head of Careers at St Theresa's complained that there was no adequate time-table allowance for careers advice sessions. A minimum of one lesson a week was not feasible for most of the fifth year because of lack of time and a reluctance to withdraw them from 'examinable' subject lessons. The outcome of which was that two-thirds of fifth formers had one careers lesson every other week and one-

<sup>6</sup> In the mid 1970's in response to increasing unemployment and the need to rationalise labour market placement, the role of the CEP was superseded by the Training Services Agency (later renamed the Manpower Services Commission), the philosophy of which moved away from the concept of personal and social development to a more structured economic strategy (Hayes (1975); MSC (1977); MSC (1981)). However the CEP has remained part of the school curriculum despite its redundant philosophy.

third had none. The third and the fourth years had scheduled some sort of careers input into their curriculum every other week, but only as part of the 'Living Programme'.<sup>7</sup> However, during the year I spent at St Theresa's the 'Living Programme' was withdrawn from the lower school curriculum because of what was defined as 'discipline problems', but what appeared in reality to be inadequate supervision and tutoring.<sup>8</sup> The sixth years had no careers guidance lessons. As the sixth form prospectus explained, "Careers are left up to the the pupils own motivation". Meetings could, however, be arranged with a very busy and elderly sixth form mistress who was also Head of Careers for the sixth as well as a Chemistry teacher, whose main function was to help with the filling out of UCCA forms or College applications.

At St. Hilda's the provision for CEP was equally poor. One fifth year class had no classroom available for the lesson to take place so the year had to sit in the library for 'quiet reading and prep'. The sixth years, like those at St Theresa's, had no timetable allowance allocated for careers advice, nor were they given much support or encouragement. During Wednesday afternoons during their General Studies programme they were advised to 'seek assistance.' They were told in their sixth form prospectus:

" It is up to you to make the Careers Service and advice work for you by using them efficiently, and by asking for advice and guidance."

<sup>7</sup> A general course focusing on personal and social education, covering subjects such as health, sex education, environmental issues etc.

<sup>8</sup> There were no qualified teachers to take these classes, teachers with a free timetable slot were allocated to these secondary-status teaching quotas.

As the provision for resources for the CEP was never statutorily laid down by the DES, it was left to the individual school to allocate what they deemed adequate. In both schools in the study the personal enthusiasm and ingenuity of the careers tutor determined what could be provided. The 'Careers Rooms' in St Hilda's and St Theresa's were kept locked. They were also both located in in accessible and unattractive parts of the school. At St Theresa's it was a small dark room situated behind the stage in the assembly hall. At St Hilda's it was in the most isolated wing of the top floor of a teaching block (4th floor), near the toilets.

The budget allocation was also very small. In St Theresa's the allowance for the academic year 1982-3 was for the entire school just four hundred pounds, an increase of one hundred and fifty pounds since 1978. As a consequence the careers departments in both schools were ill-equipped. Old books, containing out-dated concepts about work and the types of jobs available, were often torn and incomplete but were still being displayed unattractively on shelves in the 'Careers Room'. Particularly notable was the limited range of professions available to girls and the prevalence of dated, gender-stereotyped literature.

In accordance with the DES requirements the schools had teachers designated with career responsibilities. In both cases the English and Social Studies teachers were appointed Careers tutors. In this capacity they employed their own experience, (believed to be more appropriate because of their interest in the humanities), rather than any formal training in the field of

counselling. However the responsibilities of 'doubling' up their commitments as a teacher with their role as an advisor was not satisfactory as Ms Wallace, the Careers mistress and English and Social Studies teacher at St. Theresa's explained:

" A heavy teaching timetable of 25 out of 30 periods and so many added responsibilities is not conducive to inspired thought, action or time to co-operate with colleagues over the careers of girls."

This sentiment was echoed by Ms Reed English, Social Studies and Careers Mistress at St Hilda's at the beginning of the new school year when she considered the prospect of a new fifth year.

" Oh God, yet another set to get through. Just finished one lot and now another to go ...It's a demanding time ahead, a heavy load."

## (2) CEP: The Pupil Experience

For the pupils the message concerning careers was clear. It was not to be taken seriously. Regarded as free time on the timetable, careers lessons were used as 'prep' or homework time, often to the exasperation of the assigned teacher that had the unenviable task of teaching this ill-defined and 'woolly' area of the curriculum. In these lessons the pupils were set unimaginative tasks such as filling out dummy application forms or answering questionnaires. Role play, where one pupil interviews another, was seen as a chance for amusement by the participants and often degenerated into chaos. One fifth year girl described these unstructured and poorly planned sessions as, " a real waste of a period." In general the pupils would either do the required task as quickly as they could, and then proceed to get on with lesson 'prep', homework, or just sit or gossip while the teacher managed to get some of her own preparation done.

Descriptions of the career classes I observed are revealing. Among the pupils in both schools, three responses to careers lessons were identifiable. These three responses corresponded to the ability level of the pupils concerned and were easily observable because of the system of streaming by ability that both school engaged in.

The first response was that of the Band 3 pupils. These pupils designated as being of low ability saw careers as a free lesson. In St Theresa's the classes were made up mainly of black girls. The lesson would be extremely noisy and chaotic (though those that chose to do their 'prep' sat undisturbed in the back of the room). During one session several girls danced to a Micheal Jackson tape to pass the time after completing the set work. At St Hilda's it was much the same, though the lessons here were co-educational with both black and white pupils. The general strategy employed by these pupils was to make a boring lesson entertaining. They would 'muck about', tease each other, throw books, ask for unnecessary help, and fight. To these pupils careers sessions were a total waste of time, when asked few had any real idea of what they would really like to do; the question being redundant as most of these pupils were designated for YTS and knew that to be their fate. However it must be said that the black girls in contrast to their white peers had a clearer idea of what they would like to do and showed a keen interest in finding out more about what they could possibly do.

The second response was that of the black pupils of average to high ability. In contrast to their peers who had a predetermined

future in the form of the YTS, these pupils, were set apart by their desire for information. In response to the inadequate supply of career guidance they had so far received these fifth year pupils wanted to know from me about university, college courses, and various non-traditional female jobs and what they entailed. For example, in one class they were keen to know about careers in the 'Law'. They were also eager to learn about computing. It was clear from these sessions that these able girls had little idea about how to go about applying for jobs or the steps involved that would lead them down a chosen career path. In these sessions the girls were attentive and responsive. They expressed their interest in having sessions that provided information to enhance their own limited view of the job market, and the change this presented from their usual careers class.

The third response was that of the girls of high ability. These girls were characterised by a degree of certainty about their future, though there was a distinction to be made here between the white and the black female pupils attitude. Several of the black girls of high ability fell into the category above, showing a strong need for good progressive guidance. However, in general these girls felt that they were fairly certain about what they were going to be doing in the future and therefore felt that careers advice was superfluous. In their lessons many girls finished off the set work and sat quietly doing 'prep'. However on examination of their career choices both black and white girls who belonged to this group had chosen very traditional professional occupations and college courses. The black girls here being particularly prone to choosing 'gendered' social work

orientated careers (See Chapter 6). The lack of any imaginative careers guidance led many girls to reproduce safe and known career options.

In conclusion, the response of the girls to their careers lessons was a clear indication of the poverty of their content and philosophy. The lessons were met with boredom and disinterest and were clearly as the pupils indicated, in their present form, "a waste of time". The need for good positive and progressive advice was evident especially among the black girls who it is known rely heavily on institutional channels for advice. In this study only 39% of the young black women said they found their school CEP useful (in contrast to 70% of white peers). This clearly indicates the need for reform in this area of the school curriculum to assist these young women to make considered choices.

#### The Careers Service

The schools had the services of an external careers officer provided by the local Careers Office, who interviewed pupils within school hours during their time at school. Each careers officer was responsible for several schools in their district and worked by a system of pre-arranged interviews with a individual pupil at given times. When asked what they felt about these advice sessions most girls resented having to take time out of normal lessons to go. However in contrast to how they felt about CEP, 63% of black girls said they found the service useful

(compared to 30% of white girls), indicating the importance that these girls placed on this source of information.<sup>9</sup>

With the reliance that these girls had on the Service, the sensitivity of the career officer to the needs of black female pupils is crucial.<sup>10</sup> Ms Forte, a black careers officer at St Theresa's had a particular empathy with the black girls she advised and was well liked.<sup>11</sup> However in spite of her special insights into the black female experience Ms Forte acknowledged the limitations of her role and her ability to change things. She was aware that the girls would not truly confide in her as she was seen as part of the authority structure.

On the whole the girls reported that the information they received was appropriate, especially when it came to deciding what college course to apply for and how to go about that application. However the advice given was clearly built up on pre-existing career choices of the girls and did not encourage them to explore other labour market possibilities. This inability of the Careers Service to foster innovation among young black women entering the labour market, has had the effect of

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<sup>9</sup> Lee and Wrench (1983) noted a similar positive response with regard to the Careers Service.

<sup>10</sup> Willis (1983) argues that it is not the official careers material but the lads' culture that ultimately, "provides the most located and deeply influential guide for the future." (p 106)

<sup>11</sup> Her popularity was most likely the cause of the positive response given by many black girls to question about the usefulness of careers advice in schools.

perpetuating, in the majority of cases <sup>12</sup>, those career paths that were known to be feasible for black females in Britain. For example many girls expressed their desire to do social work courses not because it was their ultimate ambition, but rather that it has been a traditionally acceptable, high status career for black women, providing opportunities for advancing their education.

The function of the Careers Service is not only to provide the necessary information the school leaver needs for their decision making process, it is also involved in matching up pupils to compatible employers registered with them. In this capacity it has been suggested that the role of the Careers Service plays a significant role in the reproduction of the sexual and racial divisions of the labour market (Eggleston 1986). It is argued that they act as 'gate-keepers' with regard to occupational placement and in particular the various YTS schemes (Austin 1984, 1987; Cross 1987a). However, in my study it was apparent that the careers officers who liaised with the schools were presented with pupils that had been already sorted according to their perceived levels of ability, initiative and performance. Records kept by the careers mistress were based very much on her judgement concerning an individual pupil's characteristics. This, considered to be enabling background information, was given to the careers officers to then in their task of providing the appropriate advice. However these reports were profoundly influenced by teacher assessments, that, as we have seen (Chapter

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 6. Many black women did choose non-traditional careers, although these was more the exception than the rule.

