

CONSUMING SCHOOL

A study of Year Eight pupils' influences, desires and ambitions for the future and the way in which these relate to their school experiences.

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Abstract

This case study investigates the attitudes of a mixed sample of twenty Year Eight pupils taken from two schools towards the influences they perceive at work in their lives and how these affect their ambitions for the future. It has employed predominantly qualitative research methods and has adopted an inductive approach to analysing the data from both questionnaires and interviews in order to interrogate how the pupils' experiences of school were utilised and how these experiences were perceived to be of use in constructing pathways towards potential ambitions.

The pupils' attitudes have been considered in the light of active and passive consumption debates as these relate to Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* and de Certeau's theory of *tactics*. The findings from the sample in this research indicate a fairly broad spectrum of attitudes, with ambitions amongst the boys seeming to be more prone to the influence of habitus than amongst the girls at this stage. There was evidence also of fairly unpredictable and unexpected consumption practices to satisfy personal desires.

However, while school was enjoyed on the whole, there were few indications of a clear conceptual connection in the minds of the pupils between specific curriculum subject learning and particular ambitions, although generic skills, such as literacy and social skills, such as 'making friends' were considered useful for the future. If the findings from this research are not exceptional, then there is a danger that many young teenagers may not perceive as relevant much of what they learn in school from day-to-day and may consequently become demotivated and disengage from the process. It may be advisable to create greater transparency as to the use and value of curricular content at the point of delivery in the classroom.

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With thanks to Steve

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Introduction

Recent attitudes to school improvement have sought to investigate what pupils actually think about their experiences in schools, in an attempt to address concerns that many pupils still do not actively engage with the process, or see it as a means to achieving what they want from their adult lives.

In 1988 the Education Reform Act introduced to England and Wales a national course for all children of compulsory school age, which is referred to as the National Curriculum. This document paved the way for a largely standardised delivery of education across specific subject areas for pupils to consume. This standardised production of education is not dissimilar to the type of mass production critiqued by the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972) as producing passive consumers who were no better than mindless dupes. However, there have been various voices that have challenged the belief that consumption is per se a passive activity, in whatever context it takes place (Fiske, 1989; Giroux, 1983; Hebdige, 1979; Hall, 1997; McLaren, 1995) and that on the contrary, consumption is the way of negotiating and making meaning out of the situations and products at hand.

The concept of consumption, which used to be mainly linked to buying 'things', has been expanded, largely through cultural discourses, to include the idea of

usage and appropriation of products that are both material and non-material. Miller (1997) uses the term to explain that an idea can be bought into, or consumed, either passively or actively. If a point of view is struggled with, criticised, applied to one's own experience, then the opinion that emerges can be considered one's own. Consumption is about the ways in which we use what somebody else has produced and how we make that artefact, idea or experience our own and part of who we are; it is a way of negotiating and making meaning out of the situations and products at hand. 'Consumption is the only way to obtain the resources for life whether these resources be material-functional (food, clothing, transport) or semiotic-cultural (the media, education, language)' (Fiske, 1989, 34).

In this thesis consumption relates to how pupils make use of the 'product' of education and their experience of school. On the one hand the product presented in the classroom is the construction of governmental, legal and educational experts and is delivered through a highly trained and qualified workforce. On the other hand stands the pupil consumer who will consume the product in her/his own way. This thesis investigates the attitudes of a small sample of young teenagers. It examines how they consume school, with particular regard to what they want for their futures. Its focus is on 'wants' rather than 'needs' as 'wants are always motivational, needs only sometimes' (Hirst and Peters, 1970, 35).

The overarching research question is: How do pupils consume school and how does this relate to their aspirations? I have broken this down into three parts:

- What do young teenagers want to do, to have and to be?

- Who or what influences their ideas, opinions and ambitions?
- How do they perceive school helps them to achieve the things they want?

These questions formed the focus of both the initial questionnaires and the semi-formal group interviews. The sample included twenty pupils from Year Eight classes in two different schools, ten pupils from an urban school and ten from a country location. Their responses have been analysed in relation to two theorists: Bourdieu's theories of *habitus* (1977a, 1977b, 1984) and *field* (1993) have been used as a framework to examine attitudes embedded in familial dispositions and de Certeau's theory of *tactics* (1984) has been employed to locate happenstantial attractions and motivations for ambition. The reason for this is to attempt some level of understanding of the scope and complexities of the various practices of consuming school displayed and discussed by the pupils. De Certeau's theory (1984) stands in opposition to Bourdieu's (1977a, 1997) belief that all our motivations originate and are engendered in our earliest backgrounds. The theory of tactics allows the possibility that people might seize opportunities and ideas from what they encounter without being predisposed to do so. This theory therefore seems better positioned to measure responses to the media and the various influences of modern communication technologies, where what is encountered may be alien to previous experiences.

Young adolescents are mandated to attend school and to follow the programmes of work organised into subject areas by the National Curriculum and delivered to them, mostly in classrooms, by their teachers. However, the extent to which they

really engage with the ideologies of the school and find a use for their experiences is the issue this research tries to address.

Do pupils actually use their experiences in class to build a future or do they operate on a completely different agenda? The power and social dynamics of a classroom are always complex and are not only about struggles for meaning and understanding in relation to the curriculum. McLaren suggests that:

‘Classrooms are complex cultural sites ripe neither for revolution, nor for mindless complicity with oppression; rather they possess the potential for occupying liminal zones of transgressive practices where identities are constantly negotiated, a place of counterpressures and counternarratives’ (McLaren, 1995, 90).

Issues concerning pupil disaffection are certainly not new and committed teachers have sought to understand why so many pupils have to be ‘wooned or threatened into taking advantage of their opportunities’ (Chessum, 1980, 117). However, whilst a few children do revolt against the system, most do not. Most pupils, most of the time, do what is needed to get by, perhaps operating their own agendas at the same time as partially engaging in the lesson. However, what I wanted to investigate in this research was how useful did pupils consider their experiences in school to be. To what extent did they ‘buy into’ the rhetoric of the system and what use did they anticipate making of their experiences both inside and outside the classroom?

Over thirty years ago, Stenhouse suggested that for pupils 'to accept the discipline of learning what appears to be useless for the present in the trust that it will serve in the future – appears likely to commend itself to only a small minority of pupils' (Stenhouse, 1975, 9). More recently, research has suggested that although school is perceived as enjoyable or satisfying by most pupils (MacBeath and Weir, 1991; Keys et al., 1995; Hendry et al., 1993), it is not considered to be particularly useful or successful in preparing pupils for work and most pupils do not view it as 'an avenue to success or career' (MacBeath and Weir, 1991). In addition, this review pointed to a general opinion that there was little connection between what was studied at school, the 'real' world and the world of work. What is also of particular relevance to this research is that MacBeath and Weir's findings, taken from a variety of research on the subject of pupil attitudes to school, indicated that there was a whole range of responses to school, along with different perceptions and attitudes that were simply not understood by teachers (p.12).

The contribution this thesis hopes to offer is in revealing some adolescent attitudes towards how school 'fits in' and provides what young people want out of life, to include – but not exclusively – occupational ambitions. It offers some insights into how some adolescents treat or consume school and hopes to make a contribution towards understanding one aspect of what Hirst and Peters describe as the 'all-pervading' and 'perennial' problem of motivation in education (Hirst and Peters, 1970, 33). I have attempted to engage the 'authentic voices' of young people in school about their experiences and to interrogate what affects their

motivation and engagement (Rudduck et al., 1996) and explore how they consider school supports their ambitions for the future.

I consider it to be of crucial importance to better understand how young adolescents approach and consume school, as it may well be at this point that pupils 'need to be helped to think and act strategically in relation to their learning' (Doddington et al., 1998) so that they can plan pathways in order to realise their ambitions. Contemporary approaches to pupil participation, such as the ESRC programme on Consulting Pupils About Teaching and Learning, which resulted in publications like *Consultation in the Classroom, Developing Dialogue about Teaching and Learning* (Arnot et al., 2004) have considered pupil participation important, not only in terms of making the whole school process more relevant to the pupils, but also in terms of 'taking account of pupils' rights as consumers' (2004, p.3).

Society has changed and is continuing to change and it is very important to attempt to understand how the way we live our lives today affects what young people want from their lives and how they feel they can achieve their desires. In the face of increasingly globalised markets and rapidly expanding communication technologies, there is a belief that consumer-media culture 'has transformed the lives of children, the institutions of the family and the school and, ultimately, the 'nature' of childhood' (Kenway and Bullen, 2001, 8). For this reason I feel it is important to try and understand those elements that may inspire and motivate young people and thus influence them to engage with school in certain ways.

The first chapter considers the socio-cultural theories and debates surrounding the location of this research, with particular reference to Bourdieu (1977a, 1977b, 1984, 1993, 1997) and de Certeau (1984), as they offer two different perspectives on the issue of cultural consumption. The following three chapters investigate in turn the three fields of influence considered in this research and which have been referred to by Hirst and Peters in their discussion on motivation in education as being the source of most children's interests: families, friends and media (Hirst and Peters, 1970, 37). The second chapter discusses the nature of families and their place and perception in society today; the third chapter discusses the role of friends and peers, and the fourth chapter addresses issues concerning media influences. Chapter Five then looks at the theories and research findings to date as they relate to pupils' attitudes towards consuming school.

Part Two of the thesis contains a detailed explanation of how I conducted the research and an analysis of the data from the twenty pupils in my research sample. My methodology and the methods I employed are outlined in Chapter Six. The following chapters deal with analysing the data in order of the research questions so that Chapter Seven investigates what young teenagers want to do, to have and to be; Chapter Eight discusses who or what influences their ideas, opinions and ambitions and Chapter Nine considers how they perceive school and how they consume it in order to achieve what they want.

The last two chapters then reflect on the implications of these findings. Firstly, in Chapter Ten I consider the comparative merits of using Bourdieu's (1977a, 1977b, 1984, 1993, 1997) or de Certeau's (1984) theories in order to understand

how pupils might resist or seize opportunities in school and in Chapter Ten I outline my conclusions as they relate to my research questions, the limitations of this research as I see them and the implications of the study for research, policy and practice.

Chapter One

Socio-cultural Influences

It is my intention to approach the analysis of my research predominantly through the medium of culture. Since the cultural 'turn' this concept has provided a useful window through which to view and analyse the meanings incorporated into human behaviour. The cultural 'window' also offers a view of people located within a network of social relations and locations that today is supposedly becoming more global and diverse.

1.1 Using Theories - Bourdieu and de Certeau

In order to analyse the expressed ideas, attitudes, hopes and ambitions of the young teenagers in my research study, I have mainly employed the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau. In analysing the responses of the adolescents in my sample, I have referred in particular to Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a 'generative formula' (Bourdieu, 1984: p170). I have also used Bourdieu's outline of 'field' to some extent to organize my analysis of external socializing influences on the young teenagers outside their immediate family backgrounds and to seek some understanding of how the dynamics of alternative ideologies or 'social universes' interact with the habitus of the teenagers to affect

their consumption of school. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field offer a useful theoretical framework with which to investigate the motivations of the pupils in my study, although the concepts are not wholly unproblematic and it must be borne in mind that most of Bourdieu's empirical work on education was undertaken in the 1960s.

Because of the criticisms that have been levelled at Bourdieu's theories, in particular that he is over deterministic in his conception of human agency, I have also used Michel de Certeau's theory concerning strategies and tactics, as outlined in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), as a model for more opportunistic consumption practices that might be considered to challenge the determinism of Bourdieu. De Certeau's model seems to offer a more supportive explanation for behaviour or attitudes of resistance that deviate from the 'norm' of their cultural background. His concept of 'tactics' provides a model for action and agency that is more responsive to influences outside familial experiences and may help to understand motivation that cannot easily be situated within concepts of cultural capital.

1.2 Cultural Capital and 'Class'

Firstly I will briefly outline cultural capital as this relates to and underpins the concept of habitus. Bourdieu claims that cultural capital consists of value systems or dispositions that are arbitrarily constructed within society and tend to reproduce themselves (Bourdieu 1997). The ownership of this type of capital, particularly areas of knowledge, manners and attitudes, confers status on the

individuals who own it and can be witnessed in such systems as 'old boy' networks.

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital stands opposed to 'perfect competition or perfect equality of opportunity' (Bourdieu, 1997, 48) and denies the possibility that anyone can at any point in time become anything, or that academic achievement is dependent on intelligence. He explains that it is a 'force inscribed in the objectivity of things, so that everything is not equally possible or impossible' (p46).

This thesis is mainly concerned with the 'embodied' state of cultural capital, that is the long-lasting dispositions of the individual; the value systems, prejudices, ambitions and attitudes that are inculcated within a child's psyche as s/he grows up. Institutional recognition of cultural capital is mostly in the form of academic qualifications, which can be used for conversion to economic capital. And it is here within the education system to a greater extent, Bourdieu believes, that the academic status quo is maintained: those children in whom a similar capital has been invested as that of the education system, and who possess compatible values with that system, will swim like fish in the currents of the dominant academic ideologies of the education institutions.

The theory of cultural capital, as explained by Bourdieu, has been widely accepted as a useful explanatory structure for dealing with issues of social reproduction, especially where there is a mismatch between values in the home and those adhered to in another arena, such as school. Attitudes towards the

opportunities offered by education and the manner in which school is consumed may well be coloured by an individual's cultural capital; however, some have found the concept too deterministic and static and believe that behaviour, even in school, is not wholly determined by social location (Lareau, 1997, 703; Jenkins, 2000, 160). Theories of social reproduction do not account for the history of resistance from subordinated groups of society, nor does the concept of cultural capital explain the phenomenon of social mobility (Reid, 1998; Roberts, 2001) and processes such as 'embourgeoisement' and 'assimilation' (Harker, 2000, 165). Issues of cognition are also problematic and seem to eliminate the possibility of critical thought (Martin and Szelenyi, 2000, 282).

Some contemporary researchers and theorists feel that Bourdieu's concept of cultural reproduction neither acknowledges nor explains why and how change does happen. Reay (1998), like Michael Apple (1997), feels that the concept does not fit well with postmodernist and poststructuralist theories of diversity and individuality and does not account for the micro politics of individual narratives, nor the complexities of life today. However, despite her discomfort with cultural capital, Reay finds the concept of habitus useful (p. 140).

Before turning to a discussion of 'habitus', however, which does offer the potential to understand individual motivations, I need to point out that in the context of this thesis, which attempts to pursue the individual accounts and micro-complexities of personal narratives and ambitions, that social class categories which have been composed in the macro-context of social surveys (and used for usually very large-scale quantitative research analysis), do not, I

feel, offer a practically helpful framework for this particular research, despite Bourdieu's extensive use of them as a structure organising society. I would certainly not argue against the existence of more privileged and less privileged sections of society, nor against the belief that the gap between the two poles is widening (Mount, 2004). However, the concept of social class has always been an area which has been vigorously contested (Roberts, 2001, 24; Reid, 1998, 10), as have the levels and labels that have been allocated to the various groups.

Bourdieu at one point uses sixteen categories to analyse preferences for three different musical works (Bourdieu, 1984, 17); the Registrar General's social class scheme, which was in use through most of the Twentieth Century, until 1998, used six different categories and the present system most widely used in this country, the ONS (Office of National Statistics) scheme labels eight categories, which it rounds up into three basic divisions: service class; intermediate class and working class. The so-called 'upper' class referred to in some of Bourdieu's analyses, for example the different daily and weekly papers chosen by class factions (1984, p. 448), seems to include mostly those deemed to be 'service' or 'middle' class in other classifications, indeed in contemporary schemes an upper class no longer seems to exist. In this thesis I have also referred to information from the seven-year long Young People's Leisure and Lifestyles (YPLL) survey published in 1987, which uses just three employment categories: 'non-manual', 'manual' and 'unemployed' (Hendry et al., 1993).

Analysis of class has also traditionally referred exclusively to the occupation of the male 'head of family' as the defining element in classifying all the members

of that family (Roberts, 2001, 43-4; Reid, 1998, 12) and has taken little or no account of the potential influence of mothers; this could be particularly problematic within my study as I have considered all close family relations as potentially influential.

Another problem in making comparisons with Bourdieu's view of class reductionism is that, as has been mentioned above, his approach to social class seems to leave little or no room for change, whereas (at least in this country) social mobility has been an accepted fact and has been surveyed since the Second World War (Reid, 1998, 111). Since that time a constant flux in social positioning has been recorded, with a general trend towards upward mobility that may be due to the decline in labouring jobs and an expansion in intermediate and service class occupations (Roberts, 2001; Reid, 1998).

...despite the very wide inequalities in life-chances as seen in the relative mobility rates for people starting life in the working class, upward mobility has been a quite common experience, nothing exceptional. Those who have remained immobile will have seen others getting ahead: people who they knew at school, in their neighbourhoods, and sometimes from their own families.

(Roberts, 2001, 2000)

My research is only a small case study and its objective is to try and find and illustrate the scope of different practices amongst the pupils in my sample, with

attention focused on individual accounts and views, therefore I have listed the information about parental occupations, alongside their interests, such as has been given to me by my respondents. For anyone who would wish to review my findings in the light of a social class analysis, then Appendix 4 may provide them with the relevant information.

There is another interesting observation Roberts makes in his critique of Reproduction Theory, which is pertinent to the findings of this research and which relates to gender differentiation in terms of the influence of cultural capital on occupational destinations. He states that ability and qualifications appear to be more influential in determining the success of girls in the labour market than boys, and that among boys social and cultural capital seems to be more influential (Roberts, 2001, 221). He does not offer an explanation for this, although the cultural tradition of male employment as the most important aspect of employment within a family may contribute to this phenomenon.

However, while Bourdieu uses social class meta-analysis in which to embed his theory of habitus, the theory nonetheless retains the potential for a highly personalised analysis of individual socialisation that locates that individual in a specific cultural and historical situation and as such is a useful research tool in this study.

1.3 Habitus

Bourdieu states that the habitus, in essence, is the embodiment of the cultural capital in which the individual has invested and which has been invested in the individual. It is a 'generative formula' and 'is necessarily internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning giving perceptions...' (Bourdieu, 1984, 170). Bourdieu discusses the concept of habitus in terms of learnt attitudes and principally in terms of learnt dispositions, which he indicates as being part of an early stage of a child's process of socialization. Although he does not attempt to delineate the parameters of this formulation process, he does indicate that it is developed within the 'universe of family relationships' (1977a, p.78).

In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu indicates that the formulation process is principally achieved during the individual's earliest upbringing; however, at no point does he specifically refer this process to a particular age or stage of development as Piaget does with his theory of cognitive development (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Personal history and early influences on the individual seem to constitute the production of the habitus, which Bourdieu also refers to as 'history turned into nature' (1977a, p.81). This production of the habitus seems to be a largely unreflective and unreflexive process as he describes it and which might alternatively be explained as a process of absorption of particular attitudes, values and dispositions at a subconscious level. It is at this level that culture reproduces itself by presenting itself and its structures as natural and taken for granted.

The agent's habitus is the result of her/his particular socialisation and preconditions the individual towards certain perceptions of the world. However, Bourdieu points out that practices resulting from the influence of an individual's habitus are not performed as if in obedience to rules, rather they are 'collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor' (1977a, p.72). To some extent it might be described as a world-view; it is the shape of the individual's window on life and also constitutes the framing and the direction of the view.

A further point that is mentioned by Bourdieu in reference to the nature of an agent's habitus and one that is particularly useful and helpful for an analysis of my research with young teenagers and their consumption of school, is the element of motivation. Bourdieu describes the structures of the habitus as 'cognitive and motivating structures' (1977a, p.76 &78), inasmuch as they dictate what is considered possible and improbable (or thinkable and unthinkable) depending on the objective conditions that have produced those structures: '...the most improbable practices are excluded, either totally without examination, as unthinkable, or at the cost of the double negation which inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is to refuse what is anyway refused and to love the inevitable' (1977a, p.77). He explains that aspirations are cut to fit the social conditions of existence already experienced and that when the prospective environment is alien to the experience of the individual it will be rejected in some way. Bourdieu argues that ' habitus which have been produced by different modes of generation...cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable

practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa' (1977a, p.78).

Reay proposes that Bourdieu's concept appears to be 'multi-layered...A person's individual history is constitutive of habitus, but so also is the whole collective history ... that the individual is a member of' (Reay, 2004, 435). This idea certainly seems to fit with the concept of cultural situatedness that is integral to Bourdieu's theory and the reference to layering offers an illustration and explanation that helps to deal with the indeterminacy of where (or whether) the construct of habitus ends, beyond the indication that it occurs in an individual's 'earliest upbringing'. In her interpretation, Reay adds that the dispositions developed in the habitus are not set for all time, but are 'permeable and responsive' to changing situations and experiences. She states that she envisages the habitus 'as a deep, interior, epicentre containing many matrices' (p. 436), that demarcate the limits of choice available, but which nonetheless offer a broad range of possibilities.

Both Jenkins (2000) and Harker (2000) refer to habitus as being almost synonymous with culture. Jenkins also points out that the habitus, which mediates between 'the objective world and subjective internal reality', is not only the product, but it is also the 'source of "objective" practices'. He believes that the dichotomy between objective world and subjective internal reality is problematic within Bourdieu's theory and concludes that this model of a habitus is inevitably deterministic and that despite Bourdieu's own arguments against a deterministic interpretation, it is difficult to locate a space for the active practices

of his agents: 'Structures produce the habitus, which generates practice, which reproduces the structures, and so on' (Jenkins, 2000, 151).

Harker describes this in a circular diagrammatic form he entitles the 'Minimal Bourdieu Model' (Harker, 2000, 167). However, his analysis of the level of determinism inherent in the concept is rather less pessimistic than Jenkins's. Harker emphasizes that there is a dialectical link with material conditions and notes that 'in a situation of relatively rapid change the objective conditions of the material and social environment will not be the same for the new generation' (p. 168), which means that between each generation the objective relations will have changed to accommodate the altered conditions. Harker suggests that in a society where change is slow, the reproduction model will remain largely intact, but in a rapidly changing or revolutionary culture, the reformations will be major and would involve a 'disruption of the habitus controlled perception of historical circumstances' (p169). He adds that in a fluid and evolving society cultural reproduction does not work like a photocopying process: 'There is always "slippage" toward a compromise with specific historical circumstances, and it is in this discontinuity, this gap, that production is possible, that human agency has room to move' (ibid).

Giroux's interpretation of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural reproduction does not find room for the type of human agency suggested by Harker. He perceives the concepts as being 'one-sided and over-determined' (Giroux, 1983, 90) and in relation to the notion of habitus, Giroux writes that it is 'a conceptual straitjacket that provides no room for modification or escape. Thus

the notion of habitus smothers the possibility for social change...' (ibid). Like Martin and Szelenyi (2000), he objects to what he perceives as the lack of space for reflexive thought and resistance to dominant ideologies. In Giroux's opinion, the concept of habitus does not seem to offer an adequate explanation for rebellion, be it peaceful or otherwise, against one's own background.

1.4 Field

This area of Bourdieu's theory is not so widely written about, either by Bourdieu himself, or by those critiquing his work, although its wider social aspect offers interesting developments to the basic concepts of cultural capital and habitus, which may be useful to analysing the consumption practices of the young teenagers in my study, as it suggests how other influences may interact with the habitus to reform meanings and practices and sometimes effect transformations.

Bourdieu writes, 'As I use the term, a field is a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy' (Bourdieu, 1993, 162). He also uses the term for certain macro groupings of society, including education and the 'fields of study' (Bourdieu, 1977b, 494), but insists that each field may be considered a discrete unit and is not just 'a vague social background' (1993, p. 163),

Each field, it appears, produces its own cultural capital in which an individual can invest (1993, p. 164). It has its own organization, values and customs which Bourdieu explains may be as 'organized and mysterious as those of a primitive

tribe' (ibid). Rather interestingly, he also refers to the laws and regulations of these separate social universes as social 'games' (p.163). The effect of his terminology serves to create an impression that these other worlds are areas of life to be acted out and that they stand in opposition to the 'real' values and systems of behaviour that have been learnt in the home and that have come to be incorporated into the habitus.

Bourdieu states at one point that 'we have on the one hand a macro-sociology, and on the other a micro-psychology' (p. 162) and it seems that one of the difficulties of his theory concerns these issues of borders. In terms of fields, it appears to be obvious that fields must in certain cases overlap, for example, the literary with the artistic and both of these with the educational. In which case, does the influence of different fields penetrate the familial home through such things as media technologies? Is there room for sub-strata within the concept of fields or are these what Bourdieu refers to when he writes about the 'dominants' and the 'dominated'? If the habitus is a medium for 'transformation' does this mean hybridization between fields? Does Bourdieu's theory mean that in today's society there is the possibility not of total creativity of thought, but of almost infinite hybridization of values and attitudes as cultures and subcultures meet and compete, endlessly recreating meanings?

Grenfell and James (2004) understand Bourdieu's definition of field to mean an area of knowledge and information that is demarcated by 'what is thinkable and unthinkable, expressible and inexpressible' (2004, p. 509). They described field as a structured system of social relations (Grenfell & James, 1998, 16), but one

that does not exist in isolation and also suggest that there is a sense of ‘fields within fields’ (p. 20). In their discussion on research, they explain ‘field’ as a dynamic concept that is itself continually evolving and changing and add that ‘within a field at any given moment, there are those elements that are passing through quickly and those with established, semi-permanent positions’ (Grenfell & James, 2004, 510). They claim also that reflexivity is an important aspect of the way a field of knowledge develops and changes.

This appears to add to Bourdieu’s theories a far greater possibility for social evolution, if the idea of change, which Grenfell and James argue exists within the concept of field, can be incorporated into the interaction of a person’s habitus with the field. Although their research focuses mainly on macro-social elements, this view may offer possibilities to help account for social evolution and change that can be applied to the individual in a more dynamic way.

1.5 De Certeau – strategies and tactics

In comparison with Bourdieu’s research and theorizing, de Certeau’s approach to the analysis of social action follows more closely the qualitative paradigm, although it must be said that his focus is on practices rather than the individual. The premise of de Certeau’s theory as outlined in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) is that consumption is practised by individuals in a multiplicity of creative ways. His ethnographic research draws largely on cooking practices, but the theory he expounds in response to his observations has been used to interrogate a whole range of consumption practices where resistance is found to the dominant

order of behaviour. Mackay states that his ideas have been useful to groups such as subcultural theorists: 'These researchers of cultural appropriation found that the reality of mass culture was far more creative than suggested by mass culture critics, and was a means whereby aspirations are expressed creatively' (Mackay, 1997, 6).

De Certeau seeks to throw light on the 'mass of the audience', the dominated of Bourdieu's theories, disempowered and doomed to remain so because of the endless cycle of social and cultural reproduction in which they find themselves. De Certeau perceives resistance and describes that resistance to dominant hegemonic forces in the terminology of a military encounter, explaining that there is a need to differentiate 'both the "actions" or "engagements"...that the system of products effects within the consumer grid, and the various kinds of room to manoeuvre left for consumers by the situations in which they exercise their "art"' (de Certeau, 1984, xvii). He writes about the 'violence of order', the 'clandestine forms' used to counter this violence and 'battles or games between the strong and the weak'. He describes the principal elements of his theory as tactics and strategies.

The term 'strategy' is used by de Certeau to describe action and ideology dictated by the dominant order. This would relate to the education system, curriculum directives or the power hierarchy of a school. It carries an air of authority or of rationality. De Certeau states that 'strategies... conceal beneath objective calculations their connection with the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own "proper place or institution' (p. xx). According

to de Certeau a strategy involves a binary between an inhabited place of power, which is owned or occupied and an environment which is 'out there'. This allows the strategist both place and time to capitalize on advantages made and prepare future expansions. Strategies have access to power in order to control, name and manipulate places and spaces.

Whereas strategies belong to the strong, tactics belong to the weak who must 'continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them' (p. xix). Tactics would mainly belong to the province of the subordinated, i.e. the pupils. A tactic has neither its own space nor place, but must utilize time and opportunity in order to achieve its ends. "Ways of operating" include 'clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, "hunter's cunning," manoeuvres, polymorphic simulations [and] joyful discoveries, poetic as well as war-like' (p. xix). Tactics are intentional and calculated, they are the product of activated intelligence and are part of 'everyday struggles and pleasures'. Their principal strength depends in utilizing time creatively and opportunistically, whereas strategies rely on place. Tactics are used in the manner of a resistance movement against the taken-for-granted norms of the dominant order and 'must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers' (p. 37).

Ian Buchanan states that de Certeau's investigations 'imply neither a return to a liberal humanist concern for the individual nor a reiteration of the structuralist interest in the production of discourses' (Buchanan, 2000, 99). In terms of my own research, de Certeau's focus on and conceptualization of how *practices* may

be subverted could throw light on the day-to-day practices of consuming education.