8) with regard to black female pupils, were not always appropriate. Cicourel and Kitsuse (1977) note the impact that assessments, made about a pupil on the basis of their personal and social features, can have. They suggest that although in some cases information gained about a student through testing is important, in the majority of cases :

"... a student's occupational mobility may be more than incidentally contingent upon the sponsorship of organisational personnel who verify him to be a 'serious, personable, well-rounded student, with leadership potential'." (p.29)

The streaming and selection of pupils during five years of schooling meant that the careers officers in their one or two visits with a pupil were presented with an already assessed child which they then had the task of placing in an appropriate job. This was clearly illustrated in St Theresa's YTS preparation programme. St Theresa's offered a course called 'Looking Forward' which, from as early as the fourth year, filtered out the low achievers from the rest of the school. This programme was part of a strategy aimed at structuring these girls' educational careers along what was considered to be 'a less demanding' path. By encouraging the uptake of less academic, but clearly vocational, options such as child development, combined with the nurturing of their acceptance that the only way to enter the job market was through the YTS, the school created the desire in girls for careers such as nursery nursing and typing. This left the careers officers with the task of finding them a YTS placement that would suit them and their experience. Thus the

placement of these black girls on inferior schemes <sup>13</sup> was not so much the careers officers responsibility as has been suggested. Furthermore the role of the careers officers in occupational placement could also be 'by-passed' by the recruitment drives of the 'managing agents': private employers who subscribed to the YTS . These managing agents who could offer more desirable and higher status jobs in private industry than other employers on the schemes, recruited directly from the schools themselves. As observed in the schools studied these companies 'head hunted' for mainly white recruits in schools that had a large percentage of white students.

#### Careers Talks and Visits.

Careers talks by invited speakers and organised visits to work establishments were another source of information made available to the girls to assist them in making their decisions about the future. Arranged by the careers departments of the schools, some four to five such events in the fifth year could be expected. However the content and quality of these talks and visits varied according to the orientation of the school and type of pupils to whom they were addressed. For example, St Theresa's had arranged talks to be given on subjects such as engineering ('Opening Windows on Engineering') which were aimed at interesting the academically inclined . In contrast St Hilda's, with its

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<sup>13</sup> There were schemes acknowledged to be more prestigious than others. The better the scheme the more likely to secure employment upon leaving. These schemes were mainly run by large private employers. Those run by local authority employers were less likely to secure a job but were heavily subscribed. Most nursery nursing or care orientated choices belonged to this latter category. Austin (1984) notes careers officers were under considerable pressure to match trainees to placements as soon as possible.

'academic mediocracy' offered no such professionally orientated discussions. The talks at St Hilda's were directly related to the recruitment drives for trainees by various large private and public sector employers.<sup>14</sup> St Theresa's with its largely black and female only intake, attracted less attention from such recruitment drives.

Lee and Wrench (1983) observe that it is common practice for some companies to recruit directly in this way, a process as we have already noted, can lead to indirect discrimination. They write :

" Some firms see liaison work as time well spent in disseminating knowledge about their firm....others see it as a ritual which has to be performed with no real pay off."  
(p. 40)

#### (1) Recruitment Drives

Reaction to these talks aimed at encouraging school leavers to join a specific firm or organisation varied according to the gender of the pupil. For example, it had a significant influence on the career choices of the white boys at St Hilda's. The numbers who stated that they wanted to be bank clerks or BT engineers was marked after the careers talks given by the the respective recruitment organisation.<sup>15</sup> However there was no evidence that these talks influenced in any way the choices of the young black women in the study. This was partly to do with the orientation of the recruitment drives being aimed at a male and white audience, but also because by the fifth year most black girls had a fairly sure idea of what they might like to be doing

<sup>14</sup> For example Lloyds Bank, British Telecom, and for the second year running, Vidal Sassoon.

<sup>15</sup> The talks affected the choices of those yet undecided. The boys that wanted to do a specific 'City and Guilds ' course or apprenticeship remained unchanged after these talks.

in the future. At whatever level their plans on the whole, though not necessarily innovative, were well thought out, and included a strategy for getting ahead.

The young black women were highly critical of the quality of the talks and the information they provided. This was illustrated in their objections to the Lloyds Bank talk at St Hilda's. Lloyds' Bank had sent a middle-aged 'English gentleman' as their representative. For twenty minutes he proceeded to present an uninspired slide show illustrating the various types of jobs in banking. The slides showed an outdated range of jobs which he himself acknowledged in response to the pupils queries about computers and word processors. The objections, however came mainly from the girls who felt that women were being represented at the lower levels of employment. The jobs for women were at the clerical level; tillers, secretaries etc. The talk was clearly aimed not at City banking but at high street banking, as he explained encouragingly, " You only need a few 'O' levels or a couple of good CSE's for paper work." When the Lloyds representative said, " You must be keen and polite ", one black interjected, " and white". The slide show included no black people at all. After the talk the black girls picked up on this omission, as Verne said, " No blacks, no women: its sexist, its racist, even if they'd have you, who wants to work there anyway !" The girls were clearly fed up and bored during the talk as one girl explained, "I could have been doing something useful, instead of wasting my time, I wanted to do my English homework."

Many of these organised sessions were regarded as a waste of time by the staff involved but continued nonetheless. For example the trip to Vidal Sassoon was seen as a chance to have an afternoon off by the fifth year. Though it was optional, and only a few white girls had any genuine interest in a career in hairdressing, that afternoon the whole of the fifth was deserted, much to the staffs' relief, who took the opportunity to catch up on overdue work and go home early.

Like St Hilda's, St Theresa's had also organised several career visits. Their trips included visits to Scotland Yard, the London College of Fashion, King's College Hospital and the BBC. However these visits during school time were only for the YTS-destined pupils on the 'Looking Forward' programme, pupils who, as one teacher explained, they were glad to get off their hands for the afternoon. As part of a work experience campaign for the other pupils, St Theresa's did offer a post examination 'Community Service Programme' for one week. Here the girls did voluntary work in a hospital, school or nursery, an extension of the school's philanthropic tradition which, since the days of the Grammar regime, the Headteacher had highly valued.

## (2) Alumni Activities

Each of the schools in the study did have a tradition of inviting old pupils back to give talks about their work or study experiences. Using the 'old girls' network', St Theresa's would invite a past student who had succeeded in a professional career or attended University to talk to the sixth form once or twice a year. St Hilda's had a more novel way of introducing the world

of work to prospective leavers. Here a group of students who had recently left organised a careers day for the fifth years entitled, 'Christian Employment'.

The day was put on by several students from the South London College Christian group. It was held in the rather depressing surroundings of the school hall and consisted of talks and sketches, interspersed at intervals throughout the day with discussions and workshops. Staff made an effort not to be present so as not to inhibit the 'atmosphere'. The theme of the day was clear: the perseverance of the individual. One organiser explained:

" There is no need to find yourself unemployed. It is up to you to get a job; it is up to you to try: the jobs are there. Call on God for help and guidance."

The response to the day was varied. On the whole the Christian participants faced a hostile and cynical audience, particularly on the issue of unemployment (there was a lot of heckling and non-participation during the day). The black girls were clearly dissatisfied with the solutions they were being presented with and felt they had little in common with the speakers (all of whom were white). One black girl asked, "You tell us what prospects of employment do we have on the dole." Another remarked, "So why bother with qualifications if there is no employment." The answer came predictably from the panel, "it is up to you to convince the employer to take you on."

When asked what did they get from the day, one young woman summed up the sentiments of the others when she said:

" Boring man, waste a time. Who they trying to fool, ain't gonna be me, man let me go home and stop wasting my time with these people." (sic)

Lectures on the importance of the work ethic were clearly not what these girls wanted or needed. Another young black women, in commenting on what she had derived from her day, expressed the need again for good positive and structured advice and guidance. As she explained:

" In our discussion group we talked about going for an interview. That was the most helpful part of the whole day, the rest was a joke!"

#### From School to YTS: Selection and Recruitment

Both at St. Theresa's and St Hilda's there was an active and systematic process of recruitment of pupils onto the YTS.<sup>16</sup> These recruitment drives were selective and disproportionately affected pupils classified in the lower ability ranges.

##### (1) YTS at St Theresa's

Lower ability pupils at St Theresa's in particular were having their aspirations directed toward expecting a future with the YTS. In this school it was brought about by means of the 'Looking Forward' course: a programme that at the end of the fifth year actually placed them onto a YTS scheme. The 'Looking Forward' course was presented as a programme for non-academic fifth years:

<sup>16</sup> In a bid to stem the growing problem of unemployment and extend the influence of rational manpower planning, the Local Education Authority in partnership with the MSC have developed the TVEI (Technical and Vocational Education Initiative). Courses offered under this 'Initiative' have resulted in the increased involvement of the MSC within schools (See: Ainley 1988).

" to help them prepare for life after school in the form of preparation for work and leisure in a large city."  
(Quinquennial Review)

It was described as a non-examination option (3 periods a week) that began in the fifth year and for which the pupil was awarded an internal school certificate at the end. The course itself was ill-defined but sure of its aims. It was explained that there is no homework, no tests and only informal practical activity.

The central part of the course was:

"...visits and outings ...to practice the skills of public travelling and to learn more about work and leisure. It is important they can find their way. They have just been on a trip to Harrods." (Quinquennial Review).

The course was objectively a way of 'containing' difficult girls who missed their ordinary lessons by being sent off the school site for their practical activities. As one teacher explained wryly:

" It soon sorts them out. They don't want to be at school but after a bout of work experience they soon find out that they don't want to be at work either."

The schools' attitude to YTS-destined pupils was clearly less than encouraging. They saw them as failures and disappointments relative to the successful academic pupils who were expected to seek their employment opportunities through the traditional, laissez-faire, labour market system. The course organiser, Ms Maxwell, expressed this discriminatory sentiment when she explained, " If they're no good for college we send them onto YTS."

Ms Forte, the careers officer at St Theresa's, was in view of Ms Maxwell's statement, justifiably concerned with the way the YTS was being used as a means of, "mopping up the unemployable". She explained:

" I am worried about the YTS being used as an alternative to college courses. You can see it especially in areas such as catering."

The YTS input into schools received low status, this was reflected in its timetabling and budget priority. The 'Looking Forward' course had no resources, no rooms or materials. In the three years since it began this part of the curriculum had received no money.

Because the courses did not attempt to expand the girls' experiences or develop their prospects concerning what jobs could be available, they (the clear majority of whom were black), accepted and indeed aspired to their YTS fate. As Linda, a fifth year Band 3 girl, explained:

" I want to go onto YTS doing training for a nursery nurse at the age group of 3-4 and 5 year olds. I want to do this because while I am at home I take care of this age group (her sister's children) and have experience in feeding and changing them. I also did child development in school to help me."

Failing to inform or encourage them to take up any other type of work the course succeeded in reinforcing traditional ideas of what unskilled or semi-skilled womens' work should be, such as shop work, clerical work or low grade hospital work. Aspiring to 'care' orientated careers such as nursery nursing precipitated their placement onto YTS schemes of a lower status (i.e Mode B, now no longer in operation in that form) which could not guarantee any permanent employment opportunities (Austin 1984, 1987).

(2) YTS at St Hilda's

St Hilda's had comparatively a much less structured approach to YTS recruitment than St Theresa's. Unlike St Theresa's the curriculum did not contain a course directed to YTS-destined pupils, instead the selection for the YTS was left up to 'free market forces' and the procedures of the Careers Service. The latter entailed self-referral to the Service or necessary agencies by the school leavers upon finding themselves in the job market and unemployed. The former implied the activities of private agencies, given a free hand at St Hilda's, who were involved in the business of the direct recruitment of school leavers.

The staff and Headteacher at St Hilda's had a laissez-faire approach to the issue of youth unemployment which was reflected in their lack of concern over the high rates of young unemployed school leavers and the depressing prospects for their alumni. St Hilda's did, however, engage the services of private enterprise, in the form of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) which had approached the school with regard to recruiting trainees for its programmes.<sup>17</sup> The Youth Training Scheme that they organised, the 'Enterprise Training South', was situated in their South London Training Centre.

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<sup>17</sup> The delivery of YTS is structured in many different ways (MSC 1982). In one form it is devolved to organisations known as 'managing agents' (i.e. large firms) who run their own training programmes, which were known as 'mode A' schemes. Where the MSC run their own programmes these are known as 'mode B' schemes. The distinction of schemes into modes A and B has since been abolished but YTS remains essentially made up of inferior and superior programmes.

The representative sent by the LCCI, Mick Payne was a young enthusiastic man who introduced himself and the programme employing professional, 'hard sell' tactics. He began by telling the (pre-examination) fifth year that, "this was a good deal...think about it you don't even need exams to get onto a scheme." He explained that the schemes they offered trained them for 'white collar work,' to which a boy called out, " you mean to become a priest?!"

He went on to explain that the LCCI had decided to participate in YTS because they felt that the bad publicity surrounding it of 'slave labour' and low wages - was not altogether true. The scheme they were offering was for office and clerical staff and after a period they would put trainees in contact with companies or firms (mainly LCCI building or development concerns) for a job placement. However Payne explained that they could not guarantee terms and conditions during the trainee period as this was not built into the programme. For example, the provision for part-time release to do study was discretionary, as were hours. But he attempted to reassure them that , "we do use our political muscle to get you the best deal, in that way you can be sure we care."

The one aspect of the scheme that was fixed was the wage which as Payne explained was twenty-five pounds a week, adding that, "well at least its better than being on the dole. And remember you do get bonuses like lunch and travel allowances". After outlining the terms and conditions of the traineeship which inspite of the

professional delivery still came across as being heavily weighted in the interests of the employer and not the trainee, he urged:

" Go on give it a try. See a work experience officer and get on a scheme you like. Organisations and companies need young people and young people need us. I can assure you most get a job afterwards."

However, the pupils remained largely unresponsive and unimpressed. Though many of the pupils were disruptive during the talk, the black girls were generally attentive. At the end of the session the questions directed at Payne clearly made him feel uncomfortable. The black girls took the lead. The questions they asked however differed in content and direction from that of their white female peers. The black girls were concerned to know exactly what the scheme could offer them; what prospects did it offer, and could they really be assured of a job. They found his replies unsatisfactory as one girl explained:

" I hope to be a secretary. What I asked him was how do I know that you will not make me make cups of tea and call that training and then after tell me 'bye, thanks a lot, nice to know you'. All he says, well, there are no ways of knowing, but he don't think it true...that ain't good enough."(sic)

Unlike the boys <sup>18</sup>, the white girls were openly critical of Mr Payne and his scheme. The following extract from the discussion gives a fair indication of how the fifth form felt in general about YTS.

Question (white girl): "You says the individual person important then why can't I get into a bank in the ordinary way, but I can as a YTS trainee for the same job? If you say you are so

<sup>18</sup> As a whole the white boys found careers advice in school most useful compared to any of the other groups designated by race or gender. 88% of white boys indicated that school based careers advice was useful.

important then you should be judged as a person, not by the scheme your on."

Answer (Mr Payne): "But you are important that is why schemes are there to help you find out about work."

Question (white girl): "I think your schemes are exploiting us, you say it's for training but I have a friend who worked in a shop on a scheme she got twenty-five pound a week but this other girl, her friend, well she was getting eighty pound for the same job, and just because she weren't on a scheme."

Answer: "Well no. you must remember that you are being trained; the other person, the friend. was not. You are in a better position to be offered a job with that employer in the end when you finish the scheme than if they didn't know you and what you can do. Work experience is so important with regard to promotional prospects, you could advance so high in a job."

Question (white girl): "Yes, thats ok, but I have a friend, she was a supervisor...then someone with 'O' levels came in above her with no experience."

Answer: "I'm sure that is an exception and not a rule."

Question (black girl): "What guarantee do we have that we will get a job when we finish then?"

Answer: "Ah well now, it is up to you to inform yourself as to the success rate of the 'trainers'. ask to see files, ask questions, we need young people and most get a job."

Question (black girl): "Could you tell us if we can learn about computing?"

Answer: "Well as far as I know very few have had experience in this field, as I said we are aiming for mainly clerical and office skills."

Question ( white girl): "Has unemployment gone down since YTS began?"

Answer: "Well, no ..."

Question (white girl): "So what's the good of it then? And what use is it if we ain't gonna get a job after slogging it out on YTS.

Answer: " Forget unemployment figures, you can get a job if you really want one, the figures won't tell you that though. Don't worry about unemployment."

Question (white girl): "But now with YTS all the jobs are taken, so there is no jobs for us lot leaving school. It forces us to go on a scheme to get a job , we are being forced to do a job for twenty-five quid, not what she'd be getting, eighty quid or whatever."

Answer: "But I will say to you again, you must think of the training advantage.... For the employer the main reason for offering you the job , and lets be honest, is that it is firstly a good way to get good recruits. But there is another reason. Believe it or not, not all employers are bad. They do have a social conscious, they want to do as much as they can to ease the unemployment situation."

Question (white boy): "So why ain't Unions doing schemes then? I heard they can sack you when they want... there ain't no unions or nothing."

Answer: "We at the LCCI will monitor and check you. But you have a point there is no real security. But remember you also have to commit yourself for twelve months to one employer."

In conclusion, the way YTS was introduced varied according to the different perspectives each of the schools had toward their pupils (see Chapter 7). St Theresa's, while giving sound but traditional further and higher educational advice to the academically-inclined students, syphoned off low ability pupils into low-level courses which eventually led to YTS schemes. St Hilda's, on the other hand, with its casual approach to pupil performance, did not have such an obviously structured programme. At this school they were inclined to leave the fate of the pupils

of whatever ability level to 'market forces'. The YTS input into both of the schools were characterised by a lack of innovation and encouragement to their young, black female pupils to seek non-traditional occupations, thereby reinforcing the low expectations of the pupils and the school.

#### Making Choices: Third Year Subject Options.

In the third year of secondary school the pupils have to choose the subjects that they would like to take in their final examination in the fifth year. The choices made by these fourteen year olds is of crucial significance in structuring the future career paths of the students. This early requirement to specialise affects the future career of a pupil in many ways. It can lead to exposure or restriction to certain areas of the school curriculum which can make a substantial impact on shaping a pupil's success or failure in her academic performance. The importance of the third year option choices was recognised by the schools themselves as the following message to parents indicates:

"I look forward to seeing you all on the 13th March. The careers officer and school careers advisor will be available at the school on the evening to give you advice on how option choice affects career prospects and to give you a realistic assessment of career opportunities." ( St. Hilda's Newsletter Issue no. 40 p.2)

#### (1) Teacher Attitudes and Career Guidance

A teacher summed up the circumstances under which most pupils have to make their third year subject choices:

" It is hit or miss really. It is left to chance. In this day and age it can't be left to chance." (Mr Higgins: D&T teacher and Third Year tutor, St Hilda's)

Both schools had a similar procedure for determining the options of the pupils. It was a system that was as Ms Wright, Head of Year for the third years at St Theresa's outlined:

".. greatly depended on the performance in a particular subject, especially with regard to the sciences."

The Head of St Theresa's, Ms Grey, acknowledged the role of the teachers in the decision-making process when she issued the following warning to her staff:

" Sometimes teachers have strong objections to having a girl in her group. If a girl is in your group it is her choice and you must talk it over."

The Head of Careers, Ms Wallace, indicated that in other less direct ways a teacher could influence the choices being made by the girls. She explained:

" When girls make their choice the fact of liking a teacher is very important to them."

Despite their apparent awareness of their role, the teachers, rather than attempting to redress this issue, continued to hamper the career choices of the girls, as one teacher explained:

" The girls should realise the importance of not being able to get on with a member of staff. They must find out who is going to teach them and what group they are in or else there will be trouble. It can be like rubbing sandpaper if they don't get on." (Ms Smith: Mathematics teacher, St Theresa's)

This teacher clearly felt that it was the responsibility of the pupil to side-step certain subjects to avoid confrontation rather than it being up to the teacher to make the effort to reassess the situation.

'Liking a subject', as well as liking a teacher, was another criterion upon which young black women made their subject choices. The Head of Year for the thirds at St Hilda's, Mr Robbins, explained that this was due to the fact that at this age

the student had little experience or knowledge on which to base their career choice. This was supported by the pupils themselves who upon being asked what future careers they could see themselves in, gave a limited and predictable range of occupations. This was hardly surprising since the third year had only been scheduled two terms of careers instruction, most of which in both schools they had missed due to timetabling problems and lack of teachers. The HMIs had recommended that formal careers instruction need only start at the age of 13 when, "the eyes of the young need to be opened to wider possibilities" (DES 1973)

As a reflection of the inadequate service these pupils had received by the third form, many young black women stated their reasons for choosing a particular career was because it was something that they had 'heard about'. For example, a common response was that it was a job that their mother, aunt or sister did, or that they had seen it on TV. The simplicity of their decision-making process (and its consequences) is illustrated in the following statements:

" I really want to do the child development course. I'm looking forward to it because I like children and look after my brothers and sisters."

" I'd like to be a P.E. teacher because I'm good at sport."

" I'd like a hospital job. Physiotherapy or something. My sister does hospital work so I've heard of physiotherapy. I read something about it and I like first aid too."

" I think I'd like to do pharmacy. I saw a film about it. But it will mean that I will have to do all three sciences and I don't know if they will let me."

" My parents have a business. But I don't want to do it. My sister made them angry because she wanted to do dance and art. I don't know what to do."

The poverty of the girls' knowledge about labour market opportunities was apparent. On the whole they had traditional female expectations of work <sup>19</sup> (marriage however was not a criterion), and made their subject choices accordingly.

A third year tutor explained the many pitfalls young black women encountered when they made choices based on very little background information with regard to what a specific job actually entails:

" Many want hospital careers because they get it into their head, physiotherapy, radiographer and so on. But when they hear you need physics, they soon drop the idea."

Marcella Browne (1981) observes that there are two factors that affect female occupational choice processes. The perception of the opposite sex's response to career development (i.e an awareness that boys do not like girls to work or do better than them) and the anticipation of future adult roles (i.e. motherhood and marriage). For the older black girls in the study these two criteria were less of a consideration (see Chapter 6). However, the younger black girls who had far less experience of life, were more apt to base their career decisions upon romantic images of their future roles and relationships shared by the wider culture <sup>20</sup>. For example, marriage and the desire for economic security

<sup>19</sup> For example, nursery nurse, nurse , air hostess, cook, hairdresser.

<sup>20</sup> There was a notable difference in occupational aspirations of middle class white girls (i.e. SC 1 & 2 ) compared to working class girls of other races in the third year. These girls were clearly drawing on their home background as a source of information when making their choices. These early choices already encompassed the expectation that they would be going on to do further studies often in order to secure a non-traditional female profession. For example, one girl stated that she would "... want to do accounting. My father said to do maths and computing."

through masculine support was evident among the third year girls and was in sharp contrast to the response of the fifth year girls. Ms Wallace commented on a third year class:

" You can see how unconsciously being a girl creeps in on every level of choice and career aspirations, well you heard, all they want to do is have babies and marry someone rich and famous."