1.6 Bricolage

A final note needs to be made on the subject of bricolage. Levi-Strauss (1972) originally used the term to describe how 'primitive' people ascribed new and alternative meanings to objects in line with their own symbolic construction of their lives. De Certeau uses the term in connection with tactics and "making do": 'users make... innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules' (1984, p. xiv). Mackay describes it as a process of appropriating and rearticulating products 'through a range of everyday creative and symbolic practices' (Mackay, 1997, 6). Within his analysis on subculture, Hebdige (1979) mainly uses the concept in relation to artistic style as articulated by the working classes. He explains how commodities can be used to subvert the originally intended messages. However, underpinning this is the intention to rework existing meanings to create new meanings, to take an existing practice and change it in some way. Maybe this could be extended to an idea previously mentioned about hybridization – selectively choosing from a variety of choices or even a menu of alternatives to create something personal and possibly unique, but not entirely original. Perhaps this could be regarded as the sort of transformation alluded to by Bourdieu in his discussion on habitus.

1.7 Application to Research

It is my intention, as far as possible within the limitations of the study, to interrogate the data for evidence of any of the attitudes outlined above and to try and trace, if possible, where the influences and motivations for those attitudes may have originated. To what extent can the dispositions of the teenagers in my study be described as predetermined and is there any evidence of more intentional, creative or subversive consumption practices that challenge the theory of cultural reproduction?

1.8 What is meant by Cultural Consumption?

How do pupils consume the different cultural products, symbols and opportunities that are presented to them in their everyday lives?

The two concepts, that of 'culture' and that of 'consumption', may not appear to sit easily together. A useful definition of the contemporary meaning of the word 'culture' is given by Stuart Hall. He explains 'culture' as a system of meaningful social action or 'signifying practices' constructed and organized by human beings to give themselves a shared framework for interaction to take place: 'These systems or codes of meaning give significance to our actions. They allow us to interpret meaningfully the actions of others. Taken together, they constitute our 'cultures' (Hall, 1997, 208).

However, consumerism and consumption have tended to be associated with discourses focused on usage and economics. The meaning of 'consumption' has associations with ideas of buying or 'buying into'. On one level the connotations are economically based and have Marxist overtones connected with ideologies about the power of production. However, in contemporary terms the notion of value and of 'getting something of worth' is as firmly located within concepts of symbolic meaning and 'value', as it is within traditional notions of monetary value, and young peoples' acts of consumption are considered as important sites in the construction of lifestyles and identity (France, in press, 11). Consumption can be applied as much to wearing clothes, reading newspapers or taking part in an education programme, as is the case in this thesis.

In contemporary social analyses, the emphasis seems to be more grounded within the discourses of representation rather than need. To varying degrees, late Twentieth Century analysts have emphasised the creative potential of consumption, particularly in its relation to culture: 'Broadly speaking, consumption today is not seen by social scientists as corrupting, nor are consumers seen as the passive victims of capitalism...' (Mackay, 1997, 3).

The late twentieth century explosion in electronic communications and information technology has been welcomed by some for its potential to deconstruct the hegemony of traditional forms of information and culture hierarchies, along with the ideological domination of associated metanarratives. In addition, the media industries, also referred to as the culture industries, are generally considered to have contributed enormously to the cross fertilisation of

ideas and practices of global cultural consumption (Fiske, 1989; Kenway and Bullen, 2001). The fact that Western society at present dominates this industry is an important element in the discussion of how, why and to what extent culture is consumed within different contexts. I will discuss this point later in the following chapter on media influences.

1.9 Conspicuous Consumption and Consuming Value

The contemporary view of the symbolic function of consumption is generally considered to originate with Veblen and his theory on conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1957). In this he discussed the potential for social mobility being allied to consumption practices in a deliberate attempt to manipulate perceptions and esteem of oneself within an immediate social context. It refers to habits of differentiation that relate to learnt value systems and he focuses this type of consumption, not necessarily on economic value, but on the desirability of the object of consumption.

Veblen's observations are useful because they broaden the concept of consumption from its previous location as a purely economic site centred around affordability, to something far more dynamic and variable where the creation of social meanings is far more diverse. His focus on desirability, rather than expense, brings the element of culture and motivation closer to the centre of the analysis. According to him, the system of values and meanings at work must be more involved than a simple equation that expense is proportional to value in terms of social semiotics. Veblen's conspicuous consumer is not buying so

much to fulfil a material need, as to message the position s/he has, or would like to have. S/he is in the process of constructing an identity, from what is seen as desirable or attainable. However, the system of choices has to be recognisable, it has to relate to similar meanings amongst those with whom s/he shares her/his life, otherwise those meanings are void.

1.10 How is culture influential?

The issue of motivation, which is an important consideration when looking at behaviour practices, has been approached from different angles in the recent past and it is useful to consider these other opinions. Jerome Bruner (1990) has a background in psychology, rather than sociology and yet he has also formed the opinion that cultural situatedness is a crucial factor in explaining why people make certain choices. It is his opinion that beliefs and desires connect to the networks of symbolic systems that are used by an individual to construct meaning. Bruner describes these symbolic systems as ‘a very special kind of communal toolkit whose tools, once used, made the user a reflection of the community’ (Bruner, 1990, 11). He argues that an individual’s subjectivity is enmeshed within the culture that surrounds and permeates her/his sense of being.

It is this issue of ‘valuing’, of consideration of worth that is possibly the central focus of issues of consumption in its contemporary conception. Given any leeway of choice, the consumer will usually make a decision based on some consideration of value, however that is assessed. Bourdieu would claim that the

choice will be dictated by upbringing and the values embedded in the individual's cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997).

Bruner states that the most important cultural point is that 'values inhere in commitment to 'ways of life', and ways of life in their complex interaction constitute a culture.' He adds that 'We neither shoot our values from the hip, choice-situation by choice-situation, nor are they the product of isolated individuals with strong drives and compelling neuroses. Rather, they are communal and consequential in terms of our relations to a cultural community' (p. 29). However, he concludes by suggesting that the pluralism of modern life is full of changes and disruptions, to the extent that the notion of 'cultural communities' itself has multiple meanings that refer to multiple situations. If we do not shoot our values from the hip, then we do at least seem to have a much greater arsenal to choose from today than before the Information Revolution.

1.11 Representation and Texts

In this thesis I am concerned with the attitudes a pupil has already adopted before entering school and how that affects her/his consumption of what s/he encounters in the classroom. The major textual form I am considering in connection with outside influences is the televisual text, which I discuss in Chapter Four. However, Bernstein's theory on the classification and framing of formal educational knowledge helps to clarify how the fit, or lack of fit, between texts encountered inside and outside school may impact on how a pupil consumes what is on offer in the classroom. His paper considers how knowledge is

controlled in schools through different methods of organization or 'framing' and it also considers how educational knowledge is presented as being not only different from, but also more valuable than the 'everyday community knowledge of the pupil, his family, and his peer group' (Bernstein, 1974, 376). This may be highly influential when it comes to how and why each individual student consumes the education s/he is presented with, because the choices that are made in some way reflect the choice of values that s/he wishes to align her/himself with.

Texts are always rich in semiotic content and even when they are presented in the manner of 'value-free' information, they always come with some sort of mark of authority, often either positive or negative, inasmuch as they have been chosen by some authority - an editor of some description. If culture is about the values inherent in lifestyles or ways of life wherein individuals create and negotiate meanings through communication in various ways, then it is shot through with issues of power.

The information and so-called knowledge contained in any communication will have a context wherein it originated, even when that context is no longer visible or known: 'All knowledge contains the afterglow of lost worlds' (McLaren, 1995, 91). Apple describes this issue as problematic since 'texts are not simply "delivery systems" of "facts". They are at once the results of political, economic, and cultural activities, battles and compromises....And what texts mean and how they are used are fought over by communities with distinctly different commitments and by teachers and students as well' (Apple, 1993, 47).

As I have discussed, consumption is to do with choice to some extent. If more recent theories are correct and consumption has less to do with need than desire, less to do with the commodities or actions and more to do with 'buying into' the meanings and symbolic systems they represent, then what influences the choices we make? The arguments of the mass culture critique would have us believe that consumers are the victims of producers, accepting without question what is put on the table before us. Bourdieu might reason that people are most likely to consume the sort of things they are already used to. In which case, if the menu presented in education establishments is very different to the one offered at home, as Bernstein suggests might very well be the case for many children, then, to extend the metaphor, is most of the meal left on the plate of a significant number of children most of the time?

The issue of how we use or 'consume' education to get what we want to have, or to become who we want to be, underpins the whole relevance of education systems in contemporary society.

1.12 Cultural Identity

A central issue to all aspects of this discussion is that of identity. As individuals within society our perceptions of ourselves and others have been constituted through culture. In our world today that might mean multiple cultures. It may also mean that in different situations and at different points in time we associate or feel a greater affinity with certain representations, or desire to have or to do different things. It is possible that with the growth in global information and

media connections that our perceptions of who we are, what we want, or what we want to have, have changed and expanded in comparison with those living and being educated in previous generations.

Psychologists might argue the case for subconscious drives, however the social constructionists' theory is that discourses of any description at all create subject-positions that an individual can adopt or 'inhabit'. Althusser (1971) coined the term 'interpellation' or 'hailing' to describe the persuasive appeal of a particular subject-position in which an individual might wish to invest. The concept is also discussed by Woodward (1997) as a method of ideological 'recruitment' that may be active within any number of different discourses. This issue is considered further in the debate on media influences in Chapter Four.

An interesting analysis on the area of cultural roles is offered by Hundeide. The research she outlines views identity consumption as a 'lifestyle package': 'This is a ready format or prescription for how to be, how to present oneself, and how to participate...' (Hundeide, 2004, 90). The theory proposes that attitudes are appropriated and skills are learnt that are congruent with the identity 'package' desired, rather than on an individual basis of preference. The process has been labelled meta-identification and it seems to reveal a potential motivation why individuals might engage with learning skills or behaviours they might not otherwise consider desirable.

Erikson discusses adolescent struggles and conflicts with identity from a psychosocial angle rather than a socio-cultural one, but his theories are helpful in

addressing consumption of identity. He writes of 'the ever-present inner chaos of man's existence' (Erikson, 1968, 134), but also suggests that this state of being potentially instigates 'original deeds' and offers 'unique solutions'. He takes the Freudian concept of 'ego', an individual's awareness of her/himself as a separate cogent being in the world, and theorises that person in relation to the outside influences, rather than focusing on the 'id', as happened in classic psychoanalysis.

Not unlike Piaget's developmental approach, Erikson identified life-cycle stages in what he termed the 'epigenesis of identity' (1968). The fifth stage is the part of the life cycle that relates to adolescence. It is during this stage that the individual is considering the possibilities of her/his self-image, according to Erikson, and is willing to 'put his trust in those peers and leading, or misleading, elders who will give imaginative, if not illusory, scope to his aspirations' (1968, p. 129).

Erikson writes of the adolescent's need to be accepted and affirmed by peers and teachers (1968, p.130), but points to another important aspect of this stage, which is role or identity confusion, where an individual may want to try out roles that are not congruent with those common or socially accepted within her/his cultural milieu. Erikson also suggests that identity formation involves conflict and that successful resolution involves a commitment to an ideological view which is compatible with the values and interests of the individual. However, before commitment is made to a particular identity, if indeed one is made, most adolescents go through a period of psychosocial moratorium where new identities are explored.

Kroger points out that Erikson's theory has been criticized for not being precise enough about the nature of identity and whether identity is a structure, a configuration or a process. She also indicates the rather male orientation of his analysis: 'To Erikson, anatomy is destiny and initially determines the style of engagement with the social milieu' (Kroger, 1989, 33). Nonetheless, the theory has been developed by various people, most notably Marcia (1966), who has proposed four types of identity resolutions: achievement individuals, foreclosures, moratoriums and diffusion individuals. Recognizable types tend not to emerge until later adolescence, however the stage of psychosocial moratorium is a process usually started in early adolescence when individuals actively try on aspects of new or alternative identities. This theory supports the view that young adolescents experiment with alternative ways of being that may be quite contrary to their family background and has helped to inform recently reported research (Kerpelman and Pittman, 2001 and Meeus et al., 2002).

1.13 Subcultures

'Sub' suggests inferiority and as a prefix stands in opposition to 'super'. It suggests an undercurrent in opposition to an accepted culture and inasmuch as schools strive constantly to promote the norms and values of society at large and 'put down' any resistance, the concept of subcultures is one that challenges the desire that all pupils should be enculturated into the ideologies of the school. This desire to enculturate into an accepted, state-approved ideology has recently been enforced at a national level by directives on teaching Citizenship in state

schools and this in turn has been adopted by Ofsted as a focus for their inspections into individual lessons.

The issue of a sense of oppositionality, mentioned above by Fiske is important in considering the behaviours and identity of teenagers and the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies has played a major role in researching this area. The research has focused mainly on youth cultures as the most visible form of challenge to mainstream culture and often the most creative. It has also been shown that if the normative effects of hegemony within the more widely accepted structures of any given society are to be questioned or contradicted, then it will most likely be by the youth of that community in some way or other (Hebdige; 1979).

Research into subcultures has found that these divisions and allegiances may be based on various societal groupings (Cohen, 1980; McGuigan, 1992). One particular grouping has developed largely as a result of the growth in media-influenced consumer spending. The post-war construct of 'teenager' is a specific grouping in consumer terms and delineates a section of society based on a generational division rather than class division, which Bourdieu used predominantly in classifying the tastes and practices of groups within society (Bourdieu, 1984). However, Hebdige maintains that there is class differentiation in terms of who has the power to disseminate knowledge and information via the mass media: 'Some groups have more say, more opportunity to make the rules, to organize meaning, while others are less favourably placed, have less power to produce and impose their definitions of the world on the world' (Hebdige, 1979).

14). However, given that the concept of a culture, particularly a dominant or 'mainstream' culture, is becoming increasingly less easy to justify, particularly in postmodern discourses, then the concept of 'subcultures' is also less easy to rationalise, as the argument could be made that there are so many diffuse and various cultures that within any time-space location it is impossible to cite one culture as being more pervasive or influential than another.

This issue of diversification of groups also affects the next area of influence I would like to discuss, that of the perceptions and constructions of family life.

Chapter Two

Family

I have already partially discussed the area of home influence in my chapter relating to Bourdieu's theories, as his construct of cultural capital and the further influence of fields is central to my thesis. However, a broader view of the discourses surrounding the socializing influences of family and background is needed here in order to explore further the concept of habitus.

Bourdieu's theory appears to locate the principal influence for the moulding of values and attitudes within the family. However, he is not specific about age or situation or at what point other 'fields' of influence may intersect with the family background to provide extra-familial value systems that will impact on the habitus of the child. However, the family is shaped by the many factors that constitute the community in which it is located. Its integration through interactions will establish affective relationships and these systems of relationships will be used as a reference to establish norms (Ashley et al., 1969, 41). Perceived types or informal classifications of families affect the conceptual construction of the sort of people that constitute certain family types in the social imagination. These will impact on the quality of interaction and integration with the community around it. Whilst researching pupil disaffection, Chessum (1980) records that 'in one pupil's school records his home circumstances were

described as a “high-rise family”, as if this form of housing environment infects its inhabitants with a particular social disease’ (Chessum, 1980, 119).

In this chapter, I would like to illustrate how the concept of ‘family’ can be problematic in its own right as a field of influence and the source of primary socialization, because of its propensity to change and evolve, with the consequent reconfiguration of relationships and remixing of values and belief systems... and thus inevitably remoulding of influence.

Although this thesis is considering consumption through a cultural lens and is therefore predominantly considering the issues arising from a sociocultural viewpoint, there are other approaches that are helpful to an understanding of the issues at hand, such as Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial approach to identity, which I outlined in the previous chapter. The point of view I am adopting states that the influence of the group and the context of experiences are certainly major mediating factors in determining outcomes, but are not the only ones.

2.1 The changing nature of families

In the second half of the twentieth century, the pattern of traditional extended families was increasingly disrupted by the evolution of what was termed the ‘nuclear’ family. An adult son or daughter might move away, most frequently for work or further education, and start a family with a partner at some distance from the parents and original family home. In this situation different interests and

connections were likely to develop in relation to work, location and new friends (Ashley et al., 1969, 55). However, this structure is undergoing change again. Indeed, Muncie and Sapsford (1997) state from FPSC research (1985) that 'the so-called typical family of a married couple with father in employment and mother at home with 2 dependent children represents only 1 in 20 of all households at any time' (Muncie and Sapsford, 1997, 10).

Millicent Poole has examined the nature of change in Australian society and the impact it is having on adolescents there (Poole, 1989). She points to surveys that indicate that the reason that adolescents are leaving home is no longer principally to get married, but because of a desire for independence, this might also mean a decrease in the power of family values and mores to influence the absent individual. In the same way, but on a macro level, the issue of globalization and the dispersal of people in recent times have had a huge impact on the nature of families and family identity. The Asian and African diasporas have created tensions, particularly between generations within families who have relocated to an entirely different country and culture. Social differentiation is no longer predominantly about class, increasingly more debates concern race, gender and cultural belief systems.

Although dispersal and dislocation both play a part in disrupting the cycle of cultural reproduction, the location and context of family life has also been invaded by the expansion of communication and media technologies. Woodward suggests that people's family lives are far more permeated today by other 'fields': 'The home is also one of the places where we are viewers of media

representations through which identities are produced – for example, through the narrative of soap operas, through advertisements, and through the marketing of new identities through retailing’ (Woodward, 1997, 21). She proposes that we deal with the diversity of modern life by taking up different subject-positions in response to different roles we have to play, both within as well as outside family relationships. However, I will discuss the issue of roles and social scripts below.

The family today is perceived as not only being more permeable, particularly in relation to communication technologies, but it also needs to be adaptable in an increasingly global and evolving society. Dallos (1997) discusses families in terms of belief systems whereby every family adapts the ideologies and discourses from outside influences into its own belief system, rather than just absorbing them. However the form of family culture that will evolve will depend on the traditions and dynamics of the family group. He uses the metaphor of a deck of cards to explain the limitations of choice: ‘These ‘cards’ or options are derived mainly from experience, family traditions and societal discourses...family members make choices, but not simply in circumstances of their own choosing’ (Dallos, 1997, 174). He describes families as being in a continuous state of evolution and change and in his diagrammatic representation of the demands imposed on the family life-cycle for change, he indicates four main areas: friends, work, leisure and school (1997, p. 179, fig. 1), but states that critical events, such as marriage or death within a family will also demand changes.

As mentioned above, the nuclear family has been on the decline in the last couple of decades and is reportedly no longer the most common arrangement (Dallos, 1997, 180). It has been superseded by alternative arrangements which include single-parent families and various organizations of step-families. There has been an increase both in divorce and remarriage, which has created much greater diversification in family structures, particularly in terms of the reproduction of family cultures and belief systems. The normative view that is still projected by various institutions as being the ideal formation of a mother and father with their own children does not in fact reflect the lived reality of most children's lives today. Many children are being brought up in two families: the mother's 'new' family during the week and the father's 'new' family at the week-end (or under current formal legal arrangements, every other week-end) and the children are therefore exposed to two or more sets of traditions and family cultures, since step-parents will also contribute their own variations of beliefs and ideologies.

Despite Thatcherite rhetoric during the Eighties regarding the autonomy of the family, the new millennium sees families in British society as far less willing and far less able to isolate themselves from the outside world with the result that the process of cultural reproduction becomes discontinuous and the construction of the habitus, far from being a smooth engendering of beliefs and values in the developing individual, must become instead a disrupted and complex process involving multiple views and ideologies.

2.2 Family and identity

In the context of this thesis, the development of personal identity and the constitution of an identity through the dynamic interactions of family life are of major importance in investigating how and why an individual consumes school. Depending on who s/he feels s/he is, the child will behave, make friends and decide about involvement in activities. A sense of identity will also determine the young person's perceptions of future options and possibilities in life. In Chapter One, I have outlined Erikson's theory (1968), which has been particularly useful in various pieces of research into adolescents' interactions with their social worlds (for example Meeus et al., 2002; Kroger, 1989). In addition Woodward (1997) has also found it useful to consider other non-essentialist debates, including psychological perspectives, alongside her predominantly cultural approach to identity formation. Erikson's theory of identity types and Marcia's development of that theory provide a helpful psychosocial angle on the practice of teenagers in the course of their identity construction. But before I discuss this theory further, I would like to first consider a few of the other discourses surrounding this issue.

If the nature of family life and structure of families is becoming more diverse, then it may also be argued that the construction of identities within families is also becoming more diversified. Whatever its make-up, the role of the family is vitally important in giving the child a sense of who s/he is. The debates around identity usually refer to issues of essentialism or non-essentialism. Essentialist arguments are usually fixed and fairly inflexible, they often use biological

determinants as definitions, so that race, sex and age will be fundamental elements in constituting an identity. Non-essentialist perspectives allow to a far greater extent for difference and fluidity. Certain aspects of a person's identity are ascribed, such as gender and ethnicity, these are determined by birth; but achievement, which is also a powerful determinant of status, is determined by ability and success.

One theory that has and has had considerable influence on the question of identity is role theory. It does not deal with the psychological aspects of personality and does not really consider the complexities of society and social interaction, but it offers a framework which is particularly useful for understanding how social reproduction might be such a potent influence on people's lives, irrespective of affluence or intelligence. Role theory suggests that social scripts are learnt in order for an individual to fit into preprescribed 'roles' within a culture. By learning or adopting an accepted role, a person can find acceptance within the conventions of the family and society in which s/he lives. 'Social scripts provide people with what have been called 'vocabularies of motives', that is, with ways of making sense of their own and others' actions, and making sense, too, of the social context in which individual biographies must be lived out' (Wetherell, 1997, 246). These roles or scripts are mostly learnt from early childhood and Wetherell suggests that they become internalized and ingested into family constructs to form a pattern of behaviour that is seen as 'natural' or 'common sense' and thereby contributes to reproducing social patterns. However, she also states that many roles and scripts appear to be

contradictory and questions whether they are flexible enough to cope with the reality of human nature and the diversity and complexity of real lives.

Role theory is often referred to, especially by feminist theorists, in terms of gender roles and is therefore also criticized because of the differentiation of power relations inscribed into these male and female scripts. Children imitate parents' behaviour and assume either active or passive roles in accordance with their perception. Depending on the roles they are encouraged to adopt, attitudes and motives towards what is perceived to be possible or acceptable will also be influenced and affect their positioning within society and their interaction with society.

As a child grows up s/he will be required to fulfil an increasing number of subject positions and this might involve an issue of role conflict: the position of daughter in a Muslim family may not sit well with her membership of a football team. The resolution of these problems is usually by reference to some sort of scale of personal priorities depending on the individual's values and how s/he is located within different 'fields' (Ashley et al., 1969, 22-24). It is possible that these tensions may create a space for the readjustment of role expectations or offer a potential opportunity for hybridization.

In addition to generalized modes of behaviour, a role model offers specific information not only about behaviours, but also about possibilities for life-style choices, so that a parent or an older sibling who is involved in certain activities, either in terms of leisure or work, presents the younger child with the

demonstration of a particular possibility. In their research on adolescent aspirations, Schmitt-Rodermund and Vonderacek found that while personality factors were important, parental models were also influential in determining vocational direction in terms of entrepreneurship (Schmitt-Rodermund and Voderacek, 2002, 67).

2.3 Parental influences on adolescents

This brings us to the issue of parental influence on the aspirations of young teenagers. In terms of careers, the idea of boys following in their father's footsteps seems not to be so popular today as it was pre-WW11. This is due in part to the fact that the nature of employment has altered greatly, a job for life is less assured than it was fifty or so years ago and the types of employment have also changed. It may also reflect changing patterns of family life (Muncie and Sapsford, 1997). However, parents are still regarded as a potentially powerful influence in various ways. In terms of their influence on the consumption of school, Morrow and Wilson state that 'family morale facilitates achievement by fostering positive attitudes towards teachers, school, and intellectual interests' (Morrow and Wilson, 1971, 311). In terms of vocational interest development, Crites states that 'a son's identification with both of his parents significantly affects the patterning of his interests' (Crites, 1971, 169), but that his father's influence is of greater importance; Crites does not mention daughters. Wallace states that 'arguments about the nature of social reproduction assumed a situation of full employment for men and marriage and motherhood for women' (Wallace, 1989, 353). However she found in her research that this was no longer the case in

practice. She predicts a 'fracture in the reproduction of work roles and gender roles' in contemporary society (ibid). In the course of her interviews, Wallace found resistance as well as compliance amongst girls to traditional roles of femininity; many wanted to experience more of life than their mothers had done and certainly did not display a passive acceptance of feminine roles. Some articulated this resistance by getting pregnant before they married, by engaging in 'masculine' activities or by adopting a punk image (p. 360). She refers to both Althusser and Bourdieu's theories, but concludes from her own evidence that models of social reproduction may have 'overemphasized the smoothness of the process and concentrated more upon the subordination of young people to dominant structures than upon young people's responses' (p.365).

On the other side of the argument and aside from role-models, parental influence on achievement has also been investigated in relation to motivation and attitude. Kracke commented that, in her research, levels of information-seeking behaviours were related to parent openness to discuss issues, and authoritativeness: 'Parenting which is child-centred, warm, supportive and reciprocal is presumed to foster the development of self initiative, responsivity, and maturity in children and adolescents' (Kracke, 2002, 33). Parental attitudes can have a positive or negative influence on the way an adolescent consumes school. Research undertaken by Aunola et al. investigated the extent to which parenting styles are linked with adolescents' achievement strategies. The group found that the correlation between the parenting style and the child's achievement in school was linked but mediated (Aunola et al., 2000, 217), depending on whether the parenting style was authoritative, authoritarian,

permissive or neglectful. The research team found that depending on the attitude and style of parenting, an adolescent will develop either adaptive, task-orientated strategies or maladaptive, task-avoidant strategies.

In their research into life-expectations and the construction of goals in adolescents aged 12 to 15 years, Malmberg and Norrgard also used the concept of adaptive/maladaptive processes. They suggested that an adaptive profile 'consists of high self esteem...and use of upward comparison' (Malmberg and Norrgard, 1999, 35). These adolescents were optimistic and had a 'high control expectancy', they felt their ambitions compared favourably with a normative life span development. The maladaptive profile was the opposite with consequent withdrawal from goal setting. These theories on parenting styles along with their potential influence on adaptive and maladaptive behaviours certainly seem to indicate a link with Bourdieu's outline of habitus: the nurturing of an attitude towards success from an early age irrespective of ability, aptitude or intelligence.

Whilst intelligence probably plays a part in success, it does not necessarily play a part in ambition itself, although imagination may do so. In their investigation of the elements present in both upwardly mobile and downwardly mobile boys, Douvan and Adelson stated that they thought intelligence was a factor, but had failed to clarify in their survey 'the mechanisms which mediate between IQ and other indices of successful ego functioning' (Douvan and Adelson, 1971, 309). They found three separate patterns of motivation to be important for upward mobility: fear of failure, ambivalence towards success, and hope of success. They also expected that the adolescents from their upwardly mobile group had good

relationships with their families. They were independent but not hostile towards their families and in terms of identity were able to select an ego ideal outside the family setting.

Another interesting piece of research by Rosen has investigated the impact of race and ethnicity on an aspect of this issue of motivation: the achievement syndrome. His study has investigated the influence of ethnic values within the dynamics of motivation and social mobility in American society and concluded that an individual's cultural orientation (along with her/his psychological orientation) has been under theorised in the equation. Rosen suggests that value orientations are probably acquired when a child has a competent grasp of language, but that achievement motivation 'has its origins in parent-child interaction beginning early in the child's life when many of these relations are likely to be emotional and un verbalized' (Rosen, 1971, 284). His research found evidence that both achievement training and independence training from parents were instrumental in promoting social mobility and that particular sets of values and norms could be identified that were all related to different cultural values.

It seems also that at the stage of adolescence, spheres of influence are differentiated according to which area of the individual's life is under consideration. Brittain uses the concept of 'reference group'. Both peers and parents are used as references, but parents, he found, were more likely to be consulted on issues regarding difficult moral choices where values are relatively stable and the outcome is likely to be long-term, but not in areas where values are rapidly changing (Brittain, 1971, 201-208). Later research by Meeus et al. (2002)

supports this hypothesis. Their investigation in the Netherlands of middle adolescents from various ethnic groups also found that parental attachment is situational and that in terms of issues relating to the future, such as school and occupation, parental influence is more likely to be of greater weight.