In spite of the staff's recognition that these 'gendered' choices were negative and regressive, the counselling which the third years underwent when making their option choices did nothing to counteract this process.

## (2) Parents

In spite of the schools' limited attempts to involve them,<sup>21</sup> parents, on the whole, did not feel part of the choice process. Parents indicated that they felt that they were presented with a 'fait accompli' with regard to the subjects their daughters would be studying. Option forms were sent home for the inspection and signing of parents but only after the teacher had counselled the pupil on what to do. When parents were consulted, the teachers, from a position of superior knowledge, often persuaded them what was in their daughter's best interests. In this regard parents, such as Anita's mother, were willing to leave matters in the hands of the teachers saying:

<sup>21</sup> In both schools the attempt to involve the parents was a cosmetic gesture. The previous year at St Hilda's the third year parents' evening during this period had been cancelled. This year the school failed to issue an option booklet to every parent in order that they could discuss their child's choices at the parents evening. When met with parental objections, the school's excuse was "because of curriculum changes." At St Theresa's the attitude toward the role of the parent was made clear when a teacher remarked, " We were fortunate this year the parents' evening coincided with the option choices."

"I don't really understand what going on all the time or what they saying, is the way they says it too." (sic)

Other black parents disliked the situation and so avoided coming to the schools. As one parent said,

" I feel unwelcome when I do come, I don't trust them but then I'm not able to argue with them, they'll just go and put me in my place." (sic)

### (3) Time-table

Another set of factors influencing career options were timetable restrictions and individual school course requirements. Often pupils could not take up their chosen subject because it clashed with another. In both schools subjects were organised by subject 'block'. Sciences rarely coincided with other sciences but overlapped with the humanities curriculum, therefore making it impossible to do a certain science, for example chemistry, with a specific non-science subject like history. By making a combination of the disciplines difficult, this encouraged pupils, early on in their school career, choose between the arts or the sciences.

At St Theresa's a maximum of six to seven options was allowed. When making their selection pupils were asked to rank them according to preference, 1 2 3 4 5 , with two reserve choices 6 and 7. The choices of all the pupils were fed into a computer and a timetable based on subject 'blocks' was worked out. From these blocks the pupils were then allowed to choose 1 subject. One teacher explained, "generally they get their choices but if not they have reserve subjects."

The experience of one black, third year illustrated the problems of such a system. Caroline wanted to be a nursery nurse as her teacher explained, " she has always wanted to be that, she is that type of girl."

Her subject choices were (1) Home Economics, (2) Child Development, (3) Biology, (4) German, (5) English (6) Geography, (7) History. However Caroline was advised to drop home economics because it was suggested that it was so similar to child development and that it clashed with another subject. She was advised to take up textiles instead. In view of her interests and career choice for Caroline, who wanted to do home economics, this was an unsatisfactory choice.

School policy also impinged on the girls' ability to choose what subjects they wanted. One teacher explained how the system operated at St Theresa's:

" All girls are encouraged to do one language, one science, Maths and English and RE are compulsory... We recommend very bright girls to do 3 sciences. but there are few of those. Geography and Chemistry are very popular this year even Physics, but that is probably because Ms Grey is a physicist and is keen to promote it."

There were other problems that the girls faced if they chose too many of certain subjects whose syllabi required project work or continuous assessment.<sup>22</sup> Girls if their teachers judged them to be incompetent, girls were steered away from selecting a combination that included too many of these options because of what one teacher called 'practical problems'. She explained:

<sup>22</sup> With the establishment of the new GCSE exam this problem is even more acute. At the time of my project, GCSE was not yet fully integrated into the curriculum.

" Of course when they make subject choices it is not yet decided if they are going in for 'O'level or CSE. CSE's are good, but if some child is put in for four of five CSEs so many projects have to be submitted at once. at the same time approximately. They end up up till all hours of the night trying to complete the work and then you find that even in lesson time they are doing project work for another subject when you are teaching. They have to stay in lunch and rec to complete the work... This always happens to the children who are not aware that they must work on the projects from the beginning and leave it to the end." (Ms Parker: English teacher, St Theresa's).

Thus the direction which the third year subject choices took was influenced by a number of factors, of which teacher assessment and the quality of advice were the most important. Within the system of selection, teachers were free to employ their judgement in a number of ways. By their recommendation they could restrict or encourage the take up of certain options by pupils. The other consideration was the poverty of the careers information that the third year pupils had received prior to making their choices . Inadequate guidance left these young pupils vulnerable to limited images and ideas of the labour market that reproduced existing inequalities. Without adequate advice the future careers of these young black girls were being determined by decisions that were influenced by the restricted knowledge of both teachers and pupils.

#### Staying On: Into the Sixth Form.

Literature examining the educational characteristics of young black women suggests that they, more than any other group and in particular contrast to their white female counterparts, endeavour to pursue their education beyond the statutory minimum requirements.<sup>23</sup> My study upheld these findings and demonstrated

<sup>23</sup> See: Dex 1982; Rutter 1982; Craft and Craft 1983; Tomlinson 1983b; Brown 1984; DES 1985; OPCS 1987; Eggleston 1986.

that the majority of black female pupils expressed their wish to continue in some form of full-time education after the age of sixteen. In response to the questionnaire, 79% of young black women indicated that they would like to continue in their education. 65% of these young women wished to stay on at school, whereas 14% indicated that they would prefer to leave school and take up a college course. These findings contrasted with the responses of the white girls, 64% of whom stated their preference for staying on (43% at school and 21% at college).

The reason why young black women desire to extend their education is the subject of some debate. Eggleston et al (1986), for example, suggests that one <sup>24</sup> of the main reasons is that young black people, aware of the high rate of black youth unemployment, are attempting to postpone their labour market entry. There are those who explain the persistence of black women to continue their education as an outcome of their pursuit of financial and economic independence, especially with regard to their menfolk.<sup>25</sup> Dex (1983) suggests that young black women who desire to 'stay on' are 'making good sense' of available education and training in response to the negative status occupations and contracts of their mothers within the British labour market. Rutter (1982) offers an alternative explanation. He argues that this phenomenon, particularly among the girls, was a way of counter-acting the negative effects of material, economic and

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<sup>24</sup> In addition Eggleston et al give as an explanation a similar argument as Dex (1983). To account for the motivation of young black women these authors emphasise the strong role model of the mother.

<sup>25</sup> See for example Hooks 1982; Fuller 1982; Justus 1985; Moses 1985.

social deprivation experienced by a migrant community in Britain, which resulted in the lower attainments of black pupils at their first examination sitting.

However, these explanations did not adequately account for the fact that of the young black women in the study tended to stay on at school. Firstly, there was no evidence to support the findings of those who emphasised the presence of a conscious and universally-developed political strategy in the day-to-day decision-making process of young black women. Secondly, there was no evidence to suggest that the material deprivation suffered by the black working classes directly affected the educational outcome of West Indian children making them stay on longer to get the required grades. What the findings of this study did indicate, however, was that many young black women needed to stay on in order to redress the unsatisfactory outcome of their particular schooling experience. Others who had overcome their schooling experience by resitting their examinations were found to be engaged in the normal process of staying on in order to get the necessary grades for further or higher education.

That the schooling experience is particularly weighted against the academic success of young black women has already been established in previous chapters.<sup>26</sup> This factor when considered in the light of the evidence presented in Chapter 5 on the positive orientation of working class, West Indians to the

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<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 7 on the quality of schooling and Chapter 8 on teachers' expectations.

meritocratic ideal explains the necessary persistence of young black women in their pursuit of educational qualifications.<sup>27</sup>

It was found that 82% of young black women in the sixth form at St Theresa's at the time of my fieldwork investigation were doing resits in order to get the required grades to further their educational or vocational careers. Of the fifteen young black women in the lower sixth, thirteen were re-taking some or all of their CSEs or 'O'levels.<sup>28</sup> In the upper sixth, five of the seven black girls were still engaged in resits, while two had gone on to their 'A' levels. At St Hilda's all of the five black girls in the sixth form were involved in resits while at the same time engaging in other courses (including one or two 'A' Levels).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of the reasons for staying on given by fifth year girls who had not yet sat their final examinations. While their rationale did not presuppose failure and the need to resit, they felt strongly about the need to secure the required grades to enable them to progress in their chosen career. This rationale, it was suggested was derived from the strong influence of a cultural orientation among the West Indians toward the meritocratic ideal.

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that while doing resits some girls were also taking other subjects at other levels too .i.e. first year 'A' level, GCSE courses, or other vocationally-orientated courses such as typing and office skills. However the main reason for staying on was to resit.

<sup>29</sup> Because of the importance of the 'age factor' in the recruitment process of the youth labour market, it should be recognised that the girls' strategy to maximise their potential by staying on longer, was not always a plan that worked out in their best interests (Lee and Wrench 1983). Employers and both private and YTS apprenticeships show a preference for younger but more qualified youth. They look to qualifications being gained early (i.e. at sixteen) and at one sitting, and have been found to be less interested in the number of 'O' levels gained over a longer period. Leaving school at sixteen is, therefore, a definite advantage over leaving school at eighteen.

(1) The Impact of the Changing Role of the Sixth Form

The current role of the sixth form was characterised by its inadequate definition. On the one hand the sixth form retained its old function, a place for nurturing higher educational aspirations, on the other hand it was seen, with the growth in youth unemployment, as a site for delaying labour market entry. However, for the young black women in the sixth form, the majority of whom were there because of the need to resit their exams, were not concerned with either of these two aspects. The consequence of being caught up in the contradictions created by these two distinctly different roles was that the black girls received little advice or information to fulfil their needs and requirements (i.e. qualifications that were not of use for higher education, or suitable to enhance labour market opportunities).

Both the quality and orientation of the careers advice offered, and the non-academic input into the sixth form curriculum, reflected the school's ambivalent position with regard to its role. While there was an apparent increase in the number of vocational courses being offered, there was no complementary development of advice and information. Careers advice still largely focused upon its 'prospective university material'.

There was much evidence to suggest that the role of the sixth form was changing. The sixth form in recent years had broadened its scope, offering many pre-vocational and vocational courses, as well as other non- 'O' level and 'A' level programmes. This change was not always welcomed by the staff, many of whom found it difficult to accept as one teacher explained:

" They only go into the sixth form because they can't do anything else. They come back because they found out that there is nothing else to do and we are 'safe'."

There was some evidence to suggest that the sixth form was engaged in a process of 'mopping up' school leavers who were either undecided of future careers or underqualified for them. For example, at St Hilda's several pupils who had failed to get their required CSE grades had returned to the sixth form after the summer to do a City and Guilds course (no.365) which was a general foundation course. One girl when asked about the course replied:

" I don't know what it is or what I shall be doing really, they haven't told us much ..."

Mr Gavin, the tutor in charge of the course, explained that it was a vocational preparation course with work skills. The pupils, he said, get day release from the college for work placement. It was for those with some CSE passes who were not sure what to do but were not yet ready to leave.

This increased interest of the schools in encouraging pupils to stay on into the sixth form can partly be explained by the budget arrangements the school has with the ILEA. The sixth form budget is adjusted according to the number of pupils in its sixth form.

Ms Carter, the sixth form mistress, explained:

" There is a problem if we lose too many pupils to college courses the school loses money and staff. So it is in our best interests not to over inform them, that's Ms Grey's direction anyway."

Ms Grey did indeed support this policy as she explained in the Quinquennial Review:

" We wish to encourage girls at St Theresa's to return to school after the age of 16, rather than to depart to college."

Likewise St Hilda's had a positive recruitment drive aimed at encouraging the fifth year leavers to go on to the sixth form. The fifth form, in contrast to the information they received on other career matters, were given several talks about the sixth form as well as each being issued with an attractive sixth form prospectus.

Many of the young black women expressed dissatisfaction with what the sixth form was offering them in terms of vocational courses and indicated that they would opt for a college future in this respect. One black girl remarked:

" They ain't doing you any favours you know. They only want us for the money that they get for us, That is why they want you to stay. But I ain't staying long if I can help it."

Despite their apparent wish to stay on, their choices in the sixth form reflected this disenchantment. It was observed that many of the girls, upon completion of their resits after the first year of the sixth form, drop out. The decision to leave indicated that these girls were seeking their vocational training elsewhere.<sup>30</sup>

The vocational courses that were available were limited by the schools' resources. St Theresa's had just introduced BTEC and TEC vocational courses and in keeping with the changes around them and had, "widened the scope of their secretarial course to suit the greater range of ability of girls following the course."  
(Quinquennial Review)

<sup>30</sup> Craft and Craft (1983) found that black pupils were more likely to take up their further studies at college rather than stay on at school.

St Hilda's offered RSA and City and Guilds and had links with local colleges for pupils to do such courses as 'motor mechanics' and 'catering'. They also offered what they called a 'basic clerical package' and an 'engineering' and 'community care' package, the last two being CSE-orientated.

An increase in the number and type of courses available to the sixth form was partly due to the setting up of 'consortiums'. The consortium arrangement came about in 1981 in response to the apparent need for rationalisation of sixth form resources in the face of falling school rolls. It consisted of several schools in the vicinity of each other collaborating so that a pupil might take a course being offered by any one of the sixth forms in the consortium. Both St Hilda's and St Theresa's had the co-operation of three other schools.

The efficiency of the consortium arrangement was called into question by St Theresa's Quinquennial Review. It noted that pupils in the consortium suffered from the lack of communication between the schools. There were a number of practical problems that resulted from the lack of co-ordination this produced. Time wasting, timetable and record keeping problems, differences in examination boards and even hostilities between rival gangs based at the various consortium schools - which included incidents of sexual harassment - were highlighted. In spite of these fundamental problems with the consortium arrangement the schools themselves recognised the need to overcome them if the sixth forms were to survive.

It was recognised at St Theresa's that careers advice suffered because of the consortium as it was not included as part of the sixth form curriculum. However this was only one of the factor contributing to the poor quality of careers advice in the upper school. The sixth form in both schools, despite increases in vocational courses, retained an assumption about the extraneous need for careers advice.

Careers advice in the upper school was largely non-existent. There was no timetable allowance and as the Quinquennial Report and prospectus of the schools pointed out, it was up to the pupils to seek their own advice. What was clear, however, was that such advice that was available was orientated toward those that wished to pursue a career in higher education, at a Polytechnic or a University.<sup>31</sup> St Theresa's illustrated this primary objective of the information service it provided when a central feature in the prospectus under 6th Form Careers noted:

" Mrs Carter advises 'A' level students and has a responsibility for UCCA forms and arranging interviews with the careers officer...."

St Hilda's also shared a similar perspective with regard to careers advice in the upper school. In the prospectus it explained that:

" Careers advice is always available. In addition to the careers staff attached to the school we enjoy the help of a specialist careers officer who advises those taking 'A' levels."

The message is clear, careers advice is only for those taking 'A' levels and not for those undertaking vocational preparation.

<sup>31</sup> Craft and Craft (1983) found that black pupils were more likely to apply to Polytechnics than to Universities.

In conclusion those who entered the sixth form in order to resit exams, and not to take up a career in higher education nor a vocational programme received little support at this crucial stage in their decision making process. These black girls who chose to 'stay on' into the sixth school to secure the necessary qualifications to proceed in their career, were found to be caught up in the changing role of the sixth form. As a consequence the sixth form failed to offer the appropriate information to assist these young women to make informed and non-traditional choices concerning their occupational destinations.

#### The Effects Of Site and Situation On Occupational Choice.

An important factor affecting the quality of institutional resources available to young black women is the site and situation of the schools and agencies to which they have access. The schools that the young black women in the study attended were located in disadvantaged inner city areas of London. As already discussed in Chapter 7, this location has implications for the standards of schooling that the pupils who attended such schools receive.<sup>32</sup>

While site and situation do have important influences on information, access and resources there are those who argue that

<sup>32</sup> Pettigrew (1986), referring to research at Johns Hopkins University, suggests that the location of schools in mainly black areas decreases the employment opportunities for blacks to move out of traditional areas because predominately black schools (1) reduce networks and the 'strengths of weak ties'. (2) reduces 'mixing skills' among blacks i.e. blacks tend to choose predominately black work situations (3) reduces chances of college admission into better resourced white colleges i.e. prejudice against admitting pupil from certain schools without a tradition of admission.

the occupational disadvantages experienced by young black people can only be understood in terms of their geographical location in the inner city.<sup>33</sup> The assumption of these 'spatial' studies is that all blacks in the inner city experience the effects of 'urban blight', such as rising unemployment and the decline in manufacturing industry, in much the same way. For example, Cross and Johnson (forthcoming) calculating on the basis of male heads of household, suggest that within the inner city West Indians are skewed towards the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. In contrast they argue that in the outer areas of the city a greater proportion of the ethnic minorities resident there are to be found in skilled, non-manual, professional and managerial social and economic groups.<sup>34</sup> It is clear that the specific employment patterns of black women are not seriously considered in such an analysis.<sup>35</sup> For if they were it would become clear that while black womens' employment opportunities are affected by the process of urban decay, the characteristics of their occupational location cannot be understood only in terms of such forces. While the initial location of migrants in the labour market in the inner city was determined by job availability and government policy, the subsequent employment opportunities for young black

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Cross 1986; Wilson 1987; Cross and Johnson (Forthcoming). It is also recognised that the quality of inner city schooling has a detrimental effect on the educational performance of black pupils (Rutter 1979; Mortimore 1988)

<sup>34</sup> Similarly Wilson (1987) suggests that the blacks living in the inner city form an 'underclass'. Professional, educated middle class blacks move out of these declining areas leaving behind a residual 'underclass'.

<sup>35</sup> This is not to say that black women are ignored. They are mentioned, but nearly always in terms of their negative reproductive capacity. Wilson (1987) for example, uses as indicators of black social disadvantage the high rates of what she calls 'out of wedlock births' and 'teenage pregnancy'.

women in London have been structured by sexual dynamics of the labour market. This is demonstrated by the fact that the employment opportunities available to black women are markedly different than those available to black men. 53% of black women in London are to be found in non-manual occupations, compared to 20% of black men (Brown 1984). Not only are black women in London to be found concentrated in the non-manual sector, they are specifically to be found in the service industries, the major employers being the local authorities and the National Health Service. Black men, in contrast are more likely to be employed in manufacturing and transport and communication sectors of the economy, mainly as skilled and semi-skilled workers. The differences in employment patterns among male and female black migrant workers appear to have influenced the career choices being made by the second generation. Young black women entering the labour market feel they can more readily turn their aspirations towards the non-manual sector than the young black men who, like their fathers, have been traditionally locked into the rapidly-declining skilled and semi-skilled occupations.

When the occupational aspirations of the young black women in the study were investigated it was found that they were generally choosing community and care-orientated professions. The girls were determined to stay in London <sup>36</sup> and take up work as welfare officers, probation workers, teachers, social workers, child care workers, and nurses. Various types of office work, from

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<sup>36</sup> Even among the young women wishing to pursue further or higher education chose Colleges and Polytechnics all situated in London i.e. South Bank Polytechnic, University of London Goldsmiths' College, South London College, Brixton College, Vauxhall College etc.

computing to administration and secretarial work with the large local authorities and other branches of the welfare state, were also regarded as feasible occupations. In short they were opting for jobs that were traditionally done and known to be available to black women in the inner city and that were now essential to the servicing of their community.<sup>37</sup>

An analysis of the employment patterns of the two boroughs in the study, Lambeth and Southwark <sup>38</sup>, reveals that the distinctive aspirations of the young black women could be influenced to some degree by the local labour market opportunities that are open to them. For example women were most likely to be found in Southwark employed as clerical and office workers (20%). This was followed by service, sport and recreation workers (18%). Manufacturing, where the majority of men were to be found, only made up a small proportion of female employment (5%).

In conclusion, the evidence presented here suggests that the black female work force in the inner city is locked into a different occupational sector than black men. As a consequence of a racially and sexually segregated labour market, black female workers experience different opportunities (i.e access to various types and levels of non-manual work) and difficulties (i.e female school leavers have a higher rate of unemployment in the inner

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<sup>37</sup> A review of the public expenditure in the London Borough of Lambeth reveals the increasing pressure on the social services in the inner city (London Intelligence Unit (GLC 1985a). This demand on the services does mean that jobs are created.

<sup>38</sup> See: London Borough of Southwark (1986); London Borough of Lambeth (1985).

city)<sup>39</sup> than their male counterparts. Partly because of limited access to information, young black women do tend to choose the sorts of jobs that were known to be available to them. In this regard the location of the schools in the inner city can help explain, in part, the initial job choice of some young women.

Access, Information and Advice: 'Middle-Class Logic' and the 'Radical Reappraisal'.

Willis (1983) suggests that to emphasise the failure of agencies and services in the career process is to fall foul of the 'matrix of inappropriate middle-class logic'. He explains:

" Studies of the transition from school to work, which might have made the connection between the school, social system and the world of work, have simply been content to register a failure of the agencies and rational policies-derived basically from middle class preconceptions." (p 99)

Willis's vitriolic attack on those that suggest careers agencies play an important part in the shaping of young peoples' careers is based on his finding that:

"In terms of job choice it was the 'Lads' culture and not the official careers material which provided the most located and deeply influential guide for the future." (p 106)

Willis claims that the process responsible for reproducing labour market inequalities and class differences can be illuminated not by an investigation into the delivery of careers information, but through an analysis of the reproduction of culture:

" Counter-school culture blocks, or reinterprets, the formal information concerning work with which it is saturated. All official communications about careers and work are importantly filtered through the group. By and large what might be termed as denoted messages from teachers

<sup>39</sup> London Borough of Lambeth (1985:34) notes that a greater proportion of female young unemployed were school leavers- 87% compared to 79% for men. 47% of young women had been out of work for 6 months or over with 87% being school leavers. Of young men 49% had been unemployed for over 6 months with 75% being school leavers.

and careers officers are most heavily filtered ...  
information about a job is simply not taken in." (p 105)

However to dismiss the role of information agencies out of hand, as Willis does, is to ignore the fact that many black pupils do rely heavily on the services of official agencies in the recruitment process (Cross 1987a, 1987b). Willis's analysis of shop floor culture is specific. The internal dynamics he describes that leads the 'lads' to reproduce their class position is not applicable to the black female context as some writers suggest (see Fuller 1982). Young black women are not involved in reproducing their inequalities through their cultural values, but on the contrary engage in a process that will, according to their specific rationale, ultimately assist them in securing upward mobility. Within a consideration of this study's assessment of black female aspirations it is clear that the lack of resources will be significant to those who are attempting to secure some measure of upward social mobility through the available channels, and in particular the educational system.