Meeus et al. also point to Marcia's adaption of Erikson's identity types as a useful approach to understanding an individual's investment in an identity and the manner in which s/he may relate to both peers and parents. I mentioned these four identity 'resolutions' in Chapter One and I return to Kroger's (1989) explanation to outline them: identity achievement types will be thoughtful and introspective and display an openness to new experiences; they will have made a commitment to a social role after a period of consideration. Moratoriums have made no such commitment and tend to display anxieties; they may find difficulty in detaching themselves from parents. Foreclosures tend to have adopted an identity without exploration and may be rigid in their beliefs and drawn to authoritarian leadership. Diffusion individuals are uncommitted and may appear to be carefree, although others may experience profound loneliness or exhibit signs of severe psychopathology (Kroger, 1989). It is useful to bear this analysis in mind because it draws attention to the fact that influence between people is not unidirectional any more than it is sourced in any singular location. As the students in my study are young adolescents, they are likely to be still experimenting with what they perceive to be possibilities in the moratorium phase, however it may be possible to detect traits of these other types, in particular foreclosure individuals. It seems from the definition given in Kroger, that if foreclosures as a category are both susceptible to the dictates of authority

and may also adopt attitudes and an identity without much resistance, then they may well be more predisposed toward the sort of social reproduction that is part of my investigation.

It appears that most accounts recognize an influence of some sort from the family, even where, as with Douvan's and Adelson's comments above concerning ego ideals, the nature of that influence may be far less obvious than the reproduction of family or social types. The suggestion has come from several directions that ambition and motivation in life seem to be lacking where parenting, identity resolution or the family milieu may be at fault. A belief that parental attitudes (rather than using the over-simplified format of socio-economic status or the circumstances or size of the family), influence performance at school guided influential documents such as the Plowden Report in 1967. Both positively and negatively, attitudes displayed by family members seem to act in diverse ways on the aspirations of adolescents, although these are not the only influences.

As adolescents struggle to find their own identities and become increasingly autonomous in relation to their family, they turn more to their friend and peers for advice and support and it is this area of influence I would like to discuss next.

Chapter Three

Friends and peers

The peer/friend sphere seems to provide a bridge between the private and public world of the teenager and for the purpose of my research may offer some insight into the area of how young adolescents consume school and whether peer/friendship group influences might affect their consumption of education differently from family attitudes. Although there is little written around this specific area, various research investigations have interrogated the nature of relationships and attitudes in regards to life-paths: 'What kind of person one can become' (Malmberg & Norgard, 1999), life-courses (Poole, 1989), lifestyles, as defined by the 1987 YPLL survey (Hendry et al., 1993) and social mobility.

3.1 Peer groups

The importance of peers, in the context of significant others and their influence on education and ambitions, has been under-researched, according to Kracke (2002, p. 31) and to Meeus et al. (2002). Although peer group pressure has been

long recognised as having a considerable influence on teenagers, this has often been theorised in negative terms and as part of a rebellion against authority and the world of adults. However, this is perhaps part of the ideology that constructs parents in particular, and authority in general, as being 'good' and always 'knowing better'.

Although primary socialization must inevitably take place amidst the family, whatever its structure, because of the dependence of infants on carers, the issue of secondary socialization is even more complex, as is its influence on the construction of the habitus. Waksler suggests that 'Taken-for-granted assumptions embodied in the idea that parents socialize children obscure from view the many situations where socialization is done by others' (Waksler, 1991, 20). She also discusses the pro-active behaviour of groups outside the family seeking to recruit and socialize members into their own value-systems and suggests that these influences may well be competitive: peer-group pressure has often been cited as a disruptive influence countering both parental and school opinions.

'Peer group' usually relates to chronological age, but 'friends' is a more diverse category. Adler and Adler (1998) suggest this group can be divided into sections: family related, neighbourhood related, casual, activity related, situational, telephone connected, vocational, local and long distance, with the potential for obvious overlaps between these types. Although their research was with pre-adolescents, they found that as children grew closer to adolescence they shed those connections which had been set up, particularly by families and if there

was no real bond. As they approached adolescence, they progressively widened their social circle in line with their own desires. The conclusion to the research was that this group formed a compliment to the family base and offered another set of norms and values which acted as a lens on the life of individuals through which they were able to view both themselves and the world around them: their peer culture fitted 'in between the cracks structured by their mandated attendance in school and after-school activities, colouring their perceptions of and relation to those institutions and events' (Adler and Adler, 1998, 194).

3.2 Construction of identity

The construction of identity is a crucial aspect of the way young adolescents may consume school. It is at this point in their development that individuals experiment with not just their image, but with what has been labelled 'possible selves' (Kerpelman and Pittman, 2001; Malmberg and Norrgard, 1999; Oyserman, Terry & Bybee, 2002). This concept relates to the moratorium stage or type related to Erikson's theory (1968). What is of particular importance in this process is the type of 'feedback' given by peers and friends in the development of possible selves towards actualized identities, (Kerpelman and Pittman, 1999; Adler and Adler, 1998; Hendry et al., 1993). In their research, Kerpelman and Pittman found that the behaviour of peer partners had considerable influence on whether adolescents would engage in identity exploration of important possible selves and that negative feedback could affect identity stability if the feedback came from a significant peer. They also suggested that at this stage of experimentation identity is fairly fluid and open to

alteration and adaption in response to reactions from those significant others that form the individual's frame of reference: 'Prior to role entry, possible selves may offer adolescents "starting values" that will change (possibly in dramatic ways) as new feedback is received and the new roles are directly experienced' (Kerpelman and Pittman, 1999, 510).

As they struggle to achieve independence and autonomy from parents, friends provide an alternative society where adolescents can experience a sense of belonging (Adler and Adler, 1998) and find emotional support: 'Peers appear to be particularly helpful in respect to the exploration of the self. Talking with age-mates, adolescents can practise new patterns of thinking and develop ideas about the future' (Kracke, 2002). The YPLL survey also mentions the importance of equality in these relationships. Ideas and aspirations can be discussed in a different, possibly more open and honest way in the absence of the kind of power dynamics existent in a child-parent relationship. The adolescent's thoughts and opinions carry more equal weight in a discourse with peers: 'Friends literally reason together in order to define themselves as persons' (Hendry et al., 1993, 115).

3.3 Career exploration

In her own research investigations into career exploration, Kracke found that interaction with peers correlated with more information-seeking behaviours as well as contributing to an explanation of change in exploration. The findings from her research also emphasize the importance of peer support in thinking

about and developing competencies in preparing for future occupations. However, her results show that parental support was equally helpful and where there was a strong support from age-mates there seemed to exist at the same time evidence of a high level of parental support; these findings applied to both genders. Meeus et al. (2002) also found that school exploration was an issue in both parental and peer relationships, but found in their research into identity that parental attachment was more influential in terms of long term issues concerning the future, such as career, and that peer opinion was preferenced in matters of present-life issues. Brittain's research supported the view that adolescents are more likely to conform to peer opinions in matters where there are immediate consequences than where the choices are likely to have a long-term effect. He also found that peer opinions were likely to be more influential in areas of contemporary social opinion: 'Adolescents are more strongly given to peer conformity in making choices in areas in which social values are changing rapidly, than making choices in areas in which social values are relatively stable' (Brittain, 1971, 205).

Changes in the nature of modern society have also had some impact on the way in which young people are influenced in their consumption practices. Salmon points to areas such as the 'institutionalized age segregation' of school-aged children along with the delayed entry into adult society, in particular the world of work for children in western countries, and the expansion of communications networks (Salmon, 1979). She cites Conger's opinion that all these features have contributed to a greater reliance among adolescents on people their own age. I would suggest that at the present point in time, twenty-five years later, that issues

of extended study years and rapidly expanding communication facilities, such as the use of mobile phones, have possibly created an even greater age group bonding.

The Young People's Leisure and Lifestyles survey report supports the findings presented by Brittain and Meeus that I have discussed above, in terms of parental influence on long-term choices, but adds that 'the general trend across adolescence is towards the increasing importance of peer relationships' (Hendry et al., 1993, 115). The survey found that the peak period for association with best friends was between thirteen and sixteen and that 80% of both boys and girls between thirteen and fourteen considered peer group acceptance to be important. However, other research suggests that boys seem to prefer interacting in groups and that peer group approval has a greater influence on their behaviour than it does on girls (Poole, 1989), who are also reported in the YPLL survey as spending more time than boys alone with a same-sex friend.

Within our contemporary society the possibilities of who we can be and what we can do seem to be expanding. The traditional models of gendered family life, of class-related work and culture-specific ways of living seem to have become increasingly more fragmented in our western society. New patternings of lifestyles, which in themselves seem to be more diverse, perhaps demand greater than ever competence in being able to make appropriate or desirable choices. The two spheres of influence or 'fields' I have discussed so far, those of family and friends, are potentially powerful resources of attitudes and opinions, but the manner in which their influences will act on a young adolescent will be mediated

by one another and by the symbolic resources presented through interaction with other fields that are encountered and also probably by the psychology of the individual her/himself. How s/he consumes the field of education in the form of the school s/he goes to will be a complex negotiation of all those issues I have outlined above, although most research reports a bias in favour of parental influence when it comes to considering possible futures.

The area that offers perhaps the most potential for change in terms of its ranking as a 'favourite occupation' (Schmidbauer and Löhr, 1999, 63) is media consumption, in particular television viewing, and it is to that area of influence I turn now.

Chapter Four

Media Influences

One of the predominantly powerful influences concerning desire and identity in contemporary society is the media. In this chapter I would like to examine the types of media influences that are most likely to have an impact on the desires of young adolescents.

In referring to the media, I intend to indicate those forms of print and electronic communications that are considered to mediate information or entertainment, or most often both functions at once to some extent. These symbolic 'goods' are part of a system of cultural production-consumption which has become increasingly invasive/integral within the social relations of contemporary life.

The specific media technology referred to in this thesis as being considered influential and most commonly used by young teenagers today is television. Computers and the internet were also mentioned by pupils, but were not considered to be influential in the context of ambitions. Magazines were mentioned in responses on the initial questionnaire, but most references that might be connected to magazines were to media celebrities and probably reflected an amalgam of representations. Neither newspapers nor radio were

referred to by any of those teenagers I interviewed and have therefore not been included in my discussion, other than very briefly. I intend here to focus mainly on audience consumption practices and the ways in which these practices have been interpreted according to some of those writers who have researched and theorised these issues.

4.1 Mass Media, Representation and Semiotics

It is generally acknowledged that western society today is permeated by the rhetoric of media representation. A concerted effort would need to be made to escape the all- pervasive voices and images of our media industries, if indeed it were possible at all. Young teenagers are certainly not exempt from the vocal and visual reaches of the media industries in Britain. According to some 'the mass media construct the *social imaginary*, the place where kids situate themselves in their emotional life, where the future appears as a narration of possibilities as well as limits' (Aronowitz, 1992, 195).

During the course of World War Two, Horkheimer and Adorno wrote of the controlling evils of the mass culture industry: 'No independent thinking must be expected from the audience: the product prescribes every reaction: not by its natural structure...but by signals' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 137). It is important to bear in mind the cultural and historical situation in which the Frankfurt School theorised practices of consumption: powerful use had been

made of propaganda during the Third Reich to influence 'the masses' through the media, apparently to great effect.

However, since that time, there has been a considerable amount of further research and theorizing into practices of consumption and the effect of the media industries on that consumption. The belief that 'Consumption ...is a systematic act of the manipulation of signs' (Baudrillard, 2001, 25) has underpinned much thought and fuelled suggestions that there is a more interactive role between media products and consumers.

Saussure's contribution is important here. Saussure is recognised as being the originator of the term 'semiotics' (Saussure, 1960). His theoretical research concerned the structure of language and the problematic of signification - how meanings were created in and through language by the construction of signs. However, semiotics has both a cultural and an historical context and as such is not a rigid system, but one of fluidity where meanings can be subverted, challenged and expanded.

Barthes developed this idea by proposing that there is another level at which this process works: the 'mythical system' (Barthes, 1972). This is a level which connects strongly with cultural understandings and would only be understood within culture. He labels these two levels of meaning and understanding as the levels of denotation and connotation. Denotation describes in literal terms what is in the text; connotation pertains to the connections with other ideas, particularly in terms of values. This concept of representation is particularly important in

relation to an analysis of media influences, as media texts are very deliberately shaped or chosen for their appeal or impact on an audience and as such are a potentially highly influential source emanating from outside the field of home and family.

4.2 Resistance

The Centre for Contemporary Studies at the University of Birmingham has focused mostly on practices which resist adopting, one way or another, dominant hegemonic readings of a media text and has interrogated the gap between meaning-giving and meaning-taking. Hall argues that the two do not necessarily correlate at all. Understanding the 'lack of fit', Hall explains, enables us to evaluate better how audiences receive, read and respond to media messages and he rejects the mass culture critique as analysis grounded in behaviourism. Every sign, as described by Saussure (1960), has polysemic values and it is on the level of connotation, more than denotation, that the intersection of ideologies and discourses takes effect on meaning. These connotations or 'codes' refer to 'maps of meaning' that have been culturally constructed and 'are the means by which power and ideology are made to signify in particular discourses' (Hall, 1980, 134).

Hall's analysis of televisual discourses identifies three main 'hypothetical positions': firstly the *dominant – hegemonic position*, which is where the viewer adopts the dominant discourse or is 'operating inside the dominant code'. In this position s/he will align herself with the ideologies that pervade the text being

viewed. The second position outlined is that of the *negotiated code* or position. Hall describes this in relation to global metanarratives; a viewer decoding from within the negotiated position acknowledges that there are over-arching or generalizing discourses around the representation s/he is viewing, but adopts at the same time an oppositional standpoint in relation to localized specificities. The third position Hall describes as *oppositional*. This is where the dominant message is quite deliberately reassigned a contrary meaning.

It is specifically this tension between fields of influence that I am attempting to investigate in this study. The point of tension illustrated through Hall's theory shows the competition between the field of media influence and the ingrained values and preferences contributed by the individual's primary socialization, or his 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977a).

The influence of the media is perhaps the most feared 'other' in terms of importing different images and values into the accepted norms of family life. Television in particular is often regarded as 'an extremely powerful agent for the 'dominant ideology' – a kind of 'propaganda machine' which is responsible for brainwashing children...' (Buckingham, 1993b, 7). Therefore, if Bourdieu's theory is no longer really relevant in today's media-saturated society, then could each individual, especially teenagers experimenting with identity types (Erikson, 1968), be 'brainwashed' into treating the life-path examples illustrated on the television and elsewhere as an open menu from which to select a life-style?

De Certeau describes the tensions created by resistance to the consumption of dominant discourses (in whatever form they might appear) in terms of active 'battles or games between the strong and the weak' (de Certeau, 1984, 34). These battles or games are complex to understand, but they potentially interrupt the smooth flow of cultural and ideological transmission via the media, as well as the cultural and social reproduction discussed by Bourdieu (1977b) in the context of family backgrounds.

4.3 Hegemony and Interpellation

The concept of hegemony, referred to by Hall (1980) above in his outline of hypothetical positions, is also important in any discussion about media representation as it refers to the power of a dominant ideology to 'win the hearts and minds' of those the system does not necessarily benefit. The term was adopted and developed by Gramsci to describe 'the ideological and cultural control which a small ruling group exercises over the rest of society' (McGregor, 1984, 127). The persuasiveness of the media and its supposed ability to manipulate the masses has produced a considerable amount of literature condemning its power. These discourses have contained a degree of paranoia not dissimilar to the mass culture critique of the Frankfurt School. McGregor, using the metaphor of war, states that 'The role of the mass media in manipulating the consent of the great majority of people to the rule of a powerful elite by daily bombarding readers and listeners and viewers with a view of the world which supports the established system is now well known' (McGregor, 1984, 128).

Within his analysis, Hall also describes how at the connotative level there are various levels of meaning that can be 'taken', but that there will always be a dominant discourse that will lay claim to the 'real' meaning and seek to impose or persuade in its own favour. This discourse Hall terms 'preferred': 'there exists a pattern of 'preferred readings'; and these both have the institutional / political / ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized', (Hall, 1980, 134). However, as Hall has outlined in his theory, dominant discourses and preferred meanings do not always go uncontested, even when they are mediated by the most persuasive texts.

Investment in meanings has a further dimension: that described by Althusser (1971) as *interpellation* or hailing, a process already referred to in Chapter One. This impacts on issues of identity insomuch as the theory proposes that every discourse creates a subject-position which can then be 'inhabited' by an individual. 'All communication addresses someone, and in addressing them it places them in a social relationship. In recognizing oneself as the addressee and in responding to the communication, we participate in our own social, and therefore ideological, construction' (Fiske, 1990, 175). In effect, the reader or viewer buys into a particular point of view. The social and cultural situation of 'the audience' is considered in terms of the type of representation presented. This is a powerful hegemonic tool within an industry that is usually aiming to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, and it is the 'appeal' of the text that relates or connects often subconsciously with the desires of its viewers and calls to them to take up a sympathetic position and identify with a point of view being offered.

The concept of subject-positioning allows an individual considerable fluidity in approaching the world of representations. As a consumer, the choices each individual makes will have symbolic meanings that are seen as desirable to connect with and will reinforce or readjust her/his sense of identity. The subject-positions s/he takes up within the discourses that permeate her/his world, however temporarily, will contribute to a sense of who s/he is. Despite the homogenous label of 'teenager', young modern cultural consumers do not readily fit into a fixed position and are not easily stereotyped, despite media attempts to do so. The question of 'agency' is important: whatever aspect of their lives they are consuming, people, and particularly young people, are making active choices about the life-possibilities they see; they are 'active agents, not subjugated subjects' (Fiske, 1989, 24). They are making decisions about what they want and, according to Fiske, they are making equally as important choices about what they do *not* want: '...the sense of oppositionality, the sense of difference, is more determinant than that of similarity, of class identity...in elaborated societies' (ibid). Hall describes identities as being more like 'the sediments over time of those different identifications or positionalities we have taken up and tried to 'live'...' (Hall, 1997, 219).

As I have mentioned, uptake of the position being offered will itself be dependant on taste and desirability, which, according to Bourdieu (1984) will be dependant on the individual's background. A spectator's ability (and preferences) in decoding a text is 'embedded in the *specific interpretive frameworks and social practices of given groups* and constitutes a form of 'competence' which accounts for *differences in cultural usage*' (Gledhill, 1997, 375). However, she

agrees with Hall that the consumption of a media text is still a matter for negotiation, it is a 'contest' between the meanings encoded into it and the meanings decoded by the consumer.

Those who speak with a postmodernist voice state that: 'Childhood and adolescence are under reformation. Life pathways are changing and convoluting, twisting and mutating in complex ways' (Luke and Luke, 2001, 94). They claim that the idea of multiple subjectivities 'which captures concepts of fragmentation, hybridity, and historical positioning' (ibid) now has considerable support beyond the theoretical. Fiske suggests the idea of 'nomadic subjectivities' which evolve out of contemporary ways of life that are complex and which exist within elaborate social structures. He states that these 'active agents' are able to 'move around this grid, realigning their social allegiances into different formations of the people according to the necessities of the moment' (Fiske, 1989, 24). The implications are that the young teenagers in my study should be able to experience considerable fluidity and freedom in the way they consume media representations and how they use these representations to form ideas about what they want to have, what they want to do and who they want to be.

There is, nonetheless, a certain amount of debate around the issue of polysemic meanings created through media products. Not everyone is comfortable with the idea that a media text produces an almost infinite potential to be subverted or transformed in terms of the meanings encoded into it (Morley, 1992, 216). The persuasive power of some media representations is extremely potent and textual determinism is still a powerful force that should not be pushed aside.

4.4 How do young teenagers consume television?

Television in particular, of all the electronic media, seems to have had a particularly pervasive influence on post-war society and it is part of the material of socialization that exists to influence young people and their everyday lives. It has also caused concern and consternation regarding whether its perceived influence on young lives is greater at times than home and family (Löhr & Meher, 1999 and Gunter & McAleer, 1990). Like other cultural products, the consumption of television programmes may depend on a person's cultural capital and may also contribute to it. The different power dynamics alone within a family will produce different readings and different meanings. The same programme may well offer opportunities for both resistant and concurring positions to the same text. The appeal of the programmes themselves will also vary greatly according to the genre of the presentation of the text. Spectator viewing, which covers such programmes as films, soaps or crime series, is very different from the type of programme where an introducer speaks *into camera*, a type of interpellation, as if personally conversing with the viewer. The different ways in which children watch television, termed by Fiske (1987) 'modes of reception', has been the subject of various studies and much has been written on 'active' audiences.

So how do children respond to the TV screen at home where they are not a captive cinema audience? Fiske states that television is 'essentially a domestic medium, the routines of viewing are part of the domestic routines by which home life is organized' (Fiske, 1987, 72). He cites an ethnographic study by Palmer

(1986) who lists twenty commonly found activities, such as doing homework and talking that occurred simultaneously with television viewing. She found that periods of rapt attention seldom lasted longer than ten minutes at a time and that the programmes were more likely to be vaguely monitored until something caught someone's attention, while other activities continued. Fiske acknowledges that such studies do not enlighten our understanding of how meaning is made from televisual texts for the various viewers, but points out that they show how viewers 'are rarely dominated or controlled by [the TV] as so many critics would claim'(Fiske, 1987, 73).

Gunter and McAleer (1990) note that in the active/passive debate, their opinion from evidence they have evaluated, is that viewing is linked to understanding and that young people's attention is neither constant nor passive: 'The amount of attention they are prepared to give to individual programmes is directly related to whether the visual and audio message has meaning specific to them' (Gunter and McAleer, 1990, 38) (see also Buckingham, 1993a).

Some research has investigated this issue from the perspective of needs fulfilment. One survey mentioned by Gunter and McAleer was completed by Greenberg in London among children aged 9, 12 and 15 years. The findings produced eight groups of reasons for watching television: to pass the time; to forget, to learn about things, to learn about oneself, to be aroused, to relax, for companionship and because it's a habit. An important area here is that of social learning. When an individual feels s/he lacks an aspect of social know-how, then the television may become a reference for behaviour or personal presentation in

some capacity (Gunter and McAleer, 1990, 21). This view is supported by Marsh's research into younger children, where parents felt that 'television had played a central role in the development of children's social skills as they learned about sharing, friendship and citizenship' (Marsh, 2003, 20).

Issues of imitation and identification may well be mediated by an adolescent's cultural capital, but may well vary from Bourdieu's very class-based analysis and may cross traditional gender/race/class roles (Kenway & Bullen, 2001). Ambition or desire may also be prompted by televisual representation. In his discussion on life-style and class condition, Fiske notes that some sociologists 'have suggested that television performs a function of "anticipatory socialization" ', whereby people use the view of status groups higher than their own (which they see on television) as models they can emulate (Fiske, 1987, 106). This essentially challenges the cultural capital position which tends to adhere to the axiom that we consume according to who we are. In a similar vein, Strassburger suggests that 'television may offer teenagers "scripts" for sexual behaviour' that they might not be able to observe anywhere else (Strassburger, 1995, 42).

An area of this discussion that has caused constant concern is whether young people are able to differentiate between performance and real life. However, there seems to be evidence from research findings that by the time children become adolescents, most can discern between reality and fiction. One aspect of particular concern regarding media influences on young people is the issue of violence. Two pupils from my sample reported being influenced by seeing

representations of violence on television, although the types of representations and the responses from the pupils were very different. Since the 1960s fears about the portrayal of violence on television screens have prompted many moral outcries about the imitative impact of these portrayals. Within this research the issue was raised within the context of wrestling as entertainment, news, real-life coverage of violence perpetrated by terrorism, and police dramas. Research mostly seems to suggest that 'copycat' behaviour in response to television viewing is not usual and depends mainly on the home environment (Theunert and Schorb, 1999; Schmidbauer, 1999), although the cumulative impact of long-term exposure to violent video games may indeed increase aggressive behaviour (Anderson, 2002). However, children are more likely to respond with either feelings of pity, if they believe the victims may be suffering (Schmidbauer, 1999, 279), or if the violence is extreme, their reaction will be one of disgust, possibly combined with anxiety (Theunert and Schorb, 1999, 257).

Kenway and Bullen (2001) cite an argument presented by Meyrowitz who controversially claims that television may be contributing to the breakdown of traditional gender roles because it both demystifies male power through its portrayal of male behaviour and thereby offers it up for imitation by either sex. They also suggest that children are likely to copy role-types that they perceive as being the most successful, whichever gender is performing them. However, they question whether the impact on girls and boys is equal (p52).

Role models such as realistic human heroes, along with real-life media and sports stars, seem to be the most influential 'elements' of television representation

among this age group (Valkenburg, 2004; Fiske, 1987; Kenway & Bullen, 2001). Several of the pupils in my sample reported being influenced by celebrities, although a few mentioned the names of people they did *not* want to be like, for example political figures, such as Tony Blair. The cult of celebrity seems to have become infused into the contemporary social life of young people via the media on a level never before experienced, promoted by the 'exaggerating work' of marketing and publicity (Jaffe, 2005, 16). The types of celebrity produced by the media today range widely from talented performers with lifetime careers as celebrities to Big Brother participants; from weather presenters to sports stars. The para-social relationship between fans and celebrities is no longer considered by many to be abnormal or unhealthy, but part of everyday life and may possibly contribute to the imaginative construction of 'possible selves' that is considered both positively and negatively to be 'critical for motivating action' (Oyserman et al., 2002, 314). The identity work performed by fans or viewers is considered to be an active process of consumption, an individually mediated activity which is both highly contingent and negotiated. 'The process of identity formation in the consumption of celebrity does not involve anything as crude as role-modelling, but there are grounds for qualifying this observation in the case of the sports star' (Turner, 2004, 105). According to Turner, sports stars are the only celebrities that are required to function as heroes, as role models for their fans beyond their physical prowess in the arena where they perform, and their behaviour is scrutinized and criticized in a way that does not happen with pop idols.

The television celebrity, or the celebrity mediated by the television, has been made more accessible to audiences today and creates the impression that anyone

can achieve this status. Celebrities act as 'points of identification in a society in which other forms of collective identity, such as class and ethnicity are arguably becoming looser' (Hesmondhalgh, 2005, 120); as such they open up the potential of what is possible in terms of identity formation as well as offering ways to escape the confines and predictabilities of everyday life (Stevenson, 2005, 144).

Valkenburg makes several more interesting points about the media consumption of children approaching adolescence. She states that 'research has shown that children in middle childhood begin to enjoy watching media characters who seem psychologically similar to them' (Valkenburg, 2004, 33). They are likely to show a strong preference for adult comedy characters that may be perceived to behave childishly, such as those in *Friends* or *The Simpsons* and on the whole teenagers will prefer entertainment designed for adults.

Quantitative research findings, such as those cited by Gunter and McAleer (1990), are helpful in revealing the different practices of television watching in adolescents, and Fiske's (1987) point about lack of engagement with, and control by the television, is a useful consideration in relation to the analysis put forward in this thesis. However, it does not reveal the micro-contexts impacting on individual viewing, nor the nature of interplay and tension between home influences and broadcast influences on the consumption of television and how that in turn may affect attitudes and motivations in other areas of an adolescent's life. The meanings that are produced and understood by an individual will depend on her/his cultural context, both social and historical (Buckingham, 1993b). Research that deals with effects only is 'too linear, decontextualized,

adversarial and unidirectional' (Tobin, 2000, 4). What Tobin advocates is a hybrid approach.

In the last three chapters I have explored to some extent research findings and opinions regarding the potential influences of family, friends and media. It is clear that what is considered the primary source of socialization (home and family) is becoming more diversified. Friends and peers are certainly increasingly more influential as the individual seeks greater autonomy and are also important in identity work, but may not be as important as family in making certain decisions about the future. The media has been perceived by some to be the greatest potential 'threat' to the disruption of values and norms, but may in fact be consumed with a much higher degree of circumspection, even by children, than many people have feared. In this study I have not sought to investigate the influence of the school institution itself, as my concern is with those arenas outside the classroom. Therefore, I have tried to confine my research to the predispositions and dispositions engendered outside the power dynamic of the teacher/school-pupil situation in order to investigate what use adolescents hope to make of their school experience.

The last chapter in my literature review investigates what has been written concerning pupils' attitudes towards school and whether previous research has found that pupils actively consume school with a view to what they want for their future lives.

Chapter Five

Young people's attitudes towards consuming school

Until recently this area appears to have attracted less attention from researchers than those others I have covered in my review. My research does not investigate school refusers, who simply reject the experience altogether, but the vast majority who do engage, either willingly or unwillingly, throughout most of their childhood and teenage years. Because there is a legal requirement for children up to the age of sixteen years to be educated either in a school environment or with their family, there seems in the past to have been relatively little written about how they engage with that activity and what meaning they make of it.