This chapter examined in detail the way in which the quality of advice and access to resources can hinder or assist in the occupational placement process for young black women. It was found that these young black women often chose from a limited range of occupations because they were not given the opportunity to explore other avenues. Not only were standards of education questionable in the two schools studied, which led to a lower level of educational attainment than was possible; careers advice was also poor and ineffectual. Both the Careers Education Programme and Career Service were confused in their role, poorly resourced and under-developed. The recruitment to YTS was

clearly discriminatory, low level schemes being aimed at those who were thought of as unemployable. Procedures for early specialisation were not complemented by adequate guidance, nor free of teacher prejudice. Information in the upper school was inappropriate for the needs of the black girls who were resitting exams or wishing to go on into further studies. Under these circumstances, and in order that they might further their aspirations and secure some measure of upward social mobility, young black women were placed in a position where they had to rationalise what was available to them.

Thus, in conclusion, and contrary to Willis's position, we can say that the degree to which young black women reproduced their labour market position was indicated by the lack of any good positive careers advice. Their cultural values, if anything, assisted them in their struggle to avoid perpetuating their migrant position in the labour market. The question, however, remains as to how far we can claim, from the argument presented here, that a change in careers policy would decrease the level of sexual and racial distinctions in the labour market. This question cannot be answered directly, suffice to say that inadequate access to information and poor resources did contribute substantially to the reproduction of inequalities.

## CHAPTER 10

### OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE AND THE MAINTENANCE OF INEQUALITY:

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### An Overview

This study attempted to identify and investigate the factors that influenced the occupational choices of 62 daughters of migrant West Indian workers now resident in Britain. The young black women in the study (aged 16-19 years) attended two comprehensive schools in South London. The girls and their black and white male and female peers (total n= 198), all of whom could be objectively identified as coming from working class homes, answered questionnaires, and were interviewed and observed over a period of 18 months. The findings presented in this thesis are the results of that investigation.

The career choices being made by these second generation, Afro-Caribbean women were, relative to their peers, both high and distinct. In terms of social class the majority of young black women both expected and aspired to jobs in the highest social grouping. 74% of young black women indicated that they both expected and aspired to get jobs classified as SC 1 & 2. These jobs, often (though not always) identifiable as traditional female 'professional and intermediate' occupations, were located particularly in the social and welfare 'caring' fields. Of the 20% that aspired to jobs classified as SC3, 10% indicated their preference for non-manual, mainly office-type, work, while 10% stated their preference for skilled manual employment, again largely of the 'caring' variety.

In contrast, young black men, though also aspiring to higher social class occupations than their white male peers (but lower than their black female counterparts, were less likely to expect to achieve their aspirations in the job market. On the whole they expected to find employment as skilled manual workers.

Compared to their black female peers, young white women were more likely to aspire and expect to secure employment in SC 3 as non-manual and skilled manual workers. Young white men were the least likely of any of the pupils to want or expect a job in SC 1 & 2. Their preference for skilled manual work was marked. However, a fair proportion of young white men did aspire and expect to be employed as non-manual workers, which was in sharp contrast to the young black men, none of whom indicated that they thought this area of employment was accessible to them.

In attempting to account for the distinct aspirations of the young black women, the influence of social class on the cohort was examined. The findings suggested that, contrary to those studies which assert that there is little or no social class influence on West Indian occupational choice (Sillitoe and Meltzer 1985), there was in fact a clear association. This association, however, was not immediately apparent in a conventional examination of maternal, paternal or parental social class. Young black women, whatever the occupational status of their parents, maintained high social class aspirations.

A detailed consideration of working class, West Indian, migrant, cultural characteristics suggested that, second generation West

Indian migrant women were influenced by their parents' orientation to work and education. Positive attitudes towards education and the lack of constraint on female labour market participation within West Indian families, it was found, accounted in part for young black womens' high social class aspirations.

The nature of the West Indian female orientation to the labour market formed a central argument in the the thesis. In response to the dominant and established explanations for black female motivation, that is the strong role model of the mother figure and in the particular their 'unique' orientation to motherhood (Driver 1980; Fuller 1982; Phizacklea 1982; Dex 1983; Eggleston 1986), it was found that the young black women in the study expressed what was essentially an ideology emphasising the relative autonomy of both the male and female roles. Like their parents and grandparents, these young black women had not adopted the dominant Eurocentric ideology: an ideology in which gender was regarded as the basis for the opposition of roles and values.

The evidence suggested that the cultural construction of femininity among Afro-Caribbean women fundamentally differed from forms of femininity found among their white peers, especially their white migrant (Irish) peers. In the black definition, the statements revealed that few distinctions were made between male and female abilities and attributes with regard to work and the labour market. This particular definition of masculinity and femminity resulted in greater female participation because

nothing in the definitions of appropriate sex-role behaviour excluded them from areas of social and economic achievement.

While the factors so far described account for the commitment to a full-time career and the presence of high social class aspirations evident among young black women, the marked tendency to opt for careers in what are commonly classified as traditional female occupational preserves also needed to be explained.

It was found that the usual processes held to structure gender disadvantage in this society are further complicated by both the operation of racism and the distinct ideological orientation of working class, Afro-Caribbean, young women. Clearly what these girls were doing was attempting to achieve some measure of upward occupational mobility by means of a strategy that rationalised in their interests, the various educational and labour market constraints that they encountered.

A major constraint was the existence of a racially and sexually segregated labour market which ensured limited occupational opportunities open to young black women. The black girls chose jobs that were 'gendered', such as social work, nursing, office work etc., not so much because of the nature of the job, but because that was the only type of work in their experience and knowledge that was available to them. However, in choosing these jobs, they used the stated educational requirements as a vehicle for obtaining more or better qualifications, in an effort to enhance their career prospects and satisfy their desire for credentials. Their willingness to move into 'non-gendered'

careers (relative to their white peers) can largely be explained by the combination of the notion of relative equality between the sexes, which ensured that there was no cultural limits to their attempts to do non-traditional, female work, and the motivation to succeed, which encouraged the search for all available opportunities.

A crucial factor in shaping the distinct occupational aspirations of young black women was the experience of schooling. As a vital resource to black female pupils who were about to enter the labour market, schools were seen to play an important role in both structuring and restricting black female occupational aspirations and expectations. Confirming the findings of the Eggleston Report (Eggleston et al 1986), it was found, that with regard to information, advice and educational preparation, schools often failed their black pupils.

Black girls were clearly not being provided with the appropriate levels of qualifications needed to enter the labour market in accordance with their ability. A comparative evaluation of the two schools in the study supported the findings of the ILEA study conducted by Peter Mortimore (Mortimore 1987), suggesting that the school an individual pupil attended did make a difference. As an investigation of their examination results showed, black girls fared poorly within the 'selective' grammar school ethos of St. Theresa's. Here lower ability girls many of whom were black, not least because of the system of recruitment, experienced five years of what effectively was seen to be 'custodial' education. St. Hilda's with its record of academic 'mediocrity' and poor

standards of teaching, meant that all, but in particular the bright black girls did not do as well as they could in their examinations.

Futhermore it was observed that much of the girls' time at school was spent effecting strategies to avoid the effects of racist and negative teacher expectations. Strategies such as not taking up a specific subject or not asking for help were employed as the only means of challenging their teachers' expectations of them; expectations that were often characterised by the practice of either overt or unintentional racism.

Black girls were not only impeded by teachers assessments of their abilities but their decision making was fundamentally influenced by the poverty of advice and information they received about job opportunities. Primarily because they were not given the opportunity to explore other possibilities, young black women often chose their careers from a limited range of occupations, depending on their own knowledge and existing experience of the labour market. In this respect both the Careers Education Programme and the Careers Service were found wanting. Confused in their role, poorly resourced and under-developed, they provided little direction to those that relied most heavily on their services.

The quality of other aspects of vocational preparation in the schools was also questionable. In a similar finding to Austin (1987), recruitment to YTS from the schools was seen to be clearly discriminatory, with low level schemes being aimed at

those who were thought of as unemployable. The demand for early subject specialisation in the third year was not complemented by adequate guidance, nor was it free of teacher prejudice.

Information in the upper school, especially the sixth form was inappropriate for the needs of the black girls who stayed on to resit vital exams or wished to go on into further and higher education.

Diego Gambetta (1988), in a recent study about the educational decision-making process, interestingly entitled 'Were They Pushed or Did They Jump?', suggests that individuals tend to evaluate rationally the conditions under which they make educational decisions according to the cost and benefits of their choices. He concludes that people, subject to economic constraints, adjust their expectations according to their own academic ability and their labour market benefits, suggesting that if anything individuals jump rather than are pushed.

Young black women did make rational choices based on ability and job opportunity, but in the context of overwhelming institutional limitations, and under the severe economic constraints of a racially and sexually determined labour market. In these conditions the issue of rational choice as discussed by Gambetta, becomes somewhat academic. The women in the study found themselves in a position where, in order to achieve a modicum of upward mobility, they had little choice but to turn the limited educational and labour market opportunities open to them to their advantage.

Educational research that addresses the issue of race in schools has shown little commitment to an investigation of gender (Mirza 1986a). As the Swann Report (DES 1985) exemplifies, the possibility of acknowledging black achievement seems problematic to those wishing to assert simplistic models of race, culture, and underachievement. To those writing about the issue of race in the labour market, a similar tendency to marginalise the findings on women as 'uncharacteristic' or 'spurious' prevails (see Cross and Johnson 1988).

The presence of high aspirations in the context of continuing labour market inequality, acts as a clear indictment of the failure of a meritocratic ideology to provide a more egalitarian society. As Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) have argued, it was the hope of the architects of the 1944 Education Act, and later those who campaigned for the 1976 move towards comprehensivisation, that a more equitable educational system could be achieved. But the occupational outcomes of the young black women in the study, four years after leaving school, were clearly not a reflection of their educational potential or achievements (see 'Post Script').

In conclusion the evidence presented in this thesis suggested that ultimately, whatever the educational level or labour market disposition of these young black women, their occupational location was subject to a variety of factors, in particular, labour market structures and educational resources. Inequalities based on race, gender, and class remain an integral feature of this society inspite of its ideology of meritocracy.

### Recommendations

Burney's (1988) findings with regard to the limited effect of existing Equal Opportunities Legislation, (including the temporary effect of any 'package' of positive discrimination), together with the rather pessimistic conclusions of this research project, suggest that any policy recommendations aimed at redressing inequality may be little more than cosmetic. However the investigations of this study do point to two important policy directions.

#### (1) A Reappraisal of Social Policy and the Black Family.

In his study of the black condition in America, Wilson (1987) suggests that public policy initiatives aimed at stemming the tide of the growing black 'underclass', should be directed at restoring the economically successful, self-assured, black, male breadwinner. The persistent attack on the black family, and in particular the identification of the single mother as a major cause of black disadvantage, is a continuing misrepresentation in social policy, arising from the reluctance to acknowledge anything other than the nuclear conjugal family as the norm.

The findings of this study suggest that young black women have an alternative and equally valid concept of the family. Based on the notion of relative autonomy between the sexes, relationships and parenthood are determined by compatibility between partners and not the promise of economic security within the institution of marriage. That this pattern has endured historically, and in

times of economic hardship increases, is evidence of its viability and value.

The single parent unit rather than an indicator of 'low cultural morality' (Gibson 1986), the emasculation of the black male and the weakened black family (Moynihan 1965, in Rainwater and Yancey 1967), appears to be a positive and strategic life-style.

However the lack of recognition motherhood solicits, in terms of social policy and institutional resources in Britain, compared to any other Western nation is well documented (Moss and Brannen 1988). Facilitating women in their careers as mothers and workers appears to be a decreasing concern of the Government, who seem to have as a central goal of their employment policy a determination to discourage female labour from participating in any other sphere than the domestic. Vital support services, such as state provision for the under fives, nurseries, day care, work place creches; other basic rights such as child-care and maternity allowances, maternity leave, and important employment concessions (e.g. jobshare and part time hours), have been either eroded or ignored. However, it is precisely these policies, and the recognition of better pay for women's work, that all black women, who are now an integral part of the British economy (see Westwood and Bhachu 1988) require in order that they can secure better standards of living for themselves and their children.

## (2) 'Magnetizing the Masses'

The findings of this research project clearly showed the problems faced by inner city schools and the effect this had on the black pupils within them. The need for better career information

services, better standards of teaching and leadership, better resources and facilities, and, in particular, a more effective anti-racist strategy (as indicated by the Burnage Report (1988): See Guardian 3.5.88), are required to raise the level of schooling that black pupils receive. Black parents, teachers and pupils have long demanded such basic rights (See: Stone 1985).

In a recent statement by Neil Fletcher the leader of the ILEA, (Guardian 13.10.87) he describes such a policy that would raise the standards of pupils of all inner city schools as 'a Mark II comprehensive model'. Based on the American notion of 'magnet schools' set up to serve bright, black, ghetto children, Fletcher calls for a 'magnetising of the masses'. This, he suggests, is attainable by increasing working class parental participation, establishing 'quality control' by means of proper attainment tests, increasing incentives for classroom and head teachers, and monitoring the size and ability intake of pupils into any one school.

However, the move to improve standards has not originated from this quarter, but has come instead in the form of the haphazard recommendations of Kenneth Baker's GERBIL (Great Education Reform Bill) due to come into effect in 1990. With its politically-inspired changes for 'opting out', a national curriculum, and greater centralisation, the Bill has all the hallmarks of what Ainley (1988) has described as 'a new Victorian era in education'. Far from raising standards, through the medium of 'parental choice', and instilling academic rigour into the lives of our children, it will in effect reinstate a system of

selectivity, which instead of 'magnetising the masses' will ride roughshod over all the progress of the recent decades, re-establishing instead large pockets of inequality within the educational system.

## POST SCRIPT

### From Career Aspirations to Labour Market Realities: The Career Destinations of Former Black Students Four Years on.

In 1987, four years after the initial survey in 1983, a questionnaire was mailed to all the black male and female pupils in the study (n=72).<sup>1</sup> Of those sent out 33 replies were received (i.e. 46% percent of the sub-sample). Because of non-response, the information provided by the 'follow-up' destination questionnaire only allowed a qualitative consideration of the labour market experiences of certain pupils in the study. However inspite of this limitation some interesting patterns regarding their destinations did emerge as the following analysis of the data reveals.

#### (1) Staying On

77% of the young women who replied to the questionnaire indicated that they did for some period 'stay on' at school after the age of 16. Of these by far the majority (70%) were involved in the process of retaking CSE or 'O'levels or were engaged in other academic pursuits, such as doing their 'A' levels in order that they might go on into continuing or further education. When they left school 45% of these girls did go on to continuing, further or higher education. Many, though not all, took up social care type courses. Only 10% stayed on to do retakes with the intention of entering the labour market directly upon leaving school. They were resitting in order that they might enhance

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4 for full details of how this survey was conducted. See also, Appendix No.2.

their prospects in the job market (most entered into higher grade office work i.e civil service clerk) or secure the required qualifications to enter a particular profession (i.e. the police). The remaining 30% who stayed on were involved in the vocational courses offered by the sixth form. The take up of the secretarial programmes was especially notable.

(2) The Youth Training Scheme (YTS)

29% (9) of all the female destinations were YTS placements. A disproportionate number of these placements were office work, often low grade clerical positions. Several girls worked in private companies (e.g. a record company, a bank and solicitor's office), the others were employed by large public employers (Lambeth Council, County Courts etc).

What was clear about these placements was that they did not reflect the girls' choices. Most of the girls involved in this type of office work had indicated as their original aspiration a 'community' or 'care' placement. Many of them had taken up school courses in order to go into 'socially-orientated' occupations, as the following case illustrates.

Louella wanted to do a YTS course in nursery nursing and had taken up (and passed) child development (along with 4 other CSE's) in order that she might do so. However she was given an office placement, and as the following account of her subsequent and unsatisfactory experiences of the YTS shows, she has since spent three years attempting to secure her chosen vocation in

'community care'. She is currently employed as an assistant caterer (cook).

"In 1984 after I left school I went to Brixton College. Then I went on holiday for a few months in Jamaica. After I returned back to London from my holidays I went on a YTS scheme as I had taken all my interviews before I left.

This was a one year computer course in Kennington. On this course I also did typing, data base word processing and communication skills. When I went on my work experience I was a VDU operator for Sandell-Perkins which took me on full time. I was there for a little while becoming an experienced VDU operator.

All during this time I also had an evening job an assistant caterer in Covent Garden. I left Sandell-Perkins as I was not happy with things such as the pay especially as I was getting double the money for my evening job.

I went back to college part-time to do a 'community care' course at Vauxhall.

I have now left College after passing my exams and I got a pay rise from the evening job which I also do two full days. Move from parents house. Settled down. I hope one day to get a job in community care." (sic)

### (3) Office Work

The young black women who had stated their aspiration to be office work, and in particular secretarial work, were on the whole the most successful of all the girls in fulfilling their aspirations. These five girls did their vocational training at school or at college (e.g 'Sight and Sound') and then sought and secured work almost immediately as the following typical example illustrates:

|        |       |   |                     |
|--------|-------|---|---------------------|
| Marcia | 1984: | 6th Form St Hilda's:                      | secretarial course. |
|        | 1985: | 1 year BTEC at South East London College. |                     |
|        | 1986: | Junior Secretary for R.Mansell Ltd.       |                     |
|        | 1987: | ..  | ..                  |

On the other hand, several young women with good academic credentials, who did not state their aspiration as office work, appeared to enter this field of employment because of its



Marcella's ambition, contrary to her teachers advice, was to undertake a course in social care with the ultimate aim of becoming a probation officer. For two years she studied social care at Brixton College while working part-time on the weekend to supplement her income. In 1986 she secured a temporary training placement in a nursing home. However, unable to find a permanent position, or indeed any work for which she was trained, she decided to return to college in 1987 to do an electricians course. She has since had a baby.

The resolutness with which young black women pursued their careers was apparent. Three young women were still at college, having spent four years without earning any income, in order to achieve their ambition. Denise, for example, stayed on at school to retake CSE's and to do some more 'O' levels. For the past three years she has been studying social work at the Kingsway Princeton College.

#### (5) Higher Education and Specialised Careers

There were only two girls responding to the questionnaire who went on to pursue specialised careers. These girls, both of whom were from working class backgrounds had by 1987 successfully completed part of their studies, but as yet had not fully entered the labour market. Dianne who had left school with six 'O' levels had now been awarded a Diploma in Interior Design and Furnishing from the London College of Furniture, and was now completing a degree in Interior Design and Computer Graphics at Teeside Polytechnic. Debra had completed a Diploma in Fashion Design from the London College of Fashion, (inspite of her teacher's

expressed reservations) and was now undertaking an apprenticeship as a trainee designer and pattern cutter in Great Portland Street. These girls provided further evidence of black female willingness to postpone labour market entry (with the assistance and support of their parents) in order to attain the required qualifications needed to succeed in their careers.

#### (6) Business

Though several girls in the original sample had aspired to a career in business, only a few who replied to the questionnaire had succeeded in their ambition. Those who stated that they would hope that doing a BTEC would provide an opening into business, were all working as secretaries. One girl, who originally indicated her desire to be a teacher and had gained several 'O'levels and two 'A' levels, had been working in a boutique for three years in the hope that she might one day own her own shop.

#### (7) Unemployment

Even though no young women actually reported being unemployed, what was immediately apparent was the role the YTS played in successfully masking the lack of available opportunities by effectively postponing labour market entry. A disproportionate number of young black women were in effect moving from one unrelated scheme to another as the following typical example shows:

Sonia: Aspiration Nursery Nurse:

1984: YTS 'Newsight' Art and Design course.

1985: YTS introductory course for working with children.

1986: Southwark College-City and Guilds for home economics & family and community care (2 year course ends 1988)

Others drifted from YTS to one casual job after another in an effort to avoid unemployment:

Sandra: aspiration data processing:

1984: YTS scheme (clerical work)

1985: British Home Stores (Cashier) Oxford Street (full time)

1986: Tesco stores, Brixton (full time)

1987: Unemployed, "because I'm expecting a baby which is due in August." (I hope this will help you complete your study)

#### (8) Motherhood

Four years after leaving school many of the young black women in the study had become mothers (n=9). Entry into early motherhood was not necessarily a substitute for unemployment or poor job prospects, as it is often assumed. Some young women were on the point of completing college courses (social care and word processing) others were still involved with on-the-job training (e.g hairdressing), while others had secure jobs in various aspects of office work (e.g. civil service clerk and personnel secretary)

#### (9) The Career Destinations of the Young Black Men.

There were only two replies from the small number of young black men in the study. In contrast to their female counterparts both had distinctly 'masculine' experiences.

Maurice: aspiration electrician:

1984: Electrical Engineering (Brixton College)  
 1985: (Apprentice) in Plastering  
 1986:        "               "  
 1987:        "               "

Davis: Aspiration armed forces:

1984: Picture Framing on YTS  
 1985: H.M Forces, Royal Green Jackets  
 1986: Frozen Food Department, Jumbo Cash and Carry  
 1987:        "               "               "               "

It should be noted that Davis's Verbal Reasoning score on entry to St Hilda's was highest in terms of reading and mathematics, yet by fifth year he had been relegated to the bottom stream of the year. He was labelled as "difficult, aggressive and unable to communicate" by his teachers. However, I found him helpful and intelligent. He enclosed the following message with his questionnaire:

" Hi Heidi, I don't know if you personally remember me, but I remember you. I hope you are doing well after all these years. I would like for you to keep in touch with me and let me know how you get on with your studies. Davis."