5.1 Survey Findings

There have been several, mainly quantitative, surveys concerning pupil attitudes towards school, whose findings have been reported in various formats (Hendry et al., 1993; Keys et al., 1995; MacBeath, and Weir, 1991). The surveys reveal broader issues such as enjoyment of school: the YPLL survey findings showed that overall nearly 70% of 13-14 year old boys and over 80% of girls the same

age enjoyed being in school. MacBeath and Weir (1991) reported similar findings in their digest of UK surveys and polls collated between 1985 and 1990. Keys et al. (1995), looking more specifically at Year 6 and Year 7 children, also found a more than 80% agreement with the statement: 'On the whole, I like being at school'. However, although some of the research has been differentiated according to gender and (broadly) to employment status (Hendry et al., 1993), there has been no intention in these studies to explore the micro context of these attitudes, where they might have come from and how they evolved in the context of the complex influences existent in young people's lives.

Other broader themes have been highlighted by these surveys however: Macbeath and Weir report that, although in a minority, many pupils do not see school as an avenue to success or a career and they also point to a range of responses, perceptions and attitudes to school, which are frequently not understood by teachers.

5.2 Authentic Voices

More recently young people's attitudes towards school have been considered an important aspect in combating what was perceived by some to be the hegemony of the so-called middle classes within education, from whence the teaching-class supposedly came. It was suggested that the 'authentic' voices of the pupils themselves should be listened to in order to discover what 'diminishes their motivation and engagement' (Rudduck et al., 1996, 3). In the last few years the introduction of Citizenship to the curriculum has acknowledged to some extent

the importance of giving pupils a voice. Research projects such as Consulting Pupils About Teaching and Learning, an ESRC programme centred at the University of Cambridge, have sought to promote pupil participation to enhance teaching and learning within schools by discussing with young people their views on how they learn best. The opinion that 'schools have changed less in their deep structures in the last 20 or 30 years than young people have changed' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004, 1), has influenced recent practice towards including the pupils' perceptions in evaluations. This construction of pupils as discerning consumers is in line with the postmodern attitude to cultural consumption which positions cultural practices and artefacts as being the 'stuff' from which identities are made.

Rudduck and Flutter point to RHINOS (Really Here In Name Only), the 'invisible' children who have disengaged from their official education, but make no trouble, as examples of how some of our young people in school may be operating on a completely different agenda from the one prescribed by the curriculum. Blumberg and Blumberg (1994) have compiled an anthology of retrospective school experiences to illustrate the things that are learnt, but not taught, in schools. Although of profound value to the individual, the informal learning that happens in school is described as a neglected area in research – 'typically unexamined and undiscussed' (Blumberg and Blumberg, 1994, x). There appears to be a need for more research into the 'other' unwritten curriculum and the consumption practices of those many pupils who 'do not have the same purpose, nor even the same basic reality as teachers' (Woods, 1990, 147).

5.3 Motivation

The issue of motivation, attitudes and engagement specifically in Year 8 is of particular relevance because this is the age of transition from childhood into puberty. For some, early adolescence marks ‘the beginning of a downward spiral’ which may result in academic failure and ‘dropping out’ of school (Eccles and Midgely, 1990, 134). This is also the stage in the school system where a ‘dip’ in performance has been identified. The decline in motivation at this point may be partially explained as the result of the ‘multiple stressors’ experienced during this stage of pubertal development (p. 135). In a group of case studies on Year 8, pupils at this stage of their school career were described as being at a pivotal point in relation to their learning, at the same time that the year group lacked a ‘clear and compelling identity’ (Doddington et al., 1998). In terms of attitude and motivation, this age group are at risk of becoming demotivated and some pupils may well disengage with the dominant ideologies related to learning and qualifications prevalent in most school establishments. Year 8 may well be a year ‘when commitment to learning can begin to drift’ (Batty et al., 1999, 365).

5.4 Negotiating Pathways and Forming Strategies

Experiences inside the school, but outside the curriculum may have profound effects on the way a pupil consumes education and the manner in which s/he engages with the official curriculum. The pathway taken by each individual will be a negotiation of the pressures encountered. From the moment of entering the world of school, the pupil will become increasingly more exposed to secondary

fields of influence, which will compete with the primary socialization source. In pre-adolescent primary school children a distinct differentiation has been recorded between the given school system and the structure of their own social world: ‘...two relatively distinct social systems exist beside each other. The official system of the school, with its hierarchy, rules and particular criteria of evaluation, exists alongside the children’s own social system, which may appear to be less formal but which also has its own hierarchy, rules and particular criteria of judgement’ (Pollard, 1985, 81). However, the two worlds do intersect: Pollard found that even at the age of eleven maintaining a sense of identity was consistently a concern and that academic achievement contributed to the development of that identity.

Negotiating secondary fields of influence, as they impinge on a person’s primary socialization experience, is a skill that seems to be managed with varying degrees of success (Woods, 1990; Phelan et al., 1991, Hammersley and Turner, 1980). The influence of friends and family are two areas that are usually written about separately, as I have done above. However, Phelan et al. have investigated how these influences combine to affect the ways in which individuals engage with school and learning and how these individuals make transitions across the perceived borders between these social arenas. If the match of ideologies between school and home is poor, or if there is a mismatch in values between friends and school, then it will be vitally important that the individual learns how to negotiate the borders, if s/he is going to make school meaningful and relevant to her/his own life. In their findings Phelan et al. outline four types of practice observed in their research, from Congruent Worlds/Smooth Transitions to

Borders Impenetrable/Boundary Crossings Insurmountable and they state that their model transcends ethnic, achievement and gender categories. The competence that adolescents develop in order to move between settings confidently 'has tremendous implications for the quality of their lives and their chances of using the education system as a stepping stone to further education, productive work experiences, and a meaningful adult life' (Phelan et al., 1991, 224).

Indeed, some pupils seem able to negotiate their various worlds with considerable confidence. Rather than disengaging altogether, they surf their classroom and out-of-class experiences to glean what is meaningful for themselves in what might well be described as a type of cultural bricolage. Woods calls this behaviour 'knife-edging' (Woods, 1990, 131) and describes the practice of maximising on opportunities and experiences to further self-defined interests as colonization (p. 149). He explains that learning to 'cope' with school is one of the most valuable lessons learnt. Those that may seem to conform may simply be masking a feeling of ambivalence, or may be concealing a deep seated antagonism towards the values of the school, but are motivated towards an apparent conformity through instrumental concerns like qualifications (Hammersley and Turner, 1980, 31).

Woods's description of the strategies and negotiations practiced by pupils to create their own meanings is similar to the practice of 'tactics' as outlined by de Certeau. De Certeau's discussion explains how resistance to a dominant order, or to the 'strategies' produced by that order, can be manipulated by individuals to

seize back meaning on their own terms. He points out that these practices could be considered subversive and are often happenstantial. Woods claims to reject subcultural theory as focusing too much on fixed groupings, but proposes that an interactional approach allows for greater individual interpretation and a better opportunity to understand the multiple varieties of ways in which pupils consume the complexities of their education: 'through this maze of activity and encounters pupils negotiate their way, making the most of their power and abilities in furthering their interests, often in company with their fellows, discovering and inventing strategies of infinite number and complexity. It is, arguably, the pupils' most valuable lesson' (Woods, 1990, 156).

The manner in which individuals make meaning for themselves out of school experiences and negotiate their pathways in the direction of what they want out of life is not particularly easy to discover. Nevertheless, if we want schools and the education that is provided through them to be felt to be relevant, then we need to try and discover what the experience 'looks like' from their perspective (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004, 7).

This research seeks to contribute some understanding of how the three fields of influence (family, friends and media) may affect the choices considered by young teenagers. The study is specific to pupils in Year Eight, a year group which has caused concern because of a perceived 'dip' in performance (Ofsted, 1998) and where issues of poor motivation have been identified (Doddington et al., 1998). It therefore offers an analysis that is particularly relevant to this age group and one that extends in a small way the scope of understanding already

discussed in the literature I have revised in the previous chapters. The research also seeks to bring together the issues of the influences considered, rather than dealing with them in isolation, as has been the case in most of the literature reviewed, and offers some insight into the complexities of trying to measure the sometimes competing influences at work in the lives of young teenagers in contemporary society.

In particular this research hopes to contribute a little to the further understanding of how some Year Eight pupils consume school and their attitudes towards how relevant the experience is in relation to realising their aspirations. This research offers some further snap-shots of what the experience of school 'looks like' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004, 7) in relation to the futures they perceive on their horizons.

I have outlined in the next chapter the processes and methods I employed to try and access as broad a spectrum as possible, within a small case study, of the perceptions held by young teenagers towards their futures and the role played by school in realising those ambitions.

Chapter Six

Methodology and Methods

It is not always easy to discover in ourselves what we really want, nor to evaluate what makes us do one thing and not another, nor to pinpoint the birth of an ambition. It can therefore not be an easy task to respond to someone else asking these questions. This case study attempts to get beneath the surface of some of these issues, to some extent, with a few young adolescents who were obliging enough to try and share these thoughts with me and explain how they related to their everyday experience of school.

6.1 Personal Values

How do young teenagers consume school? For all those who do engage, on whatever level, and who do not 'drop out' the question is: 'What do they get out of it?' This question interests me because as a teacher I want to deliver or make accessible something that will enhance the lives of these young people. The belief that the process I am involved in presenting is valuable, is something that is fundamentally important to my own personal feeling of worth and so, in

respect of my ideological interest in the subject of my investigation, my approach to this research is deeply value-laden.

6.2 Positionality

There should, of course, be a demarcation line between purposes and conduct in undertaking research (Walsh, 1999, 43). However, I need also to declare a bias in my own attitude towards the behaviours I am seeking to analyse amongst the young people involved in my study. My personal belief, as an educator, is that the school system and the confines of the National Curriculum do not necessarily relate well to all the pupils or provide them with experiences or knowledge that they feel empowers them and enables them to expand their prospects of a fulfilling life. I also believe that humans are not wholly determined by their background, but are both less predictable and more creative than their positioning analysed through theories of social reproduction would have them. It is my view that with greater access to information and improving conditions of equality, young people are increasingly enabled to think up new possibilities and make leaps of ambition in their own lives, which may even be extraordinary.

I also recognise that this belief constructs a two-fold potential for misinterpretation within my analysis. Firstly that it may encourage a certain 'reading' of an informant's comments, and secondly (and somewhat paradoxically) that in an effort not to bias my reading in favour of one interpretation I may over-represent an opposing or competing interpretation. I recognise as well that my position as a teacher is influential within the dynamic

of the group interviews that have provided data for this research and that the issue of my subjectivity will have been ‘deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings’ within the discourse of the interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997).

6.3 The Position of this Research

The nature of my enquiry into the consumption of education by young teenagers is predominantly qualitative and is certainly located within this paradigm. It seeks to actively and consciously locate evidence of dynamic responsiveness in individuals to the major sources of influence within their cultural milieu (Cohen et al., 2000, p.26). The format of my research is an evidence-seeking case study and employs as a theoretical framework both Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital, habitus and fields (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b, 1984, 1993, 1997) and de Certeau’s theory of resistance (De Certeau, 1984) which I have used as a juxtaposition to Bourdieu’s perceived determinism.

The questions driving this research are these:

- What were the pupils’ hopes and ambitions for their future?
- What were the key influences on those hopes and ambitions?
- What were the pupils’ perceptions of how schooling related to their hopes and ambitions?

The issue of whether formal education is failing its pupils is one of perennial interest and concern, not just in education circles, but as an ongoing political and

national debate. Reports of research findings such as were published from the survey undertaken by the Higher Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in January 2005 seem to demonstrate that, at least at the level of higher education, a divide exists between advantaged and disadvantaged students that is both 'deep and persistent' (HEFCE, 2005). It claims to reveal 'the extent and scale of the inequality of access to higher education by young people from affluent and poorer areas throughout the country' and describes the divisions as 'entrenched': the most advantaged twenty percent are up to six times more likely to enter higher education than the most disadvantaged twenty percent. Although this particular study concerned older teenagers than those involved in my study, ambitions and intentions are certainly already being considered in early adolescence as is shown in various studies on achievement motivation (Moulton, 1971; Malmberg & Norrgard, 1999), vocational and career exploration (Krake, 2002; Schmitt-Rodermund & Vondracek, 2002) and in my own study.

What the HEFCE survey highlighted very clearly, and partly because it was a comprehensive quantitative review, was that the patterns of resistance to the rhetoric of the advantages of higher education could be aligned with material deprivation and that these could be directly linked to localities. The implications are that the region in which you are born and where you grow up will dictate your chance of entering higher education. Apart from the issue of economic disadvantage, this also raises the question of culture and identity.

What, of course, the HEFCE and other quantitative surveys do not show, is the personal perspective, the nitty-gritty information from the personal accounts of

young people about what school does for them and whether it really serves everyone's interests, or whether those interests have anything to do with the official curriculum. Was Bourdieu right? If your habitus does not match the dominant education ideology (in part thinly disguised as the National Curriculum), is the whole school curricular experience largely irrelevant, beyond the basic issues of numeracy and literacy skills?

Some research studies (such as *Consulting Pupils About Teaching and Learning*, which was a project recently sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council), have investigated the ways in which pupils can make a greater contribution to their learning and how they can find a voice in what happens in the classroom (Arnot et al., 2004). These ideas certainly go some way towards encouraging pupils to take ownership of their own learning and to make an investment in the world that is their school, although they are aimed at channelling interest and effort in a particular direction and resonate with applaudable, but hegemonic, overtones.

However, I was interested in what was going on at a more basic level. Research seems to suggest that it is at the point of early adolescence, when identity formation is becoming a conscious issue, that problems of demotivation and disengagement start taking root (Eccles and Midgely, 1990; Batty et al., 1999). I was also interested to know whether there was any evidence that the explosion of media and communication technologies had made any impact on the practices of consumption within schools. Or whether, with an increased recognition of children's rights through such structures as student councils, the opinions of

friends and others peers had gained influence in the lives of young pupils, in terms of influencing their personal and professional ambitions.

Whilst it has been observed that young people have changed more in recent years than schools themselves have changed (Rudduck and Flutter, 2004), has this, along with the increase in media representations and the rhetoric of globalization and choice, actually made any discernable difference to what is perceived as possible by pupils' individual lifestyle choices? It seemed to me that there was a lack of qualitative research findings to help illuminate the myriad individual practices in which pupils do consume school and either survive or make the whole experience worthwhile for themselves. It also seemed a possibility that increased insight into these practices might help to 'put flesh on the bones' (Bell, 1999, 11) of wider research, such as the ESRC project mentioned above. My research addresses the issues of the hopes and ambitions of young teenagers, where these originate and how these pupils perceive school in relation to realising their aspirations.

6.4 Why I selected this case study and how it is structured

The 'bounded system' (Adelman et al., 1980, 49) for this case study is a group of twenty Year 8 pupils selected from two co-educational schools in different locations. My research attempts to throw some light on the types of consumption practices that can be found within the sample I have chosen.

This case study is situated under the subheading of discipline research in education, according to Bassey's definition, as it is an enquiry which is aimed at 'informing understandings of phenomena (in educational settings) which are pertinent to the discipline' (Bassey, 1999, 59). The objective of this research is to present findings that may help to inform educational judgement and action. This study foregrounds the subjective experience of individuals and their negotiation with their social world in creating identity and meaning in their lives. According to Cohen et al. this methodological approach may be termed 'idiographic' (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 7).

In the same sense with which Stake (1995, p.36) uses the metaphor, I have cast a net, or in my case two nets, for the purpose of my research, in order to find as mixed a sample as possible from my two locations. In this sense the study could be labelled a 'multisite' case study (Stenhouse, 1985). This dual aspect, in terms of institutions, also helps resolve the problem of triangulation, although it might be argued that a certain amount of in-depth inquiry may have been traded for breadth (Sturman, 1997, 64). However, I feel that in this particular evidence-seeking study, that fishing from two sources has increased the possibility of more varied findings to a greater degree than simply doubling the sample size in one location would do. After consideration, I decided that a sample size of twenty pupils would be manageable and at the same time hopefully provide a range of responses. I also wanted the sample to have a gender balance and so I chose five girls and five boys from each school after an analysis of the initial questionnaires, the process of which I have outlined below.

One school, which I have called Bay Middle, is in a rural town in East Anglia with children being bussed or driven in from surrounding villages and farms. The second school I have named Greenways and is an urban school on the outskirts of a city in the Midlands, although nearly a quarter of its pupils come from outside the catchment area, mainly city locations. Both schools are run by local authorities, but the Midland's school is a foundation school; the head has been a friend of mine for many years. Neither school represents an area of particular social or economic deprivation, however the Midland's school does fall into the bottom fifty schools in terms of child poverty out of nearly three hundred schools in that city. The school in East Anglia is my own institution where I have taught part-time as an English and Art teacher for over ten years.

The school in East Anglia is a middle (deemed secondary) school with pupils aged nine to thirteen, Year 5 – Year 8. The gender mix is fairly even and there is a small proportion of children from ethnic minority backgrounds, although the school only occasionally has to make special provision for pupils who do not have English as a first language. My study is focused on Year 8 pupils because as young adolescents, they are at a stage that traditionally has been synonymous with disaffection. I also chose Year 8 because this age group has been highlighted in recent research as a cause for concern in relation to motivation (Doddington et al., 1998; Batty et al., 1999) and the perceived 'dip' in engagement with school education. Doddington et al. suggested that Year 8 may be a 'pivotal year' (p. 40) for pupils to 'understand how a commitment to learning... can enhance life chances' (ibid).

The school in the Midlands is termed a high school, although its status is middle (deemed secondary) with pupils aged ten to fourteen, Year 6 – Year 9, so here my Year 8 informants were not at the ‘top’ of the school and had older pupils on site with whom to compare, compete or socialize. Here again the gender mix was fairly even, although in Year 8 the ratio was nearly 60 : 40 in favour of girls. Surprisingly the proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, although larger than in the first school, was still small, with equally few non English-speaking pupils. In both schools the number of free meals was under 15%.

I decided to use a two-stage approach with a questionnaire and follow-up interview, (Malmberg and Norrgard, 1999). I had initially considered the possibility of a three-tier process with the second stage consisting of pupils interviewing one another in groups of three, followed by individual interviews with just myself. However, although this might have eliminated some aspects of responses that might be weighted in favour or against the fact that I was an authority figure, I felt the process would have been too disruptive and too time-consuming, without necessarily providing much more thoughtful information.

There were two reasons for a two-stage approach. Firstly, I wanted some initial indication of the breadth of response I might get from the respondents and decided it might be helpful to use a questionnaire before staging an interview. The questionnaires were given to all the pupils from the classes from which I eventually chose the twenty teenagers for my sample. Secondly, I wanted the key questions to be mulled over and considered for as long as possible. I hoped that the interval of several weeks between questionnaire and interview would allow

the ideas to perhaps ferment a little in the minds of the respondents. This may not have happened, but it did at least allow time for some development of thought, even if that only happened amongst friends immediately after the questionnaires had been administered. I felt the two-stage approach might also be useful in triangulating the responses I received in interview. It gave me the opportunity to check for reliability in responses between the questionnaires and the interviews to some extent and would help to contribute towards a 'balanced and holistic picture' (Parker & Tritter, 2006) of individual pupils' thoughts and opinions. Also, corroborative data from the two different sources would help support validity (Cohen et al., 2000, 95). I had also initially thought that I could either randomly select respondents or could base a selection on school records regarding socio-economic profiles or teacher recommendation. However, my objective was to investigate the *range* of opinions in a sample that was not gender-biased and my focus was not on socio-economic factors, but on cultural influences and to what extent the pupils felt motivated by those influences in their lives

After piloting the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) with the five key questions in my own Year 8 tutor group, I realised that the most appropriate and useful data gathering method would be to let the pupils speak for themselves on a second questionnaire, as they were the only ones who could speak authentically about their perceptions (see Appendix 2). This questionnaire concerned their family connections, what they and their parents enjoyed doing, the sort of activities they were involved in with friends and peers and their involvement in reading, using a computer or watching television. This information gave me an indication of what

they considered influential in their lives within the fields of influence connected to my research.

The answers to these questions were then graded in each section according to a rating scale. I had found that models based on the Likert scale had been employed in several studies on adolescents (Hundeide, 2004; Meeus et al., 2002) and was useful in giving a 'degree of sensitivity' (Cohen et al., 2000, 253) at the same time as providing categories of differentiation that could be used to group responses from which to select my interview sample. I have outlined the process I used clearly below.

After formally asking and being given permission to conduct the two studies by the head teacher of each school, the pupils were given parental consent forms to be signed if both they and their parents were happy for them to take part in giving their views about what they wanted in life (see Appendix 3). In each school the classes were mixed in respect of gender and ability. One class from each was selected, based on convenience to the school. In my school the Assistant Deputy Head took Citizenship with one of the Year 8 classes that I did not teach and brought the questionnaires into one of her lessons, as she was interested in the study, which I had discussed at length with her. The class had also previously been discussing issues of careers and futures. In the Midland's school the head himself administered the questionnaire, as he was interested in discussing the issue with the pupils. I explained that the responses did not necessarily have to be kept private, the pupils could share any ideas they wished

and discuss the questions as much as they liked, but that I only wanted them to write down what they felt was *true* for themselves.

Initially two classes in the Midlands received questionnaires, however, I realised that I did not have the time to analyse nearly sixty replies in order to choose my ten respondents, so I used the responses from just one class. Consequently only one class was given the questionnaires in the East Anglian school. However, from the initial twenty-nine pupils, three did not return permission slips and one pupil was away, leaving twenty-five valid responses. After analysis of the first questionnaire completed by the Midlands class of twenty-eight, I eliminated three: one from the lower end of the 'potentially strong influences' category; one from the middle category and one from near the top end of the lower category (see explanation below) in order to have an equal number of responses from both schools on which to base a cursory, but hopefully helpful, whole class analysis. I felt this might be useful in giving the two samples some sort of context.

6.5 The Questionnaires – Sheet One: Opinions

When I started designing the research I decided on five open-ended questions, although consequently this sheet became the second questionnaire of two (see Appendix 1). On the first side of the questionnaire were three questions:

- What do I want to do?
- What do I want to have?
- Who do I want to be?

These questions were spaced out evenly down the centre of an A4 sheet so that responses could be written anywhere around the question in the style of a 'spidergram', a format familiar by various names to most pupils today.

On side two of this questionnaire were the two most important questions:

- Who/what influences my ideas, opinions and ambitions?
- How does school help me to do, to be, to have what I want?

These were presented in a similar fashion to the first three questions, leaving as much room for responses as possible. It was my intention that the first three questions would stimulate thoughts and opinions that would help the respondents to answer the final two questions.

Before deciding on the two schools where I eventually did my research, I piloted this questionnaire in a school in Tamil Nadu in India, as I had initially wanted to do a comparative study. However, it consequently proved too difficult to do this, because of the lengthy process involved in obtaining official permission to research in India. Nonetheless the pupils in Tamil Nadu had found the layout of the questionnaire easy to manage, although they were not familiar with it, after an explanation from the teacher-translator. So when I piloted the questionnaire with my own Year 8 registration class, I kept the format the same and consequently used the same questionnaire for my actual research. The pupils seemed to find it easy to 'jot down' ideas as they came to them and then to revisit a question if discussion prompted other ideas.

For the pupils, the main problem with this questionnaire, or these questions, was actually tapping into this information in one's own mind. I had also trialled these and other questions on myself and adult friends, before deciding on this format and found that the 'openness' of the questions posed difficulties. The responses that came easily tended to be points of view that I felt were enculturated into my opinions and dispositions. However, I also felt that there were ideas in my head that were 'floating' or conditional in certain respects.

The problem of accessing the interior of the mind of a respondent is not easily resolved, if indeed it can be resolved at all (Miller & Glassner, 1997; Holstein & Gubrium, 1997; Alvesson, 2002, Seale, 1998) and at best the interview can provide 'clues – to the interiors of the interviewees or the exterior of organizational practices' (Alvesson, 2002, 111). Postmodern approaches tend to view the qualitative interview process as the shared construction of a narrative and as a symbolic interaction, but point out that while 'research cannot provide the mirror reflection of the social world that positivists strive for...it may provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds' (Miller & Glassner, 1997).

Following the pilot with my own class, I decided on a second questionnaire as a basis for selecting my sample, as the kind of socio-economic information, such as free meals, did not provide reliable facts on the variables I was using for the study and I did not feel that recruitment of a range of participants in my sample was best achieved on an ad hoc or random basis (Parker & Tritter, 2006, 27). Class teachers' recommendations would have been better, as a certain amount

about the pupils' interests, parents and backgrounds would be known to them. However, those people best provided to give this information were the pupils. so I decided to let them 'speak' for themselves.

While I have used both questionnaires as an instrumental part of my research, the one on influence, which I added later on in my preparation, was predominantly used as a first step for selection of the research subjects (see Appendix 2). This helped me to construct a 'sampling frame' from which to select potential participants (Parker & Tritter, 2006, 28). When the head of the Midlands' school received the list he commented voluntarily that the group I had selected represented a very broad mix of abilities and personalities.

6.6 Selection of Subjects for my Sample. Sheet Two: 'Influences in my Life'

The second sheet I entitled 'Influences in my Life'. These questions were more directed and some were multi-choice. For example:

5. Do you share interests with anyone in your family?

.....

15. Do you use the internet? Yes sometimes never

I limited the number of questions to 20, as this allowed just one side of A4 to be used without the writing becoming too small or the space seeming too crowded. It just allowed room for half a dozen short lines of writing at the end to explain

the sort of person the respondent would like to be when s/he was 25 and whether that person was based on anyone s/he knew or knew about.

In order to select the pupils for my sample, I gave them a score on two sets of answers. The first set included questions one and two:

1. Do most of your family live in [this county]? All Most Some Few
(include grandparents, cousins etc.)
2. Do you see quite a lot of your family? Yes Sometimes Occasionally

These gave me an indication of a) exposure to immediate and extended family; b) the strength of family bonds and c) potential exposure to the 'normative' values of own family values and practices.

In question 1 a pupil responding with 'All' would score 4 points; 'Most'=3; 'Some'=2; 'Few'=1. In question 2 a pupil responding with 'Yes' would score 3 points; 'Sometimes'= 2; 'Occasionally'=1. The total for this section would therefore be 7, with a mark of 6 or 7 indicating potentially very strong connections, 3, 4 or 5 indicating quite strong connections and 1 or 2 indicating less strong connections. These categories relate purely to the case being studied and are relative only within the sample of the research.

The second set of answers that I graded concerned media influences, both positive and negative and related to three categories of media: questions 11, 12 & 13 – broadcast media; questions 14, 15, 16 & 17 – I.T. (computer & internet) and

questions 18, 19 & 20 – print media. I decided whether the response in these three categories was rather weak or fairly strong. If strong, then I gave a point for that section. Therefore 3 points would indicate a fairly strong interest or exposure in all three media areas. In the first grouping, I considered question 11 to be the most important, as it indicated a connection rather than just exposure to T.V. programmes: ‘Is there anyone on TV/radio (real or fictional) or film you want to be like?’ Some research (Fiske, 1987; Gunter & McAleer, 1990) seems to indicate that T.V. is often partially watched while taking part in other activities and is therefore unlike interpersonal family encounters. A positive answer to number 11 would indicate a marked influence of media representation. One pupil scored two in this section: she replied ‘not really’ to question 11. I judged her response to be rather weak, as for question 12 she only named ‘reality shows’ in terms of programmes she liked and ‘cartoons’ in terms of programmes she did *not* like. However, she could name two internet sites, adding that she visited ‘all sorts’ and could also name both a local newspaper and a magazine (*Sugar*) that she read.

I did not initially grade the responses to questions directed at friends/‘people I associate with’, although questions 6, 7 and 8 related to this area, with question 7 being the only one to actually use the word ‘friends’. At the time I felt my questions had not indicated this influence clearly enough to be able to give a score that was valid and the selection of the groups did *not* therefore include this score. However, I later added a score out of three for question 7 alone, as I felt this might be useful for my analysis:

7. Do you do those things (activities 'outside of school' mentioned in Q.6.) mainly with family or friends? Mainly family (1) Both (2) Mainly friends (3)

Even without the friendship scoring, I felt the total score on each questionnaire gave me a better indication of potential influences than the other resources I had previously considered. I rejected the idea of using a random sample in my research early on, as this would give me less possibility of as broad as possible a selection of opinions. In view of the fact that this would only ever be a very small case study due to financial, situational and temporal resources, I needed to do the best I could to ensure a certain degree of reliability in procuring a broad spectrum of attitudes. (The scoring for friends was assessed and added after the interviews had taken place).

Table One: Outcomes of questionnaire 'Influences in My Life'.

Exposure to Family Influences

1. Do Most of your family live in this region?

- All – 4
- Most – 3
- Some – 2
- Few – 1

2. Do you see quite a lot of your family?

- Yes – 3
- Sometimes – 2
- No – 1

(The highest score in this section would be 7)

Exposure to Media Influences

Qs 11-20 1 point was given for the mention of

- TV / radio
- Computer
- Magazines / newspapers

(The highest score in this section would be 3)

Exposure to Friends and Peers

7. Do you enjoy doing things outside of school with family or friends?

- Mainly family – 1
- Both – 2
- Mainly friends – 3

(The highest score in this section would be 3)

<i>Pupils in sample</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>A</i>	7	3	2
<i>B</i>	7	2	3
<i>C</i>	6	3	2
<i>D</i>	6	3	3
<i>E</i>	6	2	3
<i>F</i>	5	2	2
<i>G</i>	5	2	2
<i>H</i>	4	1	3
<i>I</i>	4	2	2
<i>J</i>	5	1	2
<i>K</i>	5	3	2
<i>L</i>	7	2	3
<i>M</i>	6	3	3
<i>N</i>	3	2	3
<i>O</i>	3	3	3
<i>P</i>	4	3	2
<i>Q</i>	5	2	2
<i>R</i>	1	2	3
<i>S</i>	6	1	1
<i>T</i>	5	1	2

6.7 Interviews

After analysing the completed questionnaires, I selected ten pupils from each school to interview in groups of three or four. I based this on the total of ten points (explained above) and made a list that comprised an equal number of boys and girls, with three reserve names on each list – one for each category of potential overall influence: strong / middling / weak.

Pupil grouping for interviews

(For a breakdown and explanation of these scores, please refer to Table One above under the columns 'Family' and 'Media').

Table Two: Division of Groups.

Greenways	Bay Middle
Group 1	Group 4
A - 10	K - 8
B - 9	L - 9
C - 9	M - 9
D - 9	Group 5
Group 2	N - 5
E - 8	O - 6
F - 7	P - 7
G - 7	Q - 7
Group 3	Group 6
H - 5	R - 3
I - 6	S - 7
J - 6	T - 6

When I came to interview Group 5, it was not possible to include a couple of the pupils on the lunchtime allocated for the interview and so I reorganised Groups 5 and 6, which resulted in those groups each containing a mixture of pupils that

had declared smaller to middling influences from family and media. However, these pupils represented as wide a selection as possible based on the perceived influences in their lives as reported in their questionnaires. When given the consent forms, the pupils had been told that some would also be selected for an interview which would be tape-recorded, but that what they said would be kept confidential and their names would be changed if anything they said was printed. Most pupils taking part in the interview seemed excited by the prospect.

The interviews were semi-structured (Cohen et al., 2000, 270; Wellington, 2000, 95; Robson, 2002, 283), thus allowing a substantial degree of flexibility that could accommodate elements of both discussion as well as interview (Robson, 2002, 283). My interview 'framework' was based on the specific responses to the questionnaire, which in turn related to the five key questions on the questionnaire, and I had highlighted responses that I wanted to find out more about and had the completed questionnaires in the interviews with me. The ordering of the questions was not standardised (Seale & Filmer, 1998), but I intended to fit in a query about parental occupations without bringing too much emphasis to the question, and whether the individuals would still want to come to school, if it were not mandated to do so. Bell also refers to this type of interviewing technique as 'guided' (Bell, 1999, 138). This was one of the options mentioned by Salmon (1979, p. 99) in her discussion of methods used in adolescent studies and I felt it fulfilled the requirements for my own study. I had decided against using focus groups, as I wanted to retain the role of investigator rather than 'facilitator', so that I could control the dynamic of the discussion (Parker & Tritter, 2006, 25).

The questions in the initial questionnaire had already provided information on the principal variables my research was attempting to understand: the influences that decide young teenagers' ambitions and how or whether this then impacts on their consumption of school. The responses from the second sheet of five open-ended questions provided the key areas of questioning against the background of information on the preliminary sheet. The pupils had provided varied responses to the five key questions that asked: What do I want to do? What do I want to have? Who do I want to be? Who / what influences my ideas, opinions and ambitions? How can school help me achieve these things? My questions therefore, were organised around the responses I already had from them. I did not write down specific questions, but I had highlighted any areas of particular interest on the questionnaires, which I had with me. The objective of the interview was to check and expand, if possible on the information given on the questionnaires. The sequencing of my questions deliberately started with a question specific to a response that had already been given on the questionnaire, for example: '...you've said that people who influence you are people you meet...what did you mean by that?' or 'You want to be a dentist...and you seem to be very particular about that. Why?' The consequent framing and ordering of questions then attempted to guide the topics discussed, at the same time as allowing for genuine human interaction and empathetic responses as far as possible in the approach discussed as 'active interviewing' (Alvesson, 2002; Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Holstein and Gubrium explain that this sort of interviewing may be described as a drama that has a scripted narrative inasmuch as there are topics, distinguishable roles, a format for conversation and a 'plot'

that develops as the interview progresses (1997, p. 123). This describes the style of interview I adopted fairly well.

In both schools the pupils were interviewed by me (and recorded on audio tape) in groups of three or fours. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, I wanted to reduce the weighting of power and authority on my side and felt that informants might feel more confident and empowered if they outnumbered me. Secondly, I wanted to increase motivation to share ideas and promote a 'conversation' and I wanted to reduce as far as possible the potential misconception that particular responses might be more acceptable than others. There was of course no guarantee that this would be the effect on the respondents. Thirdly, I did not want a group larger than this, because there might be a problem with disengagement from the conversation which would outweigh the motivational factor of hearing other pupils' opinions. Lastly there was the practical issue of having to deal later with a number of recorded voices that I needed to be able to identify when transcribing the tapes. Because of the last issue mentioned, I did maintain a structure to the interview of asking pupils in turn, so that I covered the ground I wanted with each informant and at the same time was able to move the discussion along, so that it maintained some momentum for the sake of motivation.

The choice of an ideal or even suitable location and seating arrangement for a group interview is not straightforward (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) and there were inevitable problems. In the Midlands' school I was kindly given an office in the administration wing. The room had little in it, apart from a desk and chair, so

three extra chairs were brought in and I sat in a 'circle' with the pupils in front of the desk. However, the atmosphere of the room was quite official and 'stern'. The head and I both felt it would be more appropriate to leave the door ajar, as I was unknown to the pupils. We also felt it would make the room feel less prison-like, although this meant that occasionally there were disruptions outside. Nonetheless, the room was just the right size for a small group discussion, it made the tape-recording quite easy and there were very few distractions, although in the first interview there were problems locating two of the group who consequently arrived late. The interviews at this school were all done on one day.

The interviews in the East Anglian school were more problematic, as they had to be done during lunchtimes and although there is a meeting room next to the main office, it is deliberately overlooked (for security reasons) by a large window into that office, which is always very busy at lunchtimes, and therefore potentially very distracting. This room was commandeered on one of the days I had booked and the interview ended up happening in the Craft Textiles room, which surprisingly proved to work quite well, as there were no distractions outside the window and the air of casualness, constructed by having to draw up several hard plastic stools between the sewing machines and the sink, made the discussion more relaxed than the previous ones. These interviews were completed over two weeks. Neither interview situation nor location was ideal, although I do not think that it would be possible to construct anything close to an ideal for everybody.

The groups had been constructed in line with their scores given on strong /weak potential influences (see tables on pages 100 and 101). I decided that this would

be particularly important for those who did not declare fairly strong connections with family or fairly strong interests in the media, because there was a danger these pupils would feel they had less to offer a discussion than pupils who felt there were fairly strong influences in their lives.

However, every permutation of group combination would impact on what pupils might want or not want to say. Added to this was the unavoidable influence of myself as the researcher and questioner. My own 'intrapersonal variables' (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, 33), the way I looked and the way in which I spoke and behaved, would inevitably have had its own impact on the group dynamics and the 'comfort zones' (ibid) of the individuals being interviewed. In so short a time, it would have been impossible with the Greenways Pupils to have established more than a transitory rapport, but I did attempt to establish a 'middle ground' (Woods, 1986, 71) where through humour, enthusiasm and engaging an active interview approach (Alvesson, 2002), I could attempt to persuade the interviewees that I was genuinely interested in what their opinions were, whatever they were, and that my role with them was not as a teacher. The problems in my own institution were different, insomuch as the pupils already knew me as a teacher, although this gave me some existent rapport to start with. Nonetheless, my position as an authority figure would have been more entrenched in their eyes and despite being assured otherwise, concerns about some sort of 'repercussion', as the result of opinions they shared with me, may have been an issue.

However, the interview process is riddled with problems that encompass the interviewer and the interviewee together with the social situation (Alvesson,

2002, 112). Both time and situation of the interviews would also have had their impact (Alvesson, 2002, 115; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, 34) and a further extremely important and problematic dynamic in the equation is 'knowing one's mind'. Mood, time of day, an argument with Mum that morning or something witnessed on the way home the previous night, might have altered the respondent's ideas. But then again, their minds might have changed by the following day. Would it be possible to be aware of and to track all these influences and then recount them coherently to a closest confidant, let alone a researcher? In postmodernist terms, both 'truth' and identity are contingent and 'subjectivity is frequently unstable and ambiguous – a process rather than a structure' (Alvesson, 2002, 116). What can be gleaned from each of these interviews can only be viewed as part of a story. However, Miller and Glassner (1997) claim that stories about adolescence concern transitions of identity and 'becoming who/what one is not' (p. 108) and that stories are all we have.

Each interview was recorded on tape. I transcribed the tapes later, as closely as possible to the spoken word, eliminating only a few 'ers' and 'ums' (see an example in Appendix 4). This process helped me to 'relive' the interviews and was enormously helpful in my mental analysis of what I had been told. I had decided not to make additional notes during the conversation, as I felt it might be distracting for the respondents when I wanted them to know I was completely engaged in what they had to say and was focused on their comments. However, this meant that I had no 'cryptic jottings' (Woods, 1986, 81) to inform me later of non-spoken responses and interactions.

It is obviously impossible to do anything like a comprehensive job with this issue, even within the unit as defined. Nonetheless, impressions, images, stories and words *do* get caught in the mind to be later re-presented. As Bell suggests: we do the best we can in the time available (Bell, 1999, 140).

6.8 Analysing the Data

I went through several processes in organising the research data for analysis. The first questionnaire had provided information and a sampling frame on which to base the selection of pupils for my interviews (see Table One on page 100). This also provided a do and don't wish list about what each pupil wanted by the time s/he was twenty-five. I felt I also needed to bring together the information from Table One with specific information pupils had given me about parent occupations and interests, in order to more easily review this collection of data. (This can be seen in Appendix 5). This information came from both questionnaires and interviews.

From questionnaire 2, which related to Motivating Factors, I listed everything that the pupils I had selected for interview had mentioned, under generic titles such as 'Family/relationship' and 'Personal quality'. Answers such as 'love' in response to the question 'What do you want to do?' I counted as a personal quality. Answers such as 'happy' in response to 'What do you want to be?' I counted as pleasure/state of mind. If a pupil had mentioned something within that category, and I excluded nothing that was mentioned, I indicated 'yes' on the grid for analysis (see Appendix 6).

In order to see the frequency of references to each type of motivating factors, I created a column graph, which also differentiated the two schools by colour. The most obvious demographic difference between the two schools was that one was urban and the other was rural. This was potentially useful to the analysis in terms of providing possible explanations for differences between responses. (See Figure 1 on page 118).

To facilitate my analysis further I brought all the information from questionnaire 2 (responses to the five key questions) together with key comments and paraphrased transcriptions from the tape recordings, along with the tape number, onto one 'profile' sheet for each respondent. At the top of each sheet I added information on parents' occupations and each pupil's stated ambition for when s/he was twenty-five. This gave me a reference sheet for each of the twenty respondents which I could use to reference the original questionnaires and tapes/transcriptions (See Appendix 7).

I colour coded all the questionnaire responses according to the categories I had used for the motivating factors and the type of analytic induction I used to categorize my interview data also involved colour coding on the same basis (rather than using a word or abbreviation to identify categories), so that references to media categories, for example, were all represented in a 'blue' font colour. (References to school were left in black). Extracts from the interview responses were set in a column on the right of the profile sheet, with direct quotations given in italics and quotation marks. The process of selecting and coding in this manner made me more familiar with the interview responses and transcribed responses were checked against the taped interviews. This process

also helped develop an overview of each pupil's perspectives and to maintain some sense of holism in relation to the interviews, as Cohen et al. point out, there is a 'tendency for analysis to atomize and fragment the data' (Cohen et al., 2000, 282).

I divided the analysis, as presented in this thesis, into the major three sections presented in questionnaire 2. The first side of the questionnaire had addressed desires: what did the respondent want to do, to have and to be. In this analysis I focused on the range of responses that related to the three fields of influence or to school:

- Families and Relationships
- Occupations
- Friends
- Media
- Subjects and Skills

I then dealt with the final two questions separately. The next section of the analysis deals with 'Influences' and is subdivided into the three areas this research focuses on: family, friends and media. The third section deals with responses to the question 'How does school help me to do, to be, to have what I want?'

The final section of analysis before the conclusion explores the usefulness of Bourdieu's and de Certeau's theories as frameworks for understanding the expressed opinions of the pupil participants.

6.9 Validity and Reliability

I have tried to address the thorny problem of internal validity in several ways, although as I have mentioned above, knowing one's mind in order to speak it is not always easy - human nature is fallible and unreliable. The questionnaire is constructed so that it is possible to trace the possibly more embedded views of the respondents. For example, one interviewee mentioned wanting to be a barrister on three of the five major questions and when this was checked against her original twenty question sheet, she was found to have mentioned it there as well. In this way I hoped to be able to make a 'fuzzy' judgement as to whether ideas provided were more likely to be 'floating' or embedded. The repetitive or circular nature of the questions also gave me an opportunity to look for ambiguities and contradictions and it also gave the respondents the chance to interrogate their own thoughts.

The interviews were also used to triangulate this information, at the same time as to delve deeper. When interviewed, the pupil who wanted to be a barrister could not think of when or where she had originally conceived the idea, but she expressed a strong attachment to the idea at the time of the interview and I judged this to be an ambition that was true for her at that time. Another child in the original cohort of interviewees, but not included in the sample, wrote down 'terrorist' as one of his ambitions. I made a judgement (rightly or wrongly) from the tone of the rest of his questionnaire that the comment was a joke and therefore that his other 'evidence' might be unreliable. I can only hope I was right!

The tape recordings were of sufficiently good quality to hear what had been said, except very occasionally. I completed the transcriptions myself (an example can be found in Appendix 4) and kept as closely as possible to the exact words that were spoken, although of course facial expression and body language is lost on an audio tape and as I have mentioned already, I decided not to make notes on these aspects as I felt it might be distracting for the interviewees.

As far as external validity is concerned, the use of a two-site case study provided one form of triangulation for the research and the use of two schools from different areas did help provide information as to whether there were wildly differing responses. I did not find this to be so, but may well have felt that a comparison would need to be made if the findings had been very different.

Ensuring reliability in qualitative research is not easy. Case study methods, such as I have employed, can be considered helpful in understanding complex human situations (Simons, 1996), but reality itself is 'multi-layered' (Cohen et al., 2000) and the reality of these situations is something that is shifting and contingent with the picture captured being something of an unreliable snapshot, where the image has been refracted through an indifferent lens.

6.10 Ethics

In my own institution I had already discussed my interest in investigating motivational issues and the Head also expressed an interest, as he was planning to do a whole school survey into pupil and parent perceptions. I formally

requested permission to undertake the research and was directed to the Assistant Deputy Head who was responsible for developing Citizenship within the school and with whom I discussed the wording and layout of the questionnaires and the format of the interviews. She was particularly keen to be involved, as part of her programme for Year Eight related specifically to ambitions for the future and she asked if she could bring this research (the questionnaires) into her planning at a particular point as a support for her curriculum work. She was also interested because she dealt with some of the pupils in school who exhibited challenging behaviour.

The Head at Greenways has been a long term friend of mine since we studied together at sixth form college. He suggested that I sent him a copy of the questionnaires, which he found acceptable. He also expressed an interest in the issue and explained that as it was near the end of the term, he would administer them himself and use the opportunity to relieve one of his members of staff. I explained that, as with the research in my own institution, the response to the questions should take place during the course of a shared discussion, but that the pupils should be requested to only write down what they felt to be true for themselves. However, it did mean that the contexts for each discussion were rather different. The one in my own institution was part of ongoing work related to their course work and the questionnaires and discussion in the Midlands were presented by the Head as an exceptional event.

I have already outlined how I proceeded to undertake the research. Respondents from the Midlands school wrote their names on their questionnaires, otherwise it

would have made it more time-consuming and troublesome at the school to copy registration lists. The pupils in my own school gave their registration number, so that I could find out who they were for interview after I had selected the questionnaires. As I did know some of these children, this was an attempt to be impartial in choosing a sample, other than on the declared information of the variables ('Influences in my Life') given on the questionnaires. I have, however, changed both the names of the schools and the pupils whenever mentioned in this thesis.

I have sent back to both head teachers a very much condensed summary of the findings of this research in a short document that focuses on the interests of the pupils interviewed and where that links in with their experience of school (see Appendix 8). Although the pupils in both schools have now moved on to the next level, I have provided for them a brief overview of what I found, so that each has the chance to view the 'snapshot' that was taken at the time of the research (see Appendix 9). On a personal level, I would like to know if their views have changed, but this is not within the remit of this research.

The responses from my sample group were interesting and diverse. Some I found surprising and some perhaps more predictable. At least a few pupils seemed to reveal a creative and complex attitude towards how school was consumed well beyond any approach I had anticipated. However, as a practising teacher, I had found some aspects of what was revealed to be quite challenging. I have presented their views, along with my analysis in the next section.

Chapter Seven

Desires

I have subdivided my analysis into five sections. Chapters 7 -9 address in turn the key research questions. In this chapter I have taken the first area to be considered: What were the pupils' hopes and ambitions for their future?

7.1 What were the pupils' hopes and ambitions for their future?

Firstly I intend to analyse the responses given by my sample group to the question of desires. This section interrogates the conscious thoughts and ideas that are carried in some accessible form within the minds of the individuals. Although the thoughts may be accessible, the reality of these desires may be considered probable, possible or even extremely unlikely. Nonetheless, they are ideas that have been identified by the pupils in my sample as being worthy to mention, either in writing or in discussion.

Although I intend to employ various points of view to analyse the manner in which the young adolescents in my sample engaged with and made use of school, for example Erikson's theory on identity (1968), the two main theorists I am

using in my analysis are Bourdieu, in particular his theory of *habitus* and *field*, and De Certeau's description of *strategies* and *tactics*, as I have outlined them in Chapter One. Both deal with desire in a different way. Bourdieu explains that the conditions of existence which have generated the habitus, what he refers to as different 'modes of generation', will construct in the conscious or subconscious mind of an individual what is considered to be impossible, possible or probable. The dispositions engendered in this way 'cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous and vice versa' (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 78). Bourdieu claims that the habitus is the principal motivating structure of an agent (p. 76).

De Certeau, however, describes tactics as a much more opportunistic practice, one where an agent will make do with whatever s/he sees at hand 'and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment' (De Certeau, 1984, p.37). He describes these actions as 'calculated', rather than the result of ingrained dispositions and explains that this practice works in opposition to the strategies that seek to confine the agent. A tactic 'must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers' (ibid). Desire, therefore may not, according to de Certeau, have a connection with an agent's 'system of predispositions' (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 487) and if such exists may even work against it.

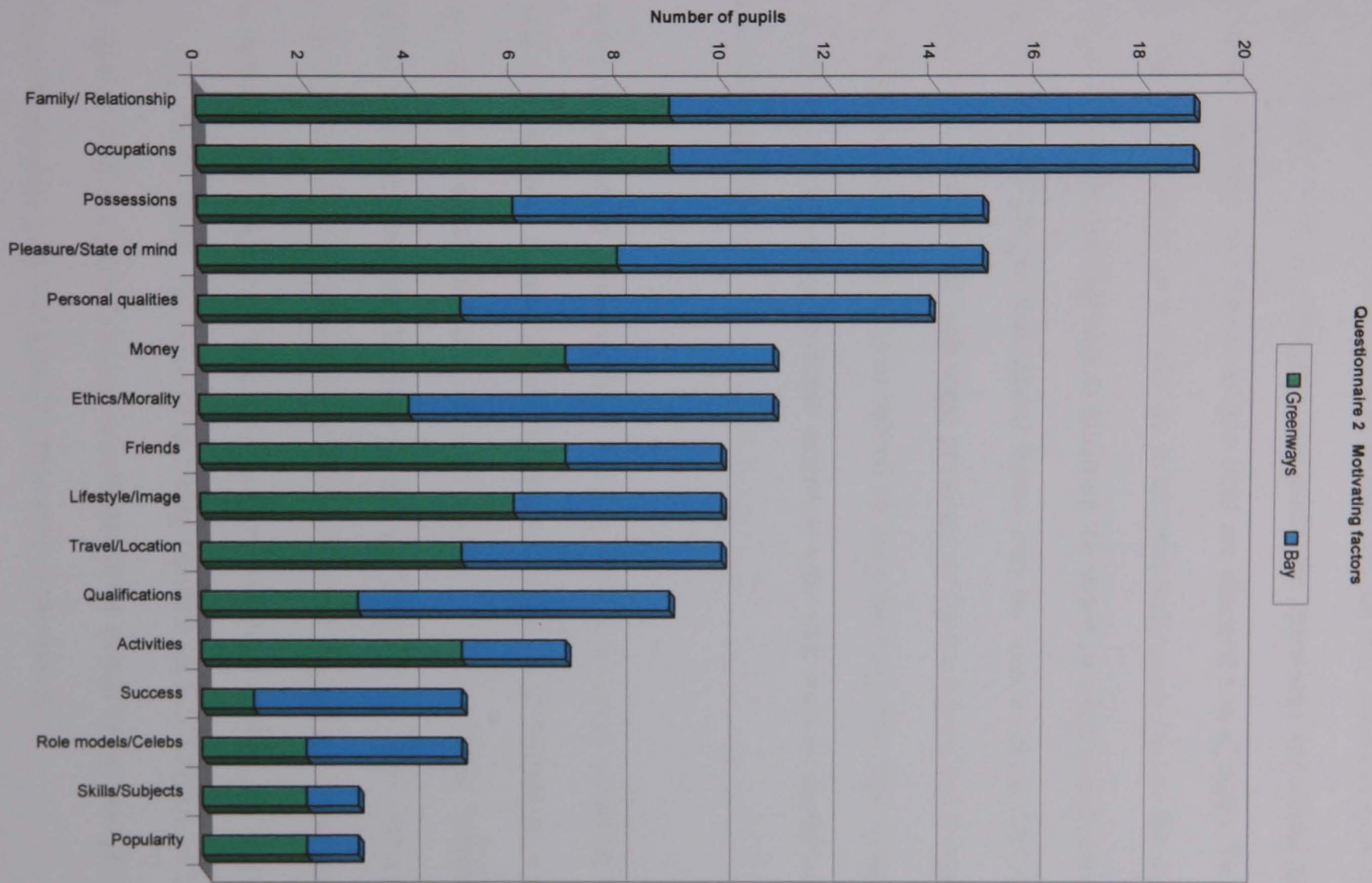
Although the pupils provided a broad and interesting range of ideas on their questionnaires, the areas I intend to focus on are those pertaining to:

- Families and Relationships - using the term as a blanket definition for close personal relationships that may or may not involve children;
- Occupations – as this was mentioned by as many pupils as mentioned family and is perceived as a major reason and objective of the education system;
- Friends - to indicate friendly peer relationships, but not ‘others’ that have been encountered, but are not known;
- Media - which in this part of the questionnaire relates mainly to ‘Lifestyle/image’ and ‘Role models / Celebrities’, although neither of these two categories refer only to the media and several pupils have indicated real-life role-models as their heroes and
- Subjects and Skills – as these were mentioned by surprisingly few pupils, despite being a highly publicised and political issue within the education system.

Previous research has also found issues related to family and occupation to feature ahead of other issues (alongside education) in terms of young peoples’ personal goals (Malmberg and Norrgard, 1999).

In analysing this research there is some overlap in some areas, for example between friends and popularity, although the concept of ‘having friends’ is different from ‘being popular’. However, the desire to be accepted or liked and to be part of a group or community is a powerful influence on behaviour (Hebdige, 1979) and the wish is articulated through both these concepts. Figure 1 on the next page shows the ‘Desires / Motivating Factors’ that were mentioned by pupils on their questionnaires.

Figure 1: Motivating Factors



7.2 Families

This is a major field of both desire and influence and the dual issues of how the composition of this field is changing alongside the questions regarding the development of identity in relation to this field are discussed in Chapter Two. Although family influences *on* a child are more obviously connected to the aim of my research, I am attempting also to illustrate the scope of what is considered important in a pupil's life, so that school issues may be seen within a context. Personal goals may not fit well with some priorities set by the school and if these alternative goals are not recognised or valued by the school system, then a pupil may need to change and adapt to some extent or s/he will feel dislocated and disaffected (Woods, 1980).

School was considered by most pupils as being a context in which social skills were learnt or developed. Several pupils mentioned the desire to *be* parents with particular qualities, which impacts on the nature of their whole identity construction. These tensions between home and school are also tensions between the public – private spheres and the way in which pupils negotiate these 'multiple worlds' will impact on their engagement and consumption of school (Phelan et al., 1991). Since the issue of desiring families and of being a wife, husband, partner and/or a parent was so important to the pupils in my sample, I have outlined briefly the pattern of the desire as they expressed it.

All but one pupil in my sample noted down somewhere in the 'What do I want to do, to have, to be?' section something referring to family relationships. Kim

stated twice in this section his desire to have a 'wife and two kids', he had also written this down on his first questionnaire as part of the 'vision' he had regarding the sort of person he wanted to be when he was 25. Nicky mentioned 'family' in each of the three parts of this section: 'marriage/ husband at 22' and 'twin babies at 23' and in the section asking what she wanted to be, she replied, a 'loving family'. 'Family' was mentioned by more pupils than either 'husband' or 'wife' and 'wife' was mentioned more by the boys in the sample, than 'husband' was mentioned by the girls. 'Partner' and 'girlfriend' were also mentioned, but only once each. Of the seven pupils that indicated a specific number of children, Sam's desire to have a family of six was the most ambitious in this area and there were three girls altogether that mentioned having a child or children without mentioning a family context or with reference to a partner. The only pupil to mention 'falling in love' was Ben.

Along with occupations, the notion of family life appeared to be at the forefront of personal ambitions within this sample. The only pupil not to mention a desire for a family, children or a partner at all was Jim, despite the fact that his father figured significantly as an influence *on* his ideas, an aspect that I will discuss in the next chapter.

The pattern that appears to be visible here indicates some diversity in the desired composition of family life. Ashley et al. (1969) and Dallos (1997) both wrote about the trend away from the nuclear model and the much quoted family 'norm' of the average married couple producing 2.4 children. There is evidence from the pupils in my study of more recent trends and terminology, as in the use of the

word 'partner', however Mia wrote this alongside the comment 'big wedding' and later also explained that she wants to have a husband and children. Liam stated that at twenty-five he would like a girlfriend, although the desire to 'have a wife and 2 kids', girl or boy, is also noted down on his list of ambitions for the future. Despite Dallos's claim that the nuclear family is no longer the most common arrangement (Dallos, 1997, p.180), which may be true in actual practice, amongst the young teenagers in my sample the desire for a nuclear-type structure to family life (a married partner together with children) appeared to be quite strong, with the boys being more specific about a married relationship than girls.

Only two pupils mentioned the desire to take up a parental role in terms of what they wanted to be, rather than in terms of what they wanted to have or to do. Ben wanted to be a 'loving father' and Tanya wanted to be a 'good parent'. Both these statements seem to indicate a strong adherence to the types of ideologies that permeate various discourses connected with family life. Each of these labels could be described as the sort of social scripts explained by Wetherell (1997, p.246) that provide people with 'vocabularies of motives' for making sense of their own lives through providing them with a predetermined role to 'inhabit'. Alternatively, Woodward (1997, p. 42) refers to Althusser's theory of interpellation which applies a more psycho-social approach to the process played by ideological constructs, although she points out that interpellation only takes place if a subject responds to the 'call' on an empathetic level by investing in that position. This suggests not so much a role being played, as a life being lived and Woodward points out that the response is made at a subconscious level. It is

possible that both Ben and Tanya's wishes derived from the predispositions ingrained in their individual habitus, or possibly from a psychological explanation, but for them, it is not yet a position invested in or negotiated in terms of real-life situations.

Although this area might seem to have little relevance to school and school was not mentioned specifically as a place to meet a future partner by the pupils in this study, the issue was of major importance in terms of what the young teenagers wanted out of their future lives. However, the more general aspect of learning social skills, which is implicit in the concept of managing personal relationships, was perceived as being a very relevant issue in how school can help pupils to achieve their ambitions and the consumption practices of the pupils in this sample appeared to have a very strong bias towards social concerns when the pupils were interviewed.