### Conclusion

Overall the career destinations of the 31 young black women and two young black men who took part in this survey were characterised by a distinct lack of variety and scope. For the girls the overwhelming concentration of employment opportunities in low grade office work regardless of their aspirations, together with the marked tendency for unfulfilled aspirations towards careers in caring professions, was a clear pattern. The 'masculine' characteristics of the male careers reflect the presence of sexual divisions in the labour market. In general what was apparent was the wasted potential of both the male and female young people in the study.

A Note On Differential Examination Performance

The young black women in the study did have higher examination results than their male peers. Overall their performance was not unlike that of their white female counterparts. The following table shows the outcome of the 1984 'O'level and CSE examination results for the pupils in the sample.

Final Examination Results By Race and Sex<sup>2</sup>

|  | Black Female | Black Male | Other Female | Other Male |
|--|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| <u>Results</u>   | (45)         | (5)        | (39)         | (24)       |
| No graded Result   | 2%           | 20%        | 5%           | 13%        |
| At least 1 Graded Result But less than 5 Higher Graded Results | 93%          | 80%        | 87%          | 87%        |
| 5 or more Higher Graded Results                                | 5%           | 0          | 8%           | 0          |

These findings were in keeping with the ILEA study on examination performance (ILEA 1987) which found that in London schools both black and white girls performed much better overall in their examinations than the boys.

<sup>2</sup> The method used in The DES School Leavers' Survey (DES 1985:114) was followed in the presentation and grouping of grades.

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APPENDIX No. 1STUDENT: INSTRUCTIONS

school questionnaire on influences on career choice, expectations and aspirations.

I am asking every student in forms ----, ---- & ----, to answer a few questions about themselves.

I am doing this firstly to see whether the results of previous studies on the career choices, expectations and aspirations of school leavers, like yourself apply to this school; and secondly to make sure that the students whom I shall be interviewing are not unlike all of you.

Please answer the questions as carefully as you can.

If there is any difficulty let me know.

REMEMBER, this is NOT A TEST, so be as honest as you can.

I shall treat all your answers as confidential: They shall NOT be shown to your teachers or parents or any other student in the school. Your names and identity will not be revealed in any report or study.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

Heidi Mirza  
University of London  
Goldsmiths' College  
(Nov 1983)

QUESTIONNAIRE

(preliminary.)

1. First name(s) .....

Surname ..... Form.....!

Address .....

---

2. Date of birth ..... Age next birthday .....

---

3. Where were you born? .....

If you have ever lived outside London, please give the following details about each of the places:

| Name of town/ village | your age when you moved there | your age when you moved away |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| .....                 | .....                         | .....                        |
| .....                 | .....                         | .....                        |
| .....                 | .....                         | .....                        |
| .....                 | .....                         | .....                        |

---

4. After July this year do you intend to stay at school:  Tick box.

OR

leave school :

---

5. When you leave school , what kind of job(s) would you like to do? Please give details.

.....

.....

---

6. Are there any jobs which you do not like? Please give details.  
.....  
.....

7. How many brothers do you have .....  
How many sisters do you have .....

Please give details of brothers and sisters living with you.

| name  | age   | always lived with you? | born in the same place as you? |
|-------|-------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ..... | ..... | .....                  | .....                          |
| ..... | ..... | .....                  | .....                          |
| ..... | ..... | .....                  | .....                          |
| ..... | ..... | .....                  | .....                          |

8. Are there any others who live with you? Yes / no  
If Yes a) what relationship are they to you? .....  
b) have they always lived with you? .....

9. Are you living with your mother/ grandmother/ aunt/ stepmother/ foster mother/  
or guardian/ or others.....  
(Please crossout the ones that do not apply.)  
Has she always lived with you? Yes /No  
If No Who else have you lived with .....  
Please give details (dates) of others you have lived with?.....

10. If your mother/ grandmother/ aunt/ stepmother/ foster mother/ guardian/ other.....is working at the moment (or if she sometimes works) what is her job? .....

Does she do it at home  or does she go out to work

Does she do it part-time  or does she do it full time

Does she travel to work Yes / No

If Yes : How far does she have to go .....

11. Was your mother born in the same town/village as you? Yes / No

If No : Where was she born? .....

12. Are you living with your father/ grandfather/ Uncle/stepfather/ Foster father/ guardian/ or other.....

(please cross out the ones that do not apply.)

Has he always lived with you? Yes/ No

If No : Who else have you lived with .....

(Please give details (dates) of others you have lived with? .....

13. If your father/ grandfather/ uncle/ stepfather/ foster father/ guardian/ other ..... is working at the moment, what is his job? ( If he is not working, give details of his last job) .....

Does he do it at home  or does he go out to work

Does he do it part-time  or does he do it full-time



Does he travel to work Yes/ No

If Yes : How far does he have to go .....

14. Was your father born in the same town/ village as you? Yes / No

If No: Where was he born? .....

15. Do you live in a :

Council house/flat

your own house/flat

Privately rented house/flat

16. Have you always come to this secondary school. Yes /No

If No : Please give details of other secondary schools you have attended:

| Name of school | Date started | date left |
|----------------|--------------|-----------|
| .....          | .....        | .....     |
| .....          | .....        | .....     |

17. Which primary school did you attend: .....

Did you like it there?.....

18. Have you ever been 'streamed' in school according to how well you are doing in your studies? Yes/ No

If Yes: Please give details of which stream(s) you have been in.

| Year  | Stream (high or low) |
|-------|----------------------|
| ..... | .....                |
| ..... | .....                |
| ..... | .....                |
| ..... | .....                |

July 1987.

You may recall in 1984 when I visited your school you very kindly completed a questionnaire for me as to what type of work you wanted to take up. I wonder if you could now let me know what you are doing by filling in the section below and returning it in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

I would very much appreciate receiving your reply as I will then be able to complete my study.

Yours sincerely,

Heidi Mirza.

NAME.....

SCHOOL.....

Work and/or educational experience since leaving school.

1984.....

1985.....

1986.....

1987.....

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.

(preliminary ---To be piloted.)

1. How important is it to you that you do well at school?  
     " " " "      to your parents  
     " " " "      to your friends      " " " " "  
     " " " "      to your teacher
2. What does 'doing well' mean to you?
3. Do all West Indian girls/boys want to succeed at school? What are some of the problems they face in trying to succeed? In what ways do you think the experience of boys differs from that of girls?
4. In what way does your experience at school differ from other girls?(ie. Asian girls, White girls.)
5. Is it important to you that the other students think of you as West-Indian, or would you rather be thought of as just another student?
6. Are there things that upset or enger you in school/at home?
7. Do your parents/ teachers understand the problems you face at school and in succeeding? To what extent do they help and understand? Do they help you enough? In what ways would you like them to help you more?
8. (Refer to question 4. on the questionnaire- leaving school.)  
     Would you tell me a bit more why you intend to stay on/ leave school this year?
9. ( Refer to question 14. on the questionnaire-exam subjects.)  
     Why did you choose to take these subjects?  
     For what reasons do you expect to pass/ fail ?

10. (Refer to question 5. on the questionnaire- preferred job.)  
What is it about the job(s) that attracts you? Will there be anything you won't like about it? How did you come to decide on a particular job? Do you think you are good enough to be a -----?
11. (Refer to question on the questionnaire- disliked job.)  
What is it about these jobs that puts you off?
12. (Refer to questions 5 and 23.-ie. if there is a discrepancy between preferred and expected job.) Why do think you will get a job doing -----, rather than the one you really like?
13. (Refer to questions 10. and 13. - parent/guardian's occupation.)  
Has your Parent's/guardian's job affected your job choice? In what ways?  
What problems do you think they face in their job and in getting their job?  
What problems do you think you will face? How far are these similar/different to the problems they faced? Do you think your outlook differs from your parents/teachers in terms of your future?(Compare your goals and aims to theirs.)
14. What do you think an employer looks for in a good employee? How would you describe a good/bad employer?
15. In 10 years time what would you like to have achieved/ what kind of person would you like to have become? Is any of this going to be difficult/ impossible?(ie. to do with self/ others, external factors eg. discrimination.)
16. (Refer to question 24. on the questionnaire.)  
What is it about ----- that you admire? Would you like to be like that:OR  
You've said there's no-one you'd like to be like. Could you tell me why that is?
17. Would you like to get married? Have you always wanted to? Why would you like to get married? What would you look for in an ideal husband? What do you expect of marriage?
18. Would you like to have children? Have you always wanted to? Why do you feel it important?

What kind of home/ family life would you like? In what ways would it differ/ be similar to your parents/guardians home and family life? (ie. discipline; support.)

What is it about being a black woman that is most important to you? What are the benefits/ draw-backs? (ie. in terms of marriage, career, job etc. vis-a-vis black men, white women.)

What advantages/disadvantages can you foresee in undertaking a FE/HE course? What kind of course would you like to do? What value is there in such a course?

Would you consider leaving home (ie. locality) to find a job? How far would you go? (West-End:abroad.)

What do you enjoy doing most out of school? (hobbies/interests) Has this interest effected your choice of favoured job?

Would you send your own daughter<sup>to</sup> to this school? For what reasons would you/ would you not send her to this school? What do you consider the benefits/draw-backs of your education?

---

APPENDIX No. 4

nd November 1983

ar Parent/ Guardian,

research worker from the University of London, Goldsmiths' College, Mrs H Mirza (Hons) is carrying out a project in the school on the pupils views about their future, with regard to the kind of jobs, family life, and plans they have. Mrs Mirza is an old girl of the school, comes from Trinidad and is particularly interested in opportunities for West Indian girls.

Mrs Mirza will be handing out a questionnaire, and will also hold interviews with a number of 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th year pupils during this school year (1983-4).

I am writing to seek your permission for your daughter to answer the questionnaire, and to be interviewed.

The identity of both the school and the girls will remain anonymous at all times.

All the information will be treated as confidential and will be seen only by Mrs Mirza.

Please return the attached slip to Mrs Mirza at the school as soon as possible.

I hope we shall have your co-operation as it will be most helpful to this research.

Yours sincerely

Headmistress .

-----  
(Please return to Mrs Mirza at the school.)

I give my permission for my daughter to take part in this research project.

Name of pupil

Address

.....

.....

Year and class.....

.....

Signed.....

7th November 1983  
7th November, 1983.

Dear parent/ guardian,

A research worker from the University of London, Goldsmiths' College, Mrs H Mirza, BA(Hons) is carrying out a project in the school on the pupils views about their future, with regard to the kind of jobs, family life, and plans they have. Mrs Mirza will be handing out a questionnaire, and will also hold interviews with a number of 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th year pupils during this school year (1983-4).

Pupils names will be selected at random and it is possible that your son/ daughter may be selected. I am writing to seek your permission for him/ her to answer the questionnaire, and/ or to be interviewed.

All the information will be treated as confidential and will be seen only by Mrs Mirza.

Please return the attached slip to Mrs Mirza at the school as soon as possible. I hope we shall have your co-operation as it will be most helpful to this research.

Yours sincerely,

Principal.

-----  
Please return to Mrs Mirza at the school.)

I give permission for my son/ daughter to take part in this research project.

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