7.3 Occupations

The issue of occupation is one that the pupils in my research had obviously not experienced first-hand. Whereas familial relationships and friendships were already part of their lived experiences, occupations were a hypothetical consideration. According to Piaget, a young adolescent is at the stage of formal or 'hypothetico-deductive' thought (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969) and capable of forming theories and making rational choices as well as 'choosing a career that will permit him to satisfy his need for social reform and for new ideas' (1969, p. 151).

The most obvious models for these pupils are parental occupations, but many other models are available to observe through interaction with other fields. In this study only one pupil named a parental occupation as his own ambition, although four other boys named a job that was similar to one or other parent's. However, every pupil mentioned some occupation that they wanted to do when they were older, although Carl expressed it as an activity under the title of what he wanted to *do* and then stated that he wanted to *be* his drum teacher. He had also explained, in his thumbnail profile of life when he was twenty-five, that he wanted to be both a chef and a drummer. Carl illustrated a type of response that occurred with several pupils who had very clear pictures in their minds of particular people that they saw as role models. In Carl's case, he expressed his attachment to the two images he had identified with in terms of an almost metamorphic desire: he wanted to *be* Jamie Oliver and /or his drum teacher.

The sources of Carl's two inspirations resided in different fields. His drum teacher was a real-life role model at school whom he knew and could interact with, whereas Jamie Oliver on the other hand is a media celebrity. I will deal with the influence of media representations below, but what perhaps may be seen here in both cases, and which I have discussed in Chapter Five, is experimentation with 'possible selves' (Kerpelman and Pittman, 2001; Malmberg and Norrgard, 1999; Oyserman et al., 2002). During the phase in identity exploration that Erikson (1968) described as psychosocial moratorium, adolescents try out alternative identities. It is not the intention of my research to investigate how Carl may seek to do this, but his wording expressed quite a strong desire to adopt, in some respect, the persona of the two role models he

named. This also illustrates an aspect of identity in modern life which is discussed by Woodward (1997): the multifaceted nature of inhabiting a whole variety of sometimes very diverse subject positions in order to fulfil various cultural and personal requirements. In his questionnaire, Carl wrote that he would like to be 'a chef and a drummer', he was not explicit about the type of mix he envisaged, but he did not appear to see any conflict at all in combining the two ambitions. It appears that his desire was linked strongly to the occupations in which his role models were employed, although the issue of interpellation, which I have mentioned above, may well have been acting on him at a subconscious level, inasmuch as he may have identified some other aspects about Jamie Oliver, or his drum teacher, that he found desirable, other than their ability to perform their occupations.

Half the pupils in the sample expressed at some point in this part of the questionnaire a desire for something more than just an occupation or possessions. One pupil who demonstrated a strong identification, not just with the profession she named, but also with the lifestyle, was India, who consistently described a determination to become a barrister in New York. In all three sections of the second questionnaire about what she wanted to do, what she wanted to have and what she wanted to be, she wrote that she would like to become a barrister, but she elaborated the section concerning what she wanted to have by explaining that her ambition was to 'live in a penthouse in New York with a flat fish tank in the wall etc.'. This was written next to a statement that she wanted to live on her own and own or drive a Mini Cooper S and a BMW X5. In terms of cultural consumption, India seems to display what has been termed meta-identification

(Hundeide, 2004). Unlike Carl, who at least superficially appeared to be connecting primarily with the skills or occupations of the role models he saw as performing these the best, India seemed to have identified with the whole lifestyle, or as Hundeide (2004, p. 90) terms it, the 'lifestyle package'. In this situation an individual buys into a complete symbolic package whose cultural meaning is inscribed not in the individual items but in the whole image. Although Hundeide suggests that lifestyle packages are bought into on the basis of a person's background, no one in India's family, that she could identify, provided the inspiration for this ambition. However she was equally unable to identify where else she may have retrieved such a clear image of what she desired and whether this was a case of bricolage and the piecing together of images and ideas from various sources.

The only pupil to identify as a preferred occupation the specific work in which his father was employed was Jim. He only answered the question about what he wanted to do and identified a 'good job', 'skills' and 'money' as his ambitions on the questionnaire, but in interview he said that he wanted to do woodwork when he was older and that his father did woodwork. He did not mention in writing anyone he particularly wanted to be on his questionnaire, but when I asked him about whether he would like to be Bart Simpson (*The Simpsons* had been mentioned earlier in the interview), he replied 'yes'. Despite offering little information on either the questionnaires or in interview, Jim had a quiet sense of his own values and opinions and explained that he would come to school, even if it were not compulsory and despite the fact that he could learn woodwork at home with his father because 'You learn more subjects'. Jim probably

demonstrated the least perceptible desire to experiment with identities and was the least ambitious, nonetheless he believed that his opinions were important and he expressed a desire to engage with the school curriculum beyond his lessons in Craft Technology.

7.4 Qualifications

This area is also one of those most obviously connected with school and qualifications are certainly the most vaunted prize of the education system. Bourdieu writes about qualifications as 'institutionalized capital' (Bourdieu, 1997) that can be converted to economic capital. They are widely recognised as being passports to futures, although their value can fluctuate, as Bourdieu points out (1997), depending on the state of the market. Nonetheless, they are a potentially strong motivating factor and yet less than half the pupils in my sample of twenty indicated that they were a particular desire in terms of their futures. Those who mentioned qualifications spanned the whole range of influence exposure, although it was a subject mentioned by twice as many pupils from the rural school as from the urban one. University, degrees and GCSEs were noted down, with an obvious relevance to school and the potential for motivation in consuming school. However, a driving licence was also mentioned by one pupil as a desirable qualification.

Surprisingly little was mentioned in this area that could be directly related specifically to school or to school-type subjects, such as are categorized within the National Curriculum. In terms of this research which seeks to explore young

people's motivations and desires and how these affect the way they consume school, it seems that at this stage amongst these pupils, striving for competence in a school-defined subject was simply not consciously on their list of ambitions. There seemed to be a lack of connection made between success in specific subjects and access to occupations. MacBeath and Weir (1991, p. 12) found in their digest of UK surveys and polls that while pupils did see the purpose of the school curriculum as a preparation for work, they did not consider it to be particularly effective in this respect.

7.5 Subjects and Skills

Although preparing pupils for occupations is an important aspect of education and part of an important political debate, subjects, skills and qualifications are areas that relate the most closely to school, as the National Curriculum dictates very precisely how every subject area should be divided and subdivided. The adolescent pupil's experience of learning has therefore been strongly framed by the concept of specific subjects which have been delivered to her/him in discrete helpings, with little overlap between subjects, for many years.

As a motivating factor, this area was mentioned surprisingly little. Apart from Jim who mentioned 'skills' under what he wanted to do, Carl wrote that he wanted to drum and Sam explained that he wanted to go into the craft trade and 'do something with his hands'. These three pupils were each from a different group in terms of the amount of exposure they had declared to home and outside influences on their initial questionnaires. No girls stated specific school-related

subjects or skills, although activities were mentioned in this section by seven pupils, both boys and girls and pupils declaring high, medium and low exposure to home and outside influences. These activities included such things as biking, swimming with dolphins and riding in hot-air balloons. However, activities that were labelled as 'hobbies', pursuits that mainly took place outside of school, were mentioned by several pupils. Kim said in interview: 'I'd like to keep most of my hobbies, like I do canoeing regularly and cycling and stuff. I'd like to buy a microlite and learn to fly to a foreign country like Spain or something as an ambition'.

Most of what was expressed by the pupils in terms of these desires was related to the family field or the peer/friendship field. Kim's mother and father were both reported by Kim on his initial questionnaire as enjoying canoeing and cycling. Activities such as playing football and rugby, mentioned by one of the girls as well as several boys, along with clubs such as Tai Kwan Do, mentioned by one of the girls, appeared mainly to be situated amongst peers and friends, although Abby reported that 'My dad used to take me to the park to play football and that's why I'm so interested in it now'.

7.6 Possessions, Pleasure and Personal Qualities

Although the two areas of Families/ Relationships and Occupations were issues on the minds of nearly all the pupils in my sample, desires relating to Possessions, Pleasure and Personal Qualities were mentioned by three quarters of the sample. Fifteen of the twenty pupils mentioned aspects relating to pleasure or

state of mind, the same number again listed possessions they desired and fourteen referred to personal qualities. Love and happiness were mentioned by quite a few pupils, along with such things as having a 'good life' and being loyal, friendly and hard-working. Some pupils had quite a well-developed idea of the identity they wanted. Kim wrote that he wanted to be someone 'who brings a smile to people's faces by solving their problems and maybe add[ing] a joke to make them laugh'.

Possessions listed were largely confined to mention of houses and cars, although animals, clothes and boats were also listed. Occasionally pupils mentioned specific cars as obvious status symbols, for example 'a limo – sports car' and a 'BMW X5'. I have categorized these as lifestyle choices where they have appeared as part of an image.

Several other issues were noted down by about half the pupils in the sample. Both money and ethics were listed by eleven pupils in response to questions about what they wanted in their future lives. The desire to travel or live in a particular foreign location was mentioned by exactly half the pupils, as was the issue of friends and lifestyles, which I have discussed in greater depth below.

I have discussed the issue of desiring friends in greater depth for the reason that while it was only listed by half the cohort on the questionnaires, it appeared as an area of great importance in the interviews and the principal reason was that pupils would continue to come to school and consume their education in school, even if their attendance were not mandatory.

I have also considered in greater depth the area of lifestyles and role models because the impact of media influences on children and their consumption of school as a consequence is of major importance to this thesis and it appeared that certain of the lifestyles and role models mentioned as desirable were adopted and/or adapted from media representations.

7.7 Lifestyle/ Image and Role Models

Desires related to particular lifestyles seemed to have been largely influenced by the media amongst the sample group in my research study, although a few real-life role models were mentioned. The field of media representation is a clearer one to define as a field of influence than the friendship/peers field, although its consumption is frequently situated inside the home and thus its influence is constantly in tension or at least in competition with the field of the family which is also the source of the individual's primary socialization. I will deal mainly with issues of media influence and how they have been perceived by the pupils in my sample in the next chapter, however, the issues of desire and influence are very closely linked, and the degree of what is perceived to be the desirability of an object, lifestyle or state of mind is what constitutes its influence. I will discuss the issue of celebrity and the desire to be like someone famous in this section, as the issue was mainly considered by pupils under the question about desire.

Gary's desire for fame exhibited elements of possible media influence. He wanted to 'Wear a [football team] shirt in front of 32,000 people shouting my name with a football at my feet'. The picture he painted was resonant of the type

of image seen on television, in newspapers or in magazines. It was a generic image as he did not mention any name, although he did name the club. However the image he aspired to was the type of hero photo produced through media representations every week of the football season and supports Turner's proposition that it is the media's production of sports stars in particular that have taken on the role of 'hero' in society today (Turner, 2004). The image Gary described was one of a genre of images depicting sporting heroes that employs a 'mythical system' (Barthes, 1972) to connote meanings beyond the denotation of the 'facts'. The object of Gary's desire was signified through the symbolic meaning of the text he described (Saussure, 1960). Gary's desire was for fame, success and popularity and it appeared that this representation had encoded in it certain meanings that satisfied specific ambitions he carried in his mind. Gary appeared to be interpellated absolutely into the subject-position illustrated in his dream-image, as it was his own face he 'saw' in the picture. He appeared to be visualizing here a future possible self, which could be 'critical for motivating action' (Oyserman et al., 2002, 314).

A couple of media celebrities were mentioned: Jamie Oliver and Michael Jackson. At one point Carl wrote that he wanted to *be* Jamie Oliver. The media influence on both Carl and Gary seems to be similar in certain respects, through the provision of iconic images and celebrity ideals that could be aspired to in terms of possible selves. Turner makes the point that audiences make use of celebrity representations in their identity work and that the media plays an 'ever more active role in the production of identity' (Turner, 2004, 102). In the case of

both these boys, media representations certainly seemed to be a source of inspiration.

However, the influence of celebrity on India was somewhat different. India's desire was to meet Michael Jackson. Although she had initially become familiar with him as a media celebrity, she had also been inspired to read his autobiography. She explained that she admired him, although she didn't like his singing and did not want to be like him herself. The desire inspired in India appeared to be quite different from that expressed by Carl or Gary. She had consumed the representations of Michael Jackson, including one of his own authorship, because she admired his independent views. However, she did then use the information, along with the opinions she developed or adopted, to create a stand for herself. In school she employed this during or at the end of Science to debate with her teacher and she considered the practice this gave her in debating an argument, a very useful tool in the pursuit of achieving the occupation she desired: that of becoming a barrister in New York. Despite her own claim of not wanting to be like Jackson, India seemed to have used him as a 'point of identification' (Hesmondhalgh, 2005), but in a remarkably selective way, that had sifted out those aspects she did not find useful or attractive. Her consumption of celebrity reflected what Turner has described as a 'highly contingent social practice' (Turner, 2004, 103) that is very different from a simplistic emulation of a role model (p.105).

7.8 Friends

The interaction of individuals with the world around them is infinitely complex, but Bourdieu's theory of 'fields' of influence reacting with the habitus as part of the process (if not all of the process) of secondary socialization is a model that is helpful in understanding desires, motivations and the construction of identity, although it is not so straightforward to conceptualize the area of 'friends' as a coherent group as it is to relate to the construction of 'family' as a field of power.

The issue of wanting friends was mentioned in the second questionnaire by half the sample group and by more than twice as many pupils from the urban school as from the rural school. The issue seemed to take on a greater significance later during the interviews in terms of their present needs and was integral to their consumption of school on a day-to-day basis. Questa stated that friends and the social aspects of school were very important for her because 'friends play a great deal in life'. It also seemed to exist as part of a continuum into their future lives and was referred to by most pupils as being the ultimate reason why they would continue to attend school, even if it ceased to be a legal requirement. India commented that given the choice of whether or not to attend school, she would come to school 'because I've got more friends here'. However, in terms of their focus on the future, the idea of friendships was not so high on the agenda of the pupils from Bay Middle at the point they answered the questionnaire, although a couple more did mention the desire to 'have lots of friends' and being 'always with friends' in their sketch on the first questionnaire about the person they wanted to be at twenty-five.

At thirteen, young adolescents are looking to achieve ever greater independence and autonomy from parents, and friends can provide that sense of belonging and support (Adler and Adler, 1998). Their support is also something that helps the individual explore new patterns of thinking and develop ideas about the future (Kracke, 2002). However, I will explore the issue concerning to what extent friends were considered to be influential in the shaping of ideas and ambitions of the pupils in my sample in the next section.

In comparison with Bay Middle, most of the pupils at Greenways School included friendships in their list of desires for the future. This may have some connection with the different models of urban and rural living, where urban communities are more closely bound within a location, whereas rural communities are spread over a much wider area. Many of the pupils at Bay Middle were driven to school either by parents or by buses that collected them from various surrounding villages. Considering communities of friends outside of a school environment may be a more present concern to urban children.

The report on *Young Peoples Leisure and Lifestyles* concluded that in society today peer relationships are becoming increasingly important (Hendry et al., 1993, p.115). They found that for 80% of both young adolescent boys and girls, peer group acceptance was important, but that peer group approval had a greater influence on boys than girls, who spent more time with a same-sex friend.

This trend seemed to be reflected in the boys at Greenways. Of those pupils that named friendships in their list of desires for the future, it was three boys that

seemed to have the clearest vision of these relationships. In the questionnaire, Ben simply stated that he wanted to have 'lots of friends', but when asked specifically about the 'biggest influence' on him regarding what he wanted in the future, he replied: 'I want to be popular; I want people to like me'. His response to why this had had such an influence on him was to explain that it was the result of his experience in school where he felt that not many people liked him. When asked further about how this issue compared with the more educational objectives of knowledge, jobs or skills, he answered: 'I'd rather have friends and no job and no skills, I'd rather have friends'. In his vision for the future, Gary wanted to 'have good friends' and no enemies and added in the section about who he would not like to be, that he would 'not like to be someone with no friends'.

The question of how pupils consume school is both a cultural and contextualized process that involves the micro – context of individual attitudes and the way in which individuals make meaning for themselves and their futures out of the fabric and threads that they have access to in their everyday lives. Within educational discourses, some of the desires mentioned by pupils in this section may seem to have little relevance, however these individual desires sometimes provide surprising connections to motivations. By surveying the whole scope of ambitions presented very briefly by the pupils in this sample, it is possible to identify more clearly the position taken by school in their eyes and thereby what use they make of school to further their own ends. Perhaps the most noticeable lack of conformity to educational and scholastic ideologies evident amongst this sample of pupils is their lack of mindfulness with regards to the political and

educational belief that qualifications are a passport to a successful and fulfilling future. Whatever is the reason for this, only nine of the twenty pupils mentioned academic qualifications in their list of desires.

I will discuss the whole issue of how these desires affect the consumption of school in Chapter Nine, however, it is necessary first to examine in what ways, by whom and to what extent the pupils felt they were influenced to make choices about their future identities.

Chapter Eight

Influences

The question of ‘Who/what influences me?’ sought to interrogate the awareness of relationships and desires and how each individual’s sense of identity interacted with the cultural and ideological situatedness of those elements that reside outside what is perceived as her/his own thoughts and ideas.

8.1 Competing fields of influence

As I have outlined in chapter two, Bourdieu’s theory suggests that influences on an agent work within the structure of different social fields and that each field functions as a separate social universe ‘endowed with particular institutions and obeying specific laws’ (Bourdieu, 1993, 163). When the habitus, which has been produced as a result of the field of home and family (one’s ‘background’) and which Bourdieu theorises as fundamentally influential, encounters another field of power, the habitus will react to this secondary field to a greater or lesser extent depending on the predispositions engendered originally in its structure.

De Certeau, it seems does not construct the nature of influence in such an ordered manner, but suggests that motivation resides in seeking or seizing opportunities to resist or escape the structures and designs of enforced and constraining strategies. The motivation for his agents is to be 'trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality' (De Certeau, 1984, 34).

Within this research I have taken Bourdieu's concept of fields to work with, in terms of areas of influence. Its structure, although problematic in places, offers a framework around which to examine my data. I have considered principally three fields of influence: firstly the original field of the family, secondly the field of friends and peers and thirdly the field of media representation. I have not included a consideration of the influence of the field of education on the consumption of school as I was interested in the attitudes that pupils brought *into* school and how these dispositions engendered *outside* the school might impact on how pupils made use of their school experience and influenced their consumption of it.

A variety of different issues and people were cited by the pupils as being influential on their ideas, opinions and ambitions. The people and the areas mentioned in the survey fell into the following groups:

- Family (immediate and extended)
- Friends/Enemies
- Others
- Media (celebrities and any other representations)
- Heroes (other than media)
- School/Teachers
- Experiences
- Possessions
- Activities

8.2 Family

The influence of family in the context of what is generally termed an individual's 'background' is what principally creates the structure of the initial habitus, which Bourdieu suggests is the mediating structure for all consequent experiences in that individual's life. I have discussed this more fully in Chapter Two. However, Bourdieu argues that the dispositions of the habitus function mainly at a subconscious level to generate patterns of 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1984, 175) and that lifestyles are 'the systematic products of habitus' (1984, 172).

Bourdieu's 'conditions of existence' are firmly located in social class structures, which he proposed produce these patterns of taste. However, the intention of this research is to focus more on the micro-contexts of individual lives, rather than on the macro-contexts of social patterning. This is not to deny that socio-cultural situations do indeed produce some of the possibilities perceived in people's lives. Nonetheless, standard national classificatory systems (see Chapter One) are problematic within the confines of this research as their labels are based on just one 'head of house', usually the father, whereas my investigation considers both parents, and also because classificatory systems are solely reliant on occupations and do not take any other factors into consideration. Another area I feel is problematic is that schemes such as the ONS scheme do not take into account people's own opinions of their class identity. According to a couple of recent polls, this may be at considerable variance with the class allotted them according to official schemes (Mount, 2004, 102; BBC, 2006). A recent survey reported but not referenced by the BBC (5th May 2006) stated that 36% of builders believed

they were middle class and 29% of bank managers believed they were working class. In this research personal opinions and perceptions are considered to be a very important element in motivation. The premise that social class is the most reliable predictor of occupational attainment has also been challenged (Roberts, 2001, 219), especially when accounting for the constant flux of social mobility (p. 212). Roberts refers to Saunders's belief that the second best predictor of adult destinations 'is a childhood measure of motivation' (p.219). However, I also do not wish to deny that the gap between the extremes of privileged – underprivileged is wide and may be widening (Mount, 2004).

In the context of this study I would like to point out that the location of the catchment area for both schools fell within areas that had 80% and over employment rates according to HMSO Social Trends in 2001. The only issues relating to gender will be issues raised by the research itself. Within my sample I am more concerned to locate, if possible, evidence of influence from the particular culture that exists at home within each individual's family, whatever that may be, and to interrogate to what extent that affects the attitudes brought to school by the young teenagers and whether it influences their consumption of school and the desires and ambitions they have for their future.

On the questionnaire the pupils were asked about the 'sort of things' their parents enjoyed doing, whether they worked and whether they (the pupils) shared interests with anyone in their family, or whether their interests were shared with friends. (This information is given in Appendix 5). During the interviews they were also asked about any occupation either parent might have and whether this

influenced their own ambitions. There was a broad variety of responses from the pupils in the sample that ranged across various practices, however all indicated influence of some description, whether positive or negative, although subconscious dispositions were more difficult to identify.

Some research into this field has proposed that the quality of the parent – child relationship will impact on the response to ambitions or whether the child is ambitious at all (Aunola et al., 2000; Malmberg and Norgard, 1999; Douvan and Adelson, 1971). The fact that parents provide potential role models for occupations can work both positively and negatively; several pupils in my sample saw examples of employment in their parents' lives that at the time of the interview they rejected. Most appeared to want a broader range of possibilities and did not appear to be particularly restricted by the type of work parents were involved in. Both parental interests as well as parental occupations seemed to contribute to a wider menu of opportunities available to influence the consumption of the young teenagers in this research.

Deepa displayed a conscious opposition and a profound resistance to the idea of being employed in the same work as either parent: 'So boring!' She also had two older sisters, one of whom worked in administration for the council. The only parental interest that Deepa reported was that her father enjoyed collecting cars, although this was not something that she expressed an interest in. However, she enjoyed doing Tai Kwan Do with her brother and although her parents did not take part in anything similar, they thought it was interesting and a good idea for her to do it. At this point in her life, the influence of her family's occupations

seems to have created in her a largely oppositional attitude towards similar employment, as Wallace found from her interviewees (Wallace, 1989), and seemed to display a desire for a greater breadth of experience than she perhaps witnessed at home. When asked if her parents were supportive of her ideas, Deepa indicated that they had a fairly ambivalent attitude, but in fact she did not really discuss this area with them. She explained that her ideas came from chatting with her 'mates'. Like Deepa, Nicky explained that she did not want to do the same work as either of her parents, because she did not consider their jobs 'adventurous'; however, her father's interest in animals did seem to have been a powerful support and influence and her ambition was to be a vet or animal carer.

Initially Ed had stated that he did not share any interests with either parent on his questionnaire and declared that he had an interest in being a pilot or a police officer, possibly going into the RAF. In interview he claimed at first that his parents had nothing to do with his career ambitions, only to realise a moment later: 'Oh, my dad does work at the airport, actually' and that he often went there when visiting his father. It seemed that Ed had simply not recognised the connection, although he did not give any indication of whether his father had any real interest in aircraft, or what particular job he had, and had merely stated that both parents liked 'going out' on his questionnaire. It seems more likely here that Ed's father had facilitated the opportunity to observe a field of activity which Ed found attractive and that because his father worked in this area of employment that this opened up possibilities in Ed's mind.

The issue of role models was illustrated in Oliver's account of parental influence. In his family the traditional role of mother and father had been reversed, something far from uncommon today as families change to meet different pressures and demands (Muncie and Sapsford, 1997). Oliver's mother was a civil servant and his father stayed at home to look after his younger brother. He felt that his mother had influenced him, although he wasn't sure how at first, but then explained that because she was head of a department that she was responsible for various aspects of planning and the idea of 'telling people what to do and when to do it' appealed to him. If there was a conflict in gender roles here and their relation to the field of work, then Oliver appeared to have resolved the problem on the basis of his own values (Ashley et al., 1969). The influence here seemed to be connected to power and status and while he identified with his father's role and would be prepared to stay at home to look after his own family, he was at the point of the interview much more influenced by the idea of power and control attached to his mother's job and her field of work.

Gary also reported being influenced by his mother's work as a teacher, but explained that this would be in the event that his ambition to become a professional football player (which he did not consider particularly realistic) did not work out. Gary was also very influenced by his father's unhappiness at work: 'I don't want to be unhappy doing something that I don't like doing', but on the other hand did share a love of football with his father. In this case, Gary seemed to have been significantly affected in his ambitions by both parents (Crites, 1971), including the negative affect caused by his father's unhappiness.

Parents and family seemed certainly to be influential in the pupils mentioned above, but in a diverse number of ways. There seemed to be some evidence of both active selection and of oppositional standpoints, of preferences being coloured by attraction in certain areas and repulsion in others.

However, in one particular case there did seem to be evidence of a strong predisposition to certain values engendered within the family background and associated with particular types of employment. Paul appeared to have taken all his career ambitions from examples in his own family. His father was an assistant manager in a quarry and his brother was a heating engineer. His perception of life-paths seemed clearly to be presented to him in terms of Dallos's metaphor of a deck of cards (Dallos, 1997, 174), where the family culture and its traditions offer a range of options from which choices can be made. Paul stated that he'd 'like to earn money properly' and have a 'proper trade like plumbing or electrician'. He wanted a 'well-paid job...that's physical, not just sitting down writing or something'. His explanations used terms that resounded with a certain 'style' of discourse and ideology: he had adopted a very particular idea of what constituted a 'proper' occupation and mentioned again later the prospect of doing a 'decent trade' and that the sort of person he did *not* want to be was a 'hobo'.

Paul demonstrated a position regarding employment that was situated within a certain ideology and which seemed to have been absorbed into his habitus. He could be described as appearing to have been influenced to adopt a subject position regarding a particular view of what was a proper and decent job through the rhetoric of family discourse and opinion. There is also a question here

regarding parenting styles (Aunola et al., 2000; Malmberg and Norrgard, 1999) and whether authoritarian parenting was influential in controlling Paul's self-perception and ability to set goals for upward mobility. Related to the issue of authoritarian parenting, is also the question of whether Paul could be described as a foreclosure identity type in line with Marcia's adaption of Erikson's theory (outlined in Kroger, 1989). However, Paul did not disclose any detail about his relationship with his father, other than appearing to both admire and like him.

Of particular relevance to this thesis is the group of five pupils, including Paul, who expressed the desire to find employment in either the same or a similar occupation to a parent or close family member. The pupils who specifically mentioned this ambition were all boys and the group constituted half of the total number of boys in the sample. The rest of these pupils did not make an obvious identification with parental occupational role models. Several pupils saw these models as a possible option, but their practice appeared to be less regular and they seemed to be influenced more by what they perceived as attractive, to add to and shape their ambitions.

However, for 50% of the boys in this sample, the influence of family background seems to have been remarkably persuasive. These five boys declared different amounts of exposure to family influences: Ben, whose father was a mechanic and who wanted to be a mechanic himself, expressed a strong association with family on his initial questionnaire, scoring seven out of a potential seven points; but Paul's score was only four out of seven. Gary, Jim and Kim scored five each. Three boys came from Greenways and two were from Bay Middle. Gary was the

only one of the four to express an ambition similar to his mother's occupation, and Kim, whose father was a paramedic explained in the interview that although his present ambition was to be a dentist, that he had various ideas about what he wanted to do with his future and was certainly not decided at that point in time.

Despite these individual variations and the fact that Kim's outlook appeared to be considerably more inquisitive and permeable, it would be unreasonable not to conclude that some element of cultural reproduction was at work here. What was perturbing and perplexing was the fact that such a high percentage of the boys in this sample appeared to be exclusively prone to the dynamics of this sort of social reproduction, whereas the girls in the sample apparently did not. Within the confines of this study, this may just be an anomaly, however, Roberts refers to this phenomenon in his analysis of social mobility. His findings suggest that among boys, social and cultural capital seem to 'carry rather more weight' (Roberts, 2001, 221) than amongst girls, for whom ability and qualifications seem to be a better determinant of labour-market achievement. However, he offers no suggestion as to why.

In research undertaken and reported by Kracke (2002) into the social factors likely to encourage active occupational exploration, it was found that supportive parental behaviours were a key influential element in promoting the sort of information-seeking activities associated with choosing a career: 'The intensity of exploration is regarded as *the* crucial prerequisite for a mature decision particularly in developmentally oriented theories of occupational choice' (Kracke, 2002, 31). However, Kracke also considered issues regarding the

influence of an individual's disposition, as well as the role of peer support on an individual's willingness and desire to explore career possibilities. She points out that although peers have been widely acknowledged as an important factor in social and emotional development, their influence has not really been considered as yet in relation to career development (p. 32). It is to the issue of peers and friends, their importance and influence in the lives of the twenty young adolescents in my sample, that I move now.

8.3 Friends

'Friends' were mentioned by nearly all the pupils in my sample in response to the question about influences, however very little was offered in terms of influence on ambitions. There was little doubt that their presence, and in particular their presence in school, was of fundamental importance, as evidenced by Ben's response, quoted above, that he would rather have friends than skills or a job. However, the importance of having friends did not seem to intersect to any real extent with issues of ambition in later life.

A couple of pupils cited friends as the original source for experimenting with new experiences: Ruth was persuaded to try canoeing and Ed was influenced into going to rugby club, but for the most part friends seemed to constitute a group outside the home background where pupils could experience a sense of belonging, as was suggested in research undertaken by Adler and Adler (1998). Mia expressed this as not wanting to feel 'outcasted' and explained that she did not feel she could do without them.

Adler and Adler's research (1998), referred to in Chapter Five, outlines the wide variety of different friendships related to different situations and locations. It is difficult to conceive of such dislocated groups constituting a unified power structure such as described by Bourdieu. The 'field' of peer groups and friendships is problematic because it does not sit comfortably with some of the definitions given by Bourdieu himself regarding the concept, in particular his reference to it being a 'separate social universe' (Bourdieu, 1993). The concept of friendship groups, such as constitute the social life of young adolescents today, seems better fitted to what Bourdieu states is *not* a field: '[A] field is neither a vague social background nor even a milieu artistique...' (1993).

However others (Grenfell and James, 1998; Woodward, 1997) have used the concept to explain the influence of smaller units of power and ideologies upon an individual. Woodward includes families, work and peer groups in her interpretation of fields (Woodward, 1997, 21), whereas, writing in the context of education as a field, Grenfell and James suggest that 'no field ever exists in isolation, and there is the sense of fields within fields' (Grenfell & James, 1998, 20). They add that 'Each subfield will have its own orthodoxy, its own way of doing things, rules, assumptions and beliefs...' (ibid). The concept of a subfield or quasi-field is perhaps the best way of considering the arena of friends and peers, although it must be pointed out that its nature is potentially to change and alter with the changing composition and dynamics of the group that constitutes the 'friends' and that therefore it is potentially a very permeable structure.

Deepa was the only pupil to mention that she discussed her interest in doing a B.Tech. qualification in acting or fashion design with her 'mates'. The importance of 'feedback' was an issue mentioned by several researchers (Kerpelman and Pittman, 1999; Adler and Adler, 1998; Hendry et al., 1993) and I have discussed their findings in Chapter Five, but whether the pupils in my sample were still not old enough to have immersed themselves in real planning for the future, or whether they simply did not consider asking their friends about this area of their lives, is a matter for conjecture. It has been suggested that adolescents will differentiate between friends and family depending on the area in which they are seeking advice (Brittain, 1971). Some research found that parental attachment was more influential in terms of issues that were of long term importance, such as identity and career issues (Meeus et al., 2002), but that peer opinion was preferred in matters of contemporary issues. Amongst my sample only Liam mentioned influences of this nature: he wrote that friends influenced him in certain aspects of identity construction: 'what I do, wear (what's cool) etc.' and added later in interview that you can trust friends and ask them personal things.

Adler and Adler (1998) suggested that peer cultures 'fit in between the cracks structured by ... mandated attendance in school and after-school activities' (Adler and Adler, 1998, 194) and that these meetings and encounters functioned as a mediating influence to 'colour' the perceptions of the pupils in relation to their school experiences. It seemed to me that for the young adolescents in my sample this described what was happening very well, but that the description was not comprehensive enough. It is my opinion that the function of friends and their

position in the way young people consume education does not just ‘fit in between the cracks’, but forms a whole web or matrix of meaning in a structure that is crazed with cracks.

8.4 Media

Although the media was mentioned by every pupil in my sample in the context of having some sort of influence on desires, whether it was in the questionnaire or later during the interview, the nature of those influences seemed to be very varied. What the media can provide for individuals is not simply specific role models, as was mentioned in the section above on desire, but it can also present a menu of examples of possible selves, of what or who we could become: ‘Representation as a cultural process establishes individual and collective identities and symbolic systems provide possible answers to the questions: who am I? What could I be? Who do I want to be?’ (Woodward, 1997, 14).

Deepa, who was mentioned above in terms of her resistance to familial occupational role models, displayed what appeared to be an opportunistic readiness to alternative ideas in her life: She explained that she wanted to have fun: she wanted to have a career in acting or fashion design and also added ‘comedian’ and ‘R&B street dancer’ to the list on her questionnaire. Her tastes seemed to display an attitude more closely in line with de Certeau’s ‘tactics’. One idea she reported having ‘snatched’ out of the airwaves was the ambition to sky-dive: ‘I saw [sky-diving] on TV once and I just thought, Wow, I really want to do that when I’m older’.

Abby claimed to be influenced by television, particularly programmes such as 'The Bill and things like that, 'cos it makes you wanna...and the News, makes you want to stop people that are terrorists...'. Under the section on her questionnaire that had asked about who or what she wanted to be when she was twenty-five, she had replied that she wanted to enforce the law: 'Be a copper or a fire-fighter. Maybe a paramedic'. It was her opinion that these desires had been influenced by the television representations she had viewed, as neither parent was involved in jobs or had interests that involved any kind of activity that could be described as similar to these.

The nature of appeal in these televisual texts seemed to have operated on Abby in the manner described as interpellation (Althusser, 1971), as it appeared that she recognised something that connected with her ingrained sympathies and personal code of ethics on a symbolic level. Her response also fitted with Barthes's (1972) theory regarding denotative and connotative readings of a text, as she seemed to be interpellated into a system of meanings, or a particular discourse, described by Hall as 'maps of meanings' (Hall, 1980), that resonate a certain ideology, rather than identifying with a specific role. Abby appeared to be unconcerned as to whether her employment would be in the police, hospital or fire service, as long as she was able to right wrongs and support law and order. In this respect, she had aligned herself with the 'dominant-hegemonic position' (Hall, 1980), and was operating, it seems exclusively in this case, inside that particular code. The media had offered her a representation of the type of person she wanted to be and for Abby this had a moral dimension that connected with her feeling of

something that was worth doing. This may well have had an impact on her consumption of school.

In comparison with Abby, Ben was influenced in a very different way by violence on the television. The issue he raised concerned his dislike for programmes that contained fighting and violence. However he reported viewing a mixture of representations of violence, including reports on the News and wrestling programmes. His response to the wrestling matches seemed to illustrate a 'lack of fit', as Hall explains it (Hall, 1980), with the dominant discourse encoded into the performance. The cynicism that adolescents have been reported to employ in terms of advertising (Buckingham, 1993a; Löhr and Meyer, 1999) does not seem to have been employed here with Ben in consuming the sport as entertainment. The extent to which he realised that televised wrestling is an exciting performance, rather than a real contest, is not clear. However, what is clear is that he resisted the idea that the show was valid entertainment and may even be described as adopting an oppositional stance to the dominant-hegemonic position (Hall 1980) that describes wrestling as 'fun': 'When I see wrestling I think, 'What's the point of doing that? It's stupid 'cos you can break people's legs and make them bleed'.

What also appeared to be in operation here was a well developed predisposition against violence, possibly engendered within the family, 'It makes me feel as if we're the same inside, we might not be the same on the outside, but we're the same on the inside. Why do we keep on fighting?', although there may be some degree of psychological aversion involved as well, as Ben mentioned bleeding

and blood several times. It was possibly this predisposition that set him in opposition to the message encoded in the media representation. Previous discourses on violence may also have involved issues of racial hatred or of punishment; ‘...if you do violence then the only place you’re going to go is prison’. His strongly expressed general dislike of violence may have had something to do with identifying with the victims, since he himself reported experiencing a degree of dislike in school. Schmidbauer suggests that because children themselves are comparatively powerless within society that they will identify with the victim on an empathetic level (Schmidbauer, 1999, 279). One or all of these influences may have contributed to Ben’s aversion to violence and he appeared to have decoded the media images (which had been influential, but probably not in the way intended) in the context of his previous opinions or experiences. The attitude that Ben brought to school against violence seemed to be quite high on the agenda for what he wanted out of life.

I could find little evidence among my sample of pupils whose desires had been ‘mobilized’ (Giroux, 2000, 99) or initiated by market culture exercises, although a few seemed to suggest there was evidence for the sort of active consumption proposed by Fiske (1989) in the way they ‘tried on’ identities supplied by the media. This practice also fits in with Erikson’s theory (1968) of psychosocial moratorium, a phase of identity exploration where adolescents actively seek out possibilities for themselves. Questa felt that television had influenced her mostly in her ambition to be famous within the music world and that magazines had also been influential because ‘it’s great to see what people do’. Her level of interest did not seem to suggest commitment to a particular subject-position, but was

more reminiscent of someone browsing potential opportunities and options. The responses from pupils certainly appeared to suggest agreement with Fiske's statement that viewers 'are rarely dominated or controlled by [the media] as so many critics would claim' (Fiske, 1987, 73). Questa's ambition to be successful in the music industry was something that could have impacted on the way she consumed school.

The influence of television and the internet on Sam seemed also to be at a secondary level of reinforcing already existent interests and ambitions. Gunter and McAleer (1990) made the point in their review of research findings that viewing is connected to understanding and that the attention given to programmes will depend on whether the messages have meaning for the viewer. Sam had mentioned only his craft teacher as being influential on his desires and opinions, but after explaining how his father had initiated in him an interest in fishing, he added in interview that he followed fishing on the television and used the internet to find out information about 'all things like poles'. However, he did add later in a short discussion about science lessons, that he enjoyed explosions. It was clear that he had watched a controlled explosion on television and that the experience had been memorable: 'they had like a couple of blocks of flats and they wanted to take them down so they just...stuck a load of TNT down the bottom and it just went boom'. When asked, Sam said that if he could not use fishing as his occupation, then he would consider working hard for the qualifications to become an explosions expert, because he would rather do something with his hands than sit behind a desk all day.

In some cases the concerns and agendas that pupils bring to school may be quite different from the principal concerns presented as part of the school curriculum. These concerns may be considerably more pressing and influential in the 'ambitions' of young adolescents than the mainstream ideologies of subject learning, qualifications and occupation.

In all, the pupils in this sample reported quite a wide selection of influences that they themselves recognised as the possible sources for ideas and motivations. The locus of the home appeared to work in both positive and negative ways to create strong desires against certain models that were perceived as unattractive for different reasons, but it also worked positively to create attitudes and ambitions closely aligned to the apparent values invested in by family. Within this sample the ideologies of the family seem to have been particularly potent amongst the boys, although the patterns are irregular with evidence of agency working to negotiate positioning and uptake of ideas within the structure of these dispositions.

There is also some evidence of deliberate searching for alternatives in opposition to familial models, ideas gleaned from encounters and experiences and within this category the media seems to have offered possibilities that have inspired ambitions, both in terms of occupations, pastimes, identity and lifestyles. Some of these encounters with representations of desired identities seem to have resonated with already developed viewpoints. Deepa's rejection of what she considers to be the tedium of her parents' occupations may well dispose her towards an enthusiastic response to watching a sky-diver on television and Ben's

stand on anti-violence may connect with feelings of being disliked and disempowered at school. However, Liam's desire to be an archaeologist in America appears to be influenced purely by books of dinosaurs and television programmes. The media, but television in particular, appears to have offered ideas which have been influential, but only on an irregular basis.

Amongst the pupils in this sample, friendships have been considered to be very important and both a present and future desire. Their principal influence has seemed to reside perhaps in their persuasion of the need of sociable qualities, although the status of friends as confidants to talk to and buddies to make life more bearable and learning more fun was mentioned by pupils. Friendships were viewed as a major factor in attending school.

Within this sample there was convincing evidence of a varied response to home background alongside evidence that media representations also presented images and models that were considered attractive by some pupils.

The three fields I have discussed are all influential in terms of motivating young adolescents, but the type of influence and the strength of that influence vary and the pupils themselves do not always find it easy to pinpoint what has influenced them, or to what extent the effect was cumulative, with input from maybe all three fields.

However, what is of most importance to this thesis is whether or how these desires and influences impact on the way in which these teenagers consume school and what position they consider school plays in delivering to them what

they want out of life. In the next chapter I consider the responses to my third research question, which addresses the key issue of how some young teenagers consume school and how the desires and influences engendered in fields *outside* school possibly affect their consumption *of* school.

Chapter Nine

How some pupils consume school

The central issue of this thesis concerns the practices of consumption with which young adolescents engage in the socio-cultural context of the school. The 'practices' with which this thesis is concerned are not necessarily the physical actions performed by the agents within the confines of a classroom or elsewhere within the campus of their school, so much as the conscious, and to some extent unconscious, attitudes these agents have towards the curriculum, the ethos and the social milieu provided for them in an establishment, that by law they are obliged to attend. The 'practices' with which this thesis is concerned may be constructed as mental practices. In some areas of the curriculum, as well as outside the arena of deliberate pedagogy, there is a requirement for real physical activity, however the 'practices' discussed with the pupils in my sample relate to a semiotic consumerism, a cognitive process of either 'buying into' or not 'buying into' the pedagogical wares for sale in the classroom. The issue at stake here has little to do with pupil attendance (although without it no school-based consumption could take place), but has everything to do with uptake. 'In the consumer society of late capitalism, everyone is a consumer. Consumption is the only way of obtaining the resources for life, whether these be material-functional... or semiotic-cultural...' (Fiske, 1989, 34).

Thirteen year olds are mandated within the legal framework that governs this country to attend school, unless they can be satisfactorily educated at home. Despite the fact that their presence is compulsory, pupils bring to the arena very different hopes, ambitions and intentions that have been developed and nurtured in other spheres of their lives outside school. In this thesis it has been useful to refer to Bourdieu's concept of 'fields' (Bourdieu, 1993) in order to demarcate the 'separate social universe' (p. 162) of each sphere of influence acting on, and interacting with, each individual's life. The specific desires of the pupils in my sample group have been discussed in Chapter Seven. Their engagement or non-engagement with the ideologies, the learning objectives and the practices with which they are expected to align themselves is encouraged through various rhetorical and hegemonic discourses, but can certainly not be enforced: you can bring a child to text, but you cannot make her think.

Issues concerning hegemonic practices within education were discussed in the Sixties and Seventies in relation to what was described as the hidden curriculum; 'those unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life' (Giroux, 1983, 47). This work was useful in deconstructing the myth that the education system, as it operated in schools at the point where it was delivered to the pupil, was socially and politically neutral. It revealed the existence of a dual curriculum: firstly, the declared and recognizable face of education for the edification of all; secondly, an informal agenda with unstated objectives to persuade all partakers of the system that the ideologies written into the ethos of the curriculum by those who

had created it were both correct and desirable. This reconfiguration of the analysis of the way in which schools functioned both socially to control meanings and also as a cultural site (p. 46) helped to make clearer the question about what schools *actually* do.

However, useful though this perspective was, it still only dealt with one half of the equation. This perspective still viewed the power dynamics extant between the education system and the pupil in unidirectional terms. While it theorised the nature of what was being delivered, and how it was being delivered to some extent, it did not attempt to deconstruct the nature of the reception of that delivery. To a certain degree, it seemed to position pupils much in the manner that the Frankfurt School mass culture critique positioned cultural consumers, that of gullible dupes, whose practices of consumption were defined by mass production. What the cultural consumption thesis brings to this analysis is the concept of active agents with consumer power. It enables the pupils' responses to their school experiences to be theorised in terms of an empowered position, where they have a choice about whether they 'buy into' what is presented for them, or whether they leave on the shelf, or on the plate, those aspects of the curriculum they simply do not want.

By theorising pupils as consumers of their schooling it was possible to investigate the variety of practices or attitudes discussed by individuals as they described the everyday dialectics of personal ambitions, family life, friends and school. It was not necessarily my intent to research subcultural oppositions or consciously orchestrated resistance, nor was it the agenda of this research to

focus on individually recalcitrant behaviours from particularly disaffected adolescents; it was rather to trace, as far as possible, how relevant these individuals felt their whole school experience was to what they really wanted to get out of life.

However, this was not unproblematic. I have outlined the limitations of the research methodology in Chapter Six, but even given the belief that opinions offered in interview are only one version of a story (Miller and Glassner, 1997), what was said in the interviews was also far from being a completely reliable source, even with the use of questionnaires completed two weeks before the interviews in order to triangulate the validity of the responses. Discussions in interview were inevitably affected by the context of those interviews and therefore the analysis depends on the contextual bias permeating each encounter with the groups of pupils. The dynamics of each group determined to a greater or lesser extent what the pupils may have been prepared to say and therefore their information needs to be treated as 'ambiguous illustrations' (Alvesson, 2002, 123). Most of the time it was not possible to surmise whether a deliberate 'spin' had been put on the replies I was receiving (or how the pupils were actively consuming the interview to suit their own agenda!). However, there were a couple of occurrences I did note in terms of replies being tailored to suit the potential reaction of the rest of the group.

One example involved Tanya from Bay Middle who seemed deliberately to avoid mentioning her ambition to be a fashion designer and to own her own company with its own brand name. In her questionnaire she had stated these

desires clearly and although I had not asked her specifically about her stated ambition to become someone famous like Ralph Lauren or Vivian Westwood, she was given opportunity to mention it, but did not. She may simply have changed her mind, it may have been that she felt uncomfortable discussing this ambition with me, or it may have been that she was unsure about the reaction she might receive from the rest of the group. Or it may have been something else altogether.

Some of the opinions given on the questionnaire were triangulated in the interview, which then proceeded to expand on the written information, but the example given above illustrates the fact that the responses I have used in this analysis are only one version of the reality of the pupils' attitudes at one point in time.

A key issue to this analysis is that I have tried to uncover the pupils' own construction of school, the meaning they made of it and their perceptions of its real relevance to their futures. I have taken as a given the surface acquiescence of most pupils in most areas of the curriculum and those who have been referred to as RHINOS (Really Here In Name Only) (Rudduck and Flutter 2004). Instead this research attempts to get beneath the surface of apparent pupil compliance to discover something about their hidden agendas and whether they think school can really help them to be the sort of person they really want to be.

9.1 To be or not to be in school?

Of fairly crucial importance in examining the nature of consumption practiced by the pupils in my sample was the issue of wanting or not wanting to be there. According to MacBeath and Weir's analysis (which I have referred to in Chapter Five) of a number of surveys and polls that were taken between 1985 and 1990, the consensus of opinion regarding enjoyment of school was that for most pupils school was an enjoyable experience and they liked being there. These findings are supported by Keys et al. (1995) and by Hendry et al. (1993).

The question I asked the pupils in my sample concerned not just enjoyment, but the worthwhile nature of school. I asked them in the course of the interview discussion whether they would still come to school if they were *not* legally obliged to do so. The response to these discussions was in favour of attendance in school. No pupil declared that s/he would prefer altogether to stay at home or go elsewhere. However, the responses did vary.

One element that was cited by several pupils as instrumental in their decision to attend school, even if there were no legal requirement to do so, was the desire to learn, although what was considered desirable to learn was different for different pupils. Jim, whose ambition was to do woodwork and whose father was also involved in doing woodwork, explained that he would still prefer to come to school even if he did not have to and in preference to working with his father, because 'you learn more subjects'; on his questionnaire he had itemised P.E., Science, English, Maths, Music and spelling in the section 'How does school

help me to do, to be, to have what I want?’ Although when asked what for him was the most worthwhile thing about the school day, he replied: ‘Friends’.

Questa’s response also indicated an enthusiasm to learn for the sake of learning: ‘I’d still come to school, because it’s a great opportunity to learn different subjects and to find out different things and to learn’. She confirmed that in her opinion it would still be worth attending because she considered learning to be enjoyable, even when it was not going to contribute directly towards the manner in which she might earn a living later on in her life. Tanya gave a similar response saying that she would stay in school because ‘I just want to learn more things’.

In his views about a future occupation, Paul was one of the pupils who exhibited the strongest influence of cultural capital engendered in his background. Both in the opinions and desires he articulated, as well as the vocabulary and terminology he used to express those opinions, he seemed to reveal already fairly well-established dispositions as to what was both valuable and possible as an ambition. He wanted a ‘decent’ trade, such as being an electrician or a plumber, something that was a ‘proper’ job. Nonetheless, Paul elected to come to school, but with a proviso that it would be just three times a week for the ‘main things’ which he identified as reading and writing properly. However he also added: ‘...how like in History be able to work things out, just like little bits of evidence, you could work your life out like that’. When I asked if he would come in to do things that were just enjoyable but unconnected with future employment he replied: ‘I’d probably do Art and Tech and stuff... ’cos it’s quite enjoyable

making things and learning how to cook would be quite a good skill to learn and it would be pretty fun'. When asked again a little later in the interview in the context of possibly learning at home from the television and internet, he replied that he might find that more enjoyable, but would be constantly wanting to go out to mess around with his friends.

These pupils included some aspect of 'enjoyment of learning for the sake of learning' as the most decisive element in their continued consensual participation in their schooling. Their reasons for preferring to attend school revealed little that had any direct connection with a specific desired future occupation, although the issue of friendships was important. These pupils appeared to consume school at least in part for enjoyment. They also seemed to display a certain degree of autonomy of taste (Woods, 1990), particularly Paul and Jim, who named subjects not in line with perceived influences.

When challenged by the proposition of attendance in school being optional, Oliver was the only pupil to give a reason in favour of attendance connected with career ambition. His declared ambition on his questionnaire was to own and build up a successful business, possibly an international business. The sort of person he wanted to be was someone like Bill Gates. Oliver explained: 'I would come into school because it'll help me...towards my big business'. However, when he was asked *how* it was going to help he appeared uncertain and hedged the question: 'Well just, well, 'cos if it doesn't work, then I'll always have like some good education in other subjects to get me another job'. It was his decided

opinion that his intention to continue schooling beyond the point where he was compelled to do so would be for reasons beyond 'just for the enjoyment'.

Oliver, it seemed, consumed school in one respect with a view towards how it might support him in a future career and this aspect would be for him the most important issue in ensuring his continued willing attendance. He found difficulty in explaining more specifically how his perception of the curriculum related to the skills and knowledge requirements of a business, although when asked about his concept of a 'good education' in relation to curriculum subjects he replied: 'I think Maths will help because...you need to know like how to do sums and stuff like that and English will be helpful so you can like prepare a résumé or something'. Although preparation for a future career was the reason Oliver cited for prospective continued participation, friends were another important aspect and it was his opinion that school offers opportunities to make friends, because it provides a location to meet people, both inside and outside the classroom: '...you're around people and you're sometimes asked to work in pairs'.

Some pupils indicated friends as the most important element in their motivation for attendance. Hannah replied that she would still come to school even if she were not required to do so 'because it would be better than not coming to school'. When I asked her why, her response was: 'Just...friends'. Ed said he would choose to attend because 'You get to meet friends...and talk about stuff', although he added as an afterthought that possibly school was a better place to learn than home. Liam's response indicated a similar ambivalence to Hannah, with the deciding factor seeming to be the opportunity to chat with friends: he

would come to school 'because [of] friends and the discussion... it gets you out of the house'.

The social aspect of school, or more specifically the importance of friendships, was obviously a major issue on the agenda of some pupils and made a noticeable contribution to their decision to attend. They seemed to indicate that even after considering and discussing their ambitions and desires for the future, that the value of school and of attending school was weighted against staying at home, because school was a useful location for social discourse and a site for valued personal interactions. These findings seem to fit in with the observations made in the YPLL survey (Hendry et al., 1993) that friendships 'preoccupy the consciousness of young people' as well as being the locus of socio-cultural negotiations where they can organize their experiences as part of the process of identity construction (p. 114 - 115).

School was also cited by one pupil as being an important site for learning how to *make* friends. Abby's point of view was that although friendships can be formed outside of school, 'there's the chance to make loads of friends in school', because of the numbers of pupils there. She indicated that in school you have to make the effort to learn, or teach yourself this skill, as the skills you develop in constructing and maintaining interpersonal relationships at home fell into a different category. Abby was expected or felt under an obligation to treat her family well: 'They're family though, got to be nice to them, haven't I?' Abby felt that in learning to develop good interpersonal relationships when she wanted and needed to, she was learning an important lesson that helped prepare her for life, a

skill that she could only effectively learn in school through experiences that could not be gained from home, or from the media. Sam, who loved to go fishing with his father and wanted a hands-on job in the craft trade when he was older, if he did not succeed in making it as a professional fisherman, also stated that he would continue to attend school, even if he did not have to, so that he did not get bored and because he would like to see his friends. The field of peers and friends was, in these instances, an important influence on the attitudes of these pupils towards consuming school.

9.2 Consuming friends in school

The pupils were asked on their questionnaires whether they spent their leisure time with family, friends or both. Ten pupils responded that outside school they were involved with both friends and family, nine that their own time was spent with friends and only Sam indicated that interests and activities were shared with mainly family.

The pupils in this study put a very high value on the friendships they had in school. For them the friendships they enjoyed in school made it worthwhile attending. Adler and Adler (1998) had found in their research that as children approached adolescence they extended their own friendship circles and tended to shed the peer attachments set up in connection with parents and family unless there was a genuine interpersonal bond. In terms of the pupils in my sample, the issue of friendships, both in and out of school, was one of major importance. For Jim friends were the most worthwhile thing of the whole school day.

Part of the whole meaning of school, as can be understood for pupils like Abby, whom I have quoted above, is that it prepares you for life because that is where you learn to make friends outside your own family: 'Friends can help you through life'. What Abby seemed to be undertaking was a negotiation across boundaries. The research undertaken by Phelan et al. (1991) into the attitudes and practices undertaken by high school pupils in negotiating the boundaries between family, peer and school cultures, found that pupils needed to develop a social dexterity in order to deal successfully with the 'multiple worlds' that constituted their lives. Abby appeared to be using (or consuming) school as a legitimate location to learn how to develop relationships of a specific type, which would be based on (but different from) interpersonal relationships that she had learnt at home. Her comment above indicates that developing this competency was of crucial value for her in creating a meaningful future life.

Kim also considered his friends in school to be important to his feeling of self-worth: they 'give you extra confidence'. He also felt that the camaraderie their friendship offered helped to support the learning process: 'you intake information and have a laugh while you're learning'. Friends for Kim were part of the meaning he made of school: it became more fun, but they also provided support for his consumption of information.

Adler and Adler (1998) refer to friends as providing an alternative society, alternative both to familial structures as well as to educational structures. However, the locus of these relationships will probably slide between the school and the home whilst dodging the hegemonic practices of both fields – fitting

between the cracks. Increasingly as their autonomy is allowed to grow, friendships will find alternative spaces to develop within the local area. In the discussion about how important a part of school friends were, Liam explained he would give nine out of ten for friends 'because if you walk into a classroom you can ask one of your friends, like something you wouldn't ask your teacher, something personal or something like that, you trust your friends'.

For some pupils, such as Kim and Liam, friendships composed a vital ingredient in consuming school. Like spread in a sandwich, they made the rest easier to swallow. Mia stated that she would give ten out of ten for the importance of friends in school because 'they make things easier for me to cope with'.

However, the issue of friends is situated differently from the issue of occupational ambition or 'the sort of person' one would like to be at twenty-five. Although friends were viewed very much as part of a projected future landscape, they also existed as part of a continuum which started with the pupils' present lives. Friends were considered part of a reality that already existed and was known about. Familial relationships would change as each individual grew up and the replies from the pupils reflected mainly desires for future relationships they may, or may not, have as adults with partners and children. Nonetheless, their view of a future occupation was a more abstract desire. Piaget and Inhelder (1969) proposed that in early adolescence an individual is capable of reasoning about 'propositions that he considers pure hypotheses' (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969, 132). This theory suggests that at this stage of their cognitive progress, which is labelled the stage of 'hypothetico-deductive' thought, the adolescent is

able to rationalize for her/himself and form theories about what s/he might want and who s/he might want to be.

9.3 Consuming skills for specific ambitions

The fact that attendance at school is a legal obligation for young adolescents is problematic insomuch as they can be swept along by the process, without their needing to elect positively to engage in a way that will serve their interests for the futures they want to have. In the first section of the second questionnaire, the pupils had been asked to respond to questions concerning what they wanted to do, to have and to be. As many pupils mentioned the desire for an occupation as mentioned the desire for a family and/or a relationship: nineteen out of the entire sample of twenty pupils expressed the desire for a job, if not a specific occupation. Several pupils indicated an ambition in line with the comment made by Piaget and Inhelder above, such as Abby, who wanted to ‘enforce the law’ and ‘save people’s lives’. However, the connections made by many between these stated ambitions and the final question about how school may help to achieve those ambitions, were unclear. Nonetheless, a few demonstrated a conscious awareness of specific links.

Carl wanted to be a chef and a drummer. His mother worked as a floor manager and his father managed a family news agency business, as far as Carl was aware, no one in the family played drums. His declared influences for these ambitions were from both the media and extra-curricular school life: Jamie Oliver was his media hero and his drum teacher his other inspiration. At the time, Carl

demonstrated these ambitions quite strongly, although he had also listed other desires such as a family, travelling and having 'lots of money'. Carl listed his technology lessons, specifically cooking as the way in which school was helping him. Nothing else was listed in this part of his questionnaire, although in the interview he explained how he was introduced to playing drums:

I wanted to play an instrument and I wasn't sure really what I wanted to play and Ms D.... gave me a couple of instruments and one of them was the guitar, but I thought "I don't really like that much" and one of them was drums and I thought "Well..." I tried that out and tried it for about a year in Year Seven and I really liked it so I've carried on with it.

Carl agreed that school offered him opportunities to try different things. His practice of consuming school seemed to some extent to display a type of bricolage. Earlier in the interview he mentioned that he had met someone that tested video games for a living: 'I'm thinking about that, it's really cool'. His attitude certainly seemed to contain an element of opportunism and he was interested in trying on ideas for size – the type of identity exploration referred to by Erikson (1968), but in a purely cognitive capacity.

India, on the other hand, was adamant that school had no real place in enabling her to achieve her goal: 'School won't help me to be a barrister'. The only connection she was prepared to concede to was that school helped to develop her self-confidence. This response in her interview supported what she had written in her questionnaire, where the explanation she had given in response to the question regarding how school supported her ambitions was remarkably

complex: 'Science helps me because I have debates with my teacher about Michael Jackson and when I win it gives me confidence when I am a barrister'. She had not been able to remember where her initial intention to go into the legal profession had originated, but explained that her parents had nothing to do with the legal system.

India's explanation of her consumption of school in regard to her occupational ambition was unorthodox and unusual. Although she had mentioned studying law in New York elsewhere on her questionnaire, at this point she mentioned nothing about access to qualifications or even information, but was focused on a specific skill, 'arguing', that she wanted to develop, to the point that to some extent it subverted or transformed her view and consumption of Science lessons. Science had become the arena where India honed her skills at debate by utilizing her knowledge about the personal life and opinions of a controversial media celebrity that she had gleaned from reading his autobiography.

What seemed to be in action here was the type of active consumption practice proposed by those who support the idea of an agency – structure dynamic that is unpredictable and creative (Fiske, 1989; Woods 1990; De Certeau 1984). India does not appear here as a 'subjugated subject' (Fiske, 1989, 24) dominated by the powerful ideologies inherent within the education system and thus within the school structures. She appears to have negotiated her way into a position of her own choosing, outside any subcultural or sub group construction, making the most of her power and abilities to further her own interests (Woods, 1990).

Although Sam had not written anything in the section of his questionnaire to suggest ideas in which school helped him with his ambition for an occupation doing 'something with [his] hands' in the craft trade, he had itemised his craft teacher as an influence on him 'because he said I'm good at it'. However, during the interview Sam had explained his love of fishing, which he shared with his father and which had been engendered in him at an early age by accompanying his father on fishing trips in preference to going shopping with his mother. If he were good enough he would make it his profession. When asked how school helped in this respect, he replied: 'I think it helps me a bit, 'cos, um, it could help me with all the spellings ... when I have to write some old letter to a company or something saying that I would like to purchase some pole or some kit...'. I pressed him further to think of anything that he might gain from school to make his future more interesting, even if it did not connect specifically with a job. He replied that he would like to learn how to blow things up in Science, because 'we sit there and copy things out and we don't do any experiments'. He said he would be prepared to work hard to get the qualifications to do explosives work.

In respect to a future career, Sam consumed school for the basic literacy skills he felt he would need. It appeared he consumed his craft lessons in connection with the fact that his teacher told him he was good, although it is unclear to what extent he felt school was developing these skills, as he explained later that he helped at home with similar activities. However, the skill he would like to have taken from school was not available. The potential Sam saw for the subject was not realised in any way and his attitude to what he actually got on his plate was one of boredom and resentment.

Whilst many of the pupils in this sample seemed to have ready ideas of occupations they might like to have, possessions and lifestyles they might like to enjoy and people they might like to be, the connections they were able to make between school and the reality of grasping these possibilities and making them real were mostly fairly vague. These attitudes seem to be consistent with the review of various survey findings reported by MacBeath and Weir (1991), who described the perceived usefulness of school as being 'problematic'. A couple of the emerging themes that they reported from a variety of research undertaken into pupils' attitudes to school between 1985 and 1990 were that: 1) despite the fact that most pupils seemed to enjoy school, very few saw it as 'an avenue' to an occupation, and 2) there seemed to be little connection between the school curriculum, the real world and the world of work (MacBeath and Weir, 1991, 12).

It did not seem to be the case amongst the pupils in my sample that there was a visible rebellion to be witnessed in the comments made by the pupils, although certain subjects were viewed by some as having little relevance to their lives, either in the present or in the future. It was more the case that there was a disjuncture between what they were asked to do in school and the real world of their futures out there, that would somehow happen later.

9.4 Ideologies, skills and qualifications

Despite there seeming to be a lack of connection in the minds of the pupils in my survey between the occupations they aspired to and the work they did in school, there did appear to be a level of concurrence with school ideologies about the

generalised objectives of 'education'. There certainly seemed to be some evidence that pupils had bought into discourses such as 'school gives you a good education', which was mentioned by four pupils. Other similar comments were: it 'channels my ability' (Gary), it teaches you what is good and bad (Ruth) and shows you right from wrong (Questa).

Several pupils expressed the opinion that school opened up opportunities for both the present and the future. Liam wrote in response to the question about how school helped him: it 'gives advice on what to do in life and what not to do, but lets me choose'. Liam gave the impression that he wanted to be (and felt that he was) in control of the choice, that he was interested and willing to consider what was offered to him, but would make up his own mind as to what he decided to do. He was not prepared simply to be a passive consumer of all the ideas and ideologies presented to him through the structures of the school.

Kim also wrote that school 'showed' him different choices and that it 'opens different paths for me to have a look down'. However, school was not the only site where Kim shopped for his ideas, the first ambition listed on his questionnaire was 'orthodontic dentist' which he had adopted after a visit the previous year, but he explained in interview that 'It's just one thing in my head'. Kim, it seemed likely, would be open to inspiration from a whole variety of sources or social situations. Ruth was similar in this respect; in interview she expressed the belief that school 'offers you opportunities to try things out', but she was already proactive in looking for opportunities and was in the process of

teaching herself to play the guitar from books and CDs, in preference to learning in a group at school.

Although a few pupils appeared to have aligned themselves with a very general ideology about school preparing you for life, without giving any specific examples of how precisely they believed this was achieved, there were others who pointed to particular skills of various types that they felt were pertinent to their lives and futures. The selection was quite varied and the comments that were made in this category seemed to be the product of deliberate agreement rather than the clichéd utterances resulting from rhetorical and hegemonic discourses. In fact skills, rather than knowledge (and/or specifically curriculum subject knowledge), seemed to constitute far more what the group considered to be helpful. The sorts of skills mentioned fell mainly into two types: 1) social and life skills and 2) basic, instrumental and learning skills.

Social and life skills were mentioned by nearly half the group and covered a fairly broad spectrum of attributes. It was felt that school helps to develop a sense of responsibility, trustworthiness and a sense of independence; it helps to develop self-awareness in terms of abilities and helps one to become a better person and to develop people skills. School, it was proposed, demonstrates good behaviour and helps an individual to learn where her/his boundaries are. Co-operation was also mentioned in the context of working in pairs or groups. Most of this group, however, only suggested one of these skills each, although both Gary and Tanya had a list, each itemising four social and life skills, but excluding altogether any mention of any subject specific skills or knowledge. Nor did either of these pupils include any positive mention of subjects in the

interview. These pupils aligned themselves with particular ethics and moral values although they appeared to be quite selective. Gary, whose mother was a teacher, reiterated the accepted rhetorical metaphor that school 'channels my ability' on his questionnaire, and also explained with conviction during interview that one useful thing gained from school was 'learning how to put up with people, especially teachers'. It is possible that although one of these comments appeared less sincere because it was a cliché, that in fact both positions were felt to be true. His second comment perhaps carried more conviction because it was more personalised. Taken as a group there certainly seemed to be evidence that some of the pupils in this sample consumed school in part because they believed it would make them each, as Questa wrote, 'a better person' in some way, although the responses varied considerably.

The types of responses I found here seem to fit broadly with the findings Hammersley and Turner (1980) wrote about as a result of their research into conformity in pupils. They warned about the problems of polarising pupils' attitudes so that they were seen as either deviant or conformist. They suggested that apparent conformity may cover a multitude of perspectives and that it may be at times be a calculated strategy adopted to achieve particular ends. Their suggestion was that 'pupils select adaption to school according to their goals and the means available to achieve them' (Hammersley and Turner, 1980, 32).

In terms of the pupils in my sample, social skills and social acceptance rated very highly, with a few individuals specifically mentioning 'popularity'. Gary wanted to be famous and popular, the sort of celebrity who goes to film premiers.

He also wanted to be his 'own person, and 'someone who sets a good example'. The social and life skills he mentioned as useful in helping him towards his ambitions appeared to be in line with his stated goals. It also seemed possible that he was both driven by a fear of being unhappy in an occupation (as his father was) and influenced by his mother's values as a teacher, as he stated that his second ambition, which he considered to be more realistic, was to be an English teacher.

Basic and instrumental skills were mentioned by most of the pupils at Bay Middle, but by only one pupil at Greenways. Jim, who was intent on following his father into the 'woodwork' trade, explained that school helped him to 'think hard' and to spell. Jim enjoyed school and had decided he would still come to school if he did not have to because 'you learn more subjects'. He was the only pupil who showed evidence of consuming and enjoying school for the major part on a subject basis. In the section concerning how he felt school helped him he also listed P.E., Science, English, Maths and Music. Although his very clearly stated ambition was not obviously going to be supported by some of these subjects, he still consumed them, it seemed, with some pleasure. He also enjoyed the challenge of being required to 'think hard' and felt this to be a worthwhile skill to have.

Literacy skills were itemised by several pupils, along with associated skills of letter writing and being able to write a résumé. These last two were located specifically as skills related to desired occupations. When I asked Sam how school was going to support his ambition to be a professional fisherman he

explained that spellings and letter writing might be useful. Nicky stated that school helped her to learn about computers so she could store information, Tanya mentioned problem-solving, a skill that was taught both alone and in groups and both Oliver and Paul mentioned planning.

Oliver felt that learning to plan would be useful as a businessman because it would help in estimating how much money and work would be needed for projects. Paul, who wanted employment in a 'proper trade' explained that apart from needing basic literacy skills in order to be able to write letters to people, it was also necessary 'to be able to plan out how your job's going to work out and stuff so...you've got to be able to plan things ahead'. He felt quite certain that this skill could be learnt in school, so I asked him where. He felt that possibly planning an experiment in Science was helpful, but decided that although he did not enjoy English very much, that the process of planning a story promoted this skill: 'When you're writing a story, you plan how many characters you're having, er, how long the story's going to be: a short one or a long one; what the story's about'. He seemed fairly certain that this skill would transfer across to running an office or a company.

The way in which these pupils appeared to be making connections between what they learnt in school and what they needed for their future lives was very varied and sometimes surprising. Paul's attitude to consuming English was almost as unexpected as India consuming Science for the debate at the end of the lesson.

Apart from Jim's list, curriculum subjects were not referred to frequently, particularly not in direct connection with future ambitions. Four pupils mentioned History, but not specifically for the knowledge, but rather for the skills. Paul stated that it taught you to use evidence to work things out, Ben's opinion was that by learning about things that have happened in the past, you can understand how to do things in the future and Ruth felt similarly, that knowing about the past enabled you to make comparisons and thereby see how things were changing. These skills appeared to be more about enhancing their lives than preparing them for occupations of their choosing. Apart from a 'proper trade', Paul wanted a good home and family. Ruth wanted to be a guitarist, to travel the world and be happy and Ben wanted to be clever, to fall in love and have a family, travel, be active and work as a mechanic. There were no obvious connexions with the skills they felt they learnt in History.

Deepa suggested that English presented ideas for future ambitions, she wanted to be an actress, a fashion designer, a comedian or an R and B street dancer, but did not specifically say how. Art was mentioned in the context of enjoyment by a couple of boys, however Tanya, who stated on her questionnaire that she wanted to be an interior or a clothes designer, talked about Art with clear commitment to the subject. She had her own materials at home and explained: 'I enjoy art and making things...being creative'. She appeared to consume her Art lessons with a passion, which was encouraged and supported by successive teachers in the subject: 'The Art teachers I've had in school have always told me that I should use my creativity and I really want to...make things and do things with art'.

Ed enjoyed rugby which he'd learnt by joining a friend at a rugby club. It seemed that he was looking forward to lessons in P.E. in Year 9 because he would get to do rugby in school, whereas at the moment the lessons involved softball which he did not enjoy as much. Ed also mentioned P.S.H.E. because these lessons taught him about drugs and he had written on his questionnaire that the sort of person he did not want to be when he was twenty-five was a 'druggie / smoker / out of work'. It was not clear whether he had been recruited by the powerful rhetoric of the P.S.H.E. lessons, or whether he had been persuaded by other experiences which had then been reinforced by the lessons, but it was a connection that impressed him strongly in terms of what he wanted for his future life.

The motivation of 'instrumental concerns' mentioned by Hammersley and Turner (1980, p. 31) with regards to wanting to achieve good exam results was also not particularly evident amongst the pupils I interviewed and certainly remarkably less evident than the issue of skills just discussed above. Although nine pupils in all mentioned some sort of qualification on their first questionnaire, only five mentioned or discussed the connection when considering how school helped them to achieve their goals in life. Kim appeared to have the closest focus on the area of qualifications. He wanted to get ten GCSEs, five A levels and a degree in dentistry, he added in interview that while friends were important and gave you confidence, knowledge and qualifications were needed for a good job. Mia's attitude was very similar, she wanted to have a choice: 'I want to be able to do what I want'. Her rationale was that in order to get what she wanted out of life she needed to get qualifications first before looking for 'social

happiness', and that school 'gives you the knowledge to be able to pass exams and stuff and get grades'. Ed stated that the prospect of gaining the appropriate qualifications to be a lawyer would be a motivation for making a commitment to school work. For India it existed only as part of the lifestyle she imagined for herself: at twenty-five she wanted to 'fly over to New York and study law to become a barrister'. However Carl rather unexpectedly mentioned wanting to have a driving licence. He did not discuss this in interview, but it was evidently a conscious desire for something that would empower his life as he saw it in the future. The only comment he made about school-orientated qualifications was that school 'helps you along' by pushing you to get good grades and was unconnected with his specific ambitions. Carl also believed that teachers were strict 'for your own good really, so you get a better job when you're older'.

This last comment in particular demonstrated a strong element of negotiation with regards to conforming to school discipline. Carl appeared to be prepared to go along with the values imposed by the school because he had been persuaded that these rules were for his own good and would enable him to achieve good exam results. Woods suggests that 'there is no bland internalization of institutional goals' (Woods 1980, 15) and that any apparent conformity will be based on some sort of negotiation. Several of these pupils seemed to exhibit this kind of attitude towards consuming the educational system's structure for exams and qualifications and the values inherent in that structure in order to get what they wanted. However, it appeared to be a mediated compliance and certainly not one of wholesale conformity. What was surprising here, was that so few pupils connected their consumption of school and getting what they wanted out of life

with the much vaunted educational passport of qualifications. Even Carl's initial response in connection with the first questionnaire was to think of wanting a driving licence, rather than a catering or a music qualification. The instrumental concern of qualifications, one of the most debated items on the educational and political agenda, does not seem to have been a particularly pertinent issue with the pupils in this sample. There may be various reasons for this, but what is of interest to my thesis is that the Year Eight pupils in this sample, for whatever reasons, did *not* make a strong connection between the access to qualifications provided by the school and what they wanted out of life.

The issue of discipline in school was something mentioned by a few pupils as being conducive to their learning and yet another aspect of their practice of consuming school, but again only for a few pupils. Another issue was to do with personal interaction. Even for those who enjoyed entertainment through the media, the process of learning was more easily undertaken in school. Faye enjoyed watching television and reading magazines, but felt she could not do without school: 'because what you read in a book or something is, like, boring. If you're at school and, like... listen, you can learn it more easily'. Nicky felt the same, and so did Liam: '...you can talk to [teachers], and if you ask them a question they'll answer it back and you can like have a discussion with them, whereas with a computer or with a TV you can't really have a discussion'. He was also unconvinced by the idea of teacher-administered chat-rooms: 'Well, you're not really there...when you're in front of them you can show them things and like hand movements and what you mean; you can describe it to them'. Liam's description here was of a proactive engagement in the negotiation of

understandings and the construction of meanings. He was not content with the concept of being handed down knowledge either from the television, via the computer or even while sitting in a classroom to simply absorb and learn. Learning for Liam involved a semiotic and semantic struggle with representations. From his point of view, the process of learning in the classroom was anything but passive and involved the necessity of explaining and describing in the process of creating understanding. In fact the description of his own learning was much closer to what might be considered a teaching technique. Woods has described how pupils 'negotiate their way, making the most of their power and abilities in furthering their interests' (Woods, 1990, 156) and this seems to describe very well one aspect of Liam's consumption of school.

9.5 Conclusions about the variety of ways in which some pupils consume school

As I have discussed, the young adolescents in this research demonstrated through their questionnaire responses and interview conversations a variety of different practices in the way in which they consumed school with regards to what they wanted out of life. I have summarised below the various attitudes I encountered.

- Most pupils in the sample stated that they would come to school, even if they were not mandated to do so and even if they could learn all they felt they needed to via media communications.
- Most stated that the reason for this was because school was a locus for meeting their friends, whom they considered to be more important to their

lives than the knowledge they could gain in school, although in some cases this was only just the case.

- Some indicated that the interactive nature of the classroom made it easier to learn and several indicated that having the support and company of friends made the process both easier and more pleasant.
- Half the boys in this sample expressed the desire for an occupation similar to a parent or close family member and seemed to have been influenced towards this ambition to some extent by their family background and family value systems, although the individual attitudes varied greatly and did not preclude interest or enjoyment of unrelated subjects in school. Influence from a mother and a brother were included in this group.
- No girl indicated an interest in pursuing an occupation similar to a parent, however there was evidence of parents supporting other interests and activities as well as occupational ambitions that were different from their own occupations.
- There was evidence of media influence in giving form to aspirations. Media representations of occupational types (for example police officers) and celebrities produced by, or represented through, the media (for example Bill Gates and Jamie Oliver) provided conscious examples of potential role models.
- Many pupils demonstrated a weak conceptual link between school and ambitions for their futures. School was perceived as a place where exams were taken, but the connections between chosen occupations and the subject knowledge that might be needed, or the qualifications that might

enable employment in the desired field, were hazy in most cases, whilst with some pupils no connections had been made at all and the possible role of school in achieving ambitions did not seem to have been considered.

- Although less than half the sample group mentioned qualifications as a motivational issue, it was a subject mentioned by twice as many pupils from the rural school as from the urban school.
- School was considered to be more helpful in terms of teaching and developing skills. The skills mentioned tended to refer more to social skills than to basic academic skills (literacy and numeracy), or to activity skills, although these were mentioned.
- School was considered by a few pupils as a place that offered windows on different pathways: the opportunity to consider options for the future. However, no pupil indicated a view of school as a clear pathway towards a specific goal.
- Consumption was sometimes surprising, unpredictable and very personalised.
- Consumption sometimes appeared to be unconnected to occupational ambitions or parental interests.
- A few pupils demonstrated a belief in line with educational ethics that they would receive a 'good' education at school.

In the next chapter I explore the comparative merits of employing either Bourdieu's theories or de Certeau's theories as a framework to understand the

various ways in which these young adolescents appear to be consuming the experiences and opportunities available to them in school.

Chapter Ten

Using theory to understand different practices of consumption

It is important to not only observe and record the everyday consumption practices of the pupils in my sample, but as far as possible to also understand the variety of tendencies shown. In order to attempt this I have employed the theories of Bourdieu and de Certeau, and the analytical engines of those theories that I have felt would be useful to an investigation of this research, I have discussed in Chapter One.

I felt that in order to understand the pupil's position in school, it would be useful to interrogate the dynamics of the power structures acting on that individual. Categorizing the multiple influences acting on an individual and the boundaries between those influences could be expressed in many ways, for example Phelan et al. write about students' 'multiple worlds' (1991). However I found that using Bourdieu's concept of 'fields' offered a structure that incorporated a power dynamic that was more clearly defined and therefore more helpful as a framework for analysis. The construct of each arena of influence constituting a 'separate social universe' (Bourdieu, 1993, 162) with powerful hegemonic representations capable of shaping people's lives and their experience of their

lives, helps to put power and influence at the centre of the agenda of how school is consumed.

10.1 Was 'field' useful for analysis?

The private sphere of home and family as the source of primary socialisation is perhaps the most easily recognisable as a particular locus functioning under its own laws and relations of force and producing its own particular form of capital (Bourdieu, 1993, 164), although the concept of what constitutes a family has changed, as I have discussed in Chapter Two, and its parameters are not clearly defined. However, grown-up brothers, sisters not living at home, uncles and grandmothers were all mentioned as influential amongst the pupils in this research, along with parents living separately. In their discussion, Grenfell and James (1998 & 2004) position 'field' as a concept that is continually changing and evolving and which can be viewed in terms of being separable into subdivisions. Their view of 'field' accommodates the modern notion of family very well and the pupils seemed to be clear about who and what defined their own families and demonstrated little confusion when asked about influences from this field.

However, what was possible to achieve within this study related mainly to *conscious* awareness of connections, whereas the roots of some sources of influences had become obscured or unrecognisable for various reasons. Ed, for

example, only realised the connection between his ambitions and his visits to his father as he talked to me in interview.

His example illustrated something of the complexity involved in analysing fields of influence. Bourdieu states that a field operates as an 'autonomous social universe' (Bourdieu, 1993, 164), however Grenfell and James qualify this by explaining that a field never stands in isolation from other fields (Grenfell and James, 1998, 20). In this instance the field of aviation and the field of family coincided to open up new knowledge, ideas and experiences which have seemingly been both memorable and influential to Ed. However, this is not the whole story and Ed suggests that there may have been other experiences or representations, particularly from television, that had been influential, however he could not pinpoint any particular programme. It may well be that the field of media representation also contributed to Ed's ideas and ambitions. It is possible that motivations and ambitions grow and develop from multiple sources or 'fields'.

Another aspect of the complexity involved in trying to understand the situation is the nature of the influence from each of these fields and the impact of agency on what is chosen from each of these experiences. According to Ed, his encounters with the field of aviation were fairly limited, but even if his visits to the airport with his father were not the only source of influence, Ed was quite specific and selective about what he had taken from his experience of this field. Although he illustrated the desire for an occupation that had a connection with his father's occupation (even though he did not make clear exactly what his father did), it

still appears as if Ed was making deliberate choices and that the ideas engendered by his visits with his father to the airport, combined possibly with his television viewing, were creating opportunities for choice which took their place amongst other ideas.

On the one hand it is feasible to argue that what may be seen here is that the dispositions engendered while in contact with his father, predisposed Ed to consider as worthwhile the sort of occupations associated with the airport. Conversely, Ed's father may have been working at the airport out of convenience rather than choice and Ed may have no contact with aviation engineers or pilots on his visits. His father had not worked in the job for long and Ed only mentioned an interest in 'going out' in response to a question about parental interests on the questionnaire, his ideas may therefore have been more opportunistic than produced, and may have been more firmly located, although more deeply concealed, in forgotten television viewing. An important issue, from the point of view of this research, is that considerably more information would be needed to make a more valuable assessment of the dynamics of influence at work here. However, it is possible to observe that the influence of other fields have opened up or enhanced ideas that have been added to his list of potential future occupations and that within this menu of opportunities, Ed has been quite particular and selective.

I found 'field' a more difficult concept to articulate in connection with friends and peers in the context of this research. Although it constitutes a very obvious social grouping and is a classification used regularly in research (see Chapter

Three), it fits less well into Bourdieu's definitions of an independent social universe and could arguably be situated as a 'vague social background', which Bourdieu states does *not* constitute a field at all (Bourdieu, 1993, 163). However, there are hierarchies amongst friends and peers and dynamics are certainly at work to influence individuals within groups in various ways, (Coleman, 1979; Kracke, 2002; Brittain, 1971; Wyer, 1971). Nonetheless, the structure of these power dynamics might best be understood using the interpretation of 'field' given by Grenfell and James (1998, p. 20) which suggests that there are many subfields and the nature of the entirety is anyway to be ever-changing and evolving (2004, p. 510).

Within this study, this field seemed to be less influential in terms of offering ideas, although in a couple of cases friends were cited as having introduced individuals to new experiences, such as canoeing and rugby, and there was one case where the possibility of doing a B. Tech qualification was reportedly discussed amongst friends. The power of the influence of peer and friends seemed mainly to exist in their desirability. Their influence on consumption was that they made school a worthwhile place to be. Their presence and companionship provided a reason for coming to school, if legal requirements to do so were withdrawn. That this field of influence was important to the nature in which school was consumed would be difficult to argue against, but the power of its influence appeared to operate in a very different way to the influence of family life, which is not selected or chosen and which is arguably imbued with issues of hierarchy and authority to an extent that peer and friendship groups tend not to be. The appeal of peer and friendship groups for pupils is at least partly

because of the equality of position offered the members (Hendry et al., 1993). The huge differentials between knowledge and access to power are not nearly as marked within this field as they are within the field of home and family, and the nature of its influence, as in Deepa's case, tends to be in support or 'feedback' (Kerpelman and Pittman; Adler and Adler, 1998; Hendry et al., 1993) or on contemporary issues of cultural artefacts and practices, rather than *future* lifestyles and careers.

The field of media representations provided some interesting responses and it was possible to observe fairly powerful influences, which were both acknowledged and recognised by the pupils as being highly motivational, as well as several instances where a media source was not acknowledged, but where it seemed likely that media representation had provided the inspiration. The appeal of the lifestyle images described by India, who wanted to study to be a barrister in New York whilst living in a penthouse flat with a 'fish tank on the wall' and Gary's visualisation of being a football star with '32,000 people shouting my name', had been powerfully persuasive on the ambitions of these two pupils, even though neither pupil cited the media as a direct source of the creation of the image they had connected with.

Other examples of the influence of media products, such as celebrities and the portrayal of career lifestyles (for example *The Bill* was mentioned), were clearly in evidence as the representation of an identity to be desired. Again, the pupils appeared to be highly selective about what they took from these representations and as the research literature indicated (Fiske, 1989; Gledhill, 1997), fear about

over-influence from the media seemed generally to be unfounded and certainly within the confines of the sample in my research, it seemed to be that the pupils were not dictated to, neither were they at the mercy of multiple examples of possible lives that might lead them into areas they did not want to go.

Several did not mention anything specific in terms of media influence in relation to their future lives. Pupils like India could admire someone like Michael Jackson for one aspect of his personality, while disliking the original aspect of his media fame: his singing. Paul, on the other hand, despite declaring initially the potential to be influenced in several ways by the media, did not in interview mention anything that could be connected directly with this field. In his initial questionnaire response he indicated that he would watch any programme, except 'chick flicks' on television, he enjoyed using the computer for gaming, buying and e-mailing, and he also explained that he read *The Sun* newspaper and the magazine, *Nuts*. The main influences for his future seemed to be firmly rooted in his family, particularly his father and brother. This raises the issue of 'habitus', the second of Bourdieu's theories that I have attempted to use in my effort to tease out the motivating factors existent in young teenagers' consumption of school and which has been described as 'central to the process of career decision making' (Grenfell and James, 1998, 170).

10.2 Does 'habitus' help understand consumption?

Bourdieu's concept of habitus was useful in analysing my research data, but only to a certain extent. In Paul's case, the concept of predispositions which are engendered in the family background to motivate desires and govern the direction of ambition, seems to describe the patterns of consumption and resistance to structures in other fields very well. Despite a self-confessed indulgence in television viewing, alongside an enjoyment of various other aspects of media and communications technology, Paul's attitudes appeared to be inscribed with an ideology learnt at home and these values seemed to be, at the time of interview, the guiding principle for what he wanted out of his future life. These principles did not stand in opposition to school life. Paul wanted to be kind, loving, helpful and a good father, but in terms of the relevance of specific subjects, school provided him with the 'main things', how to read and write properly, but not much else. Although surprisingly, and seemingly as if as a result of his encounter with the field of school, Paul explained his fascination with how history teaches that lives can be decoded and 'worked out' from little bits of evidence; that it is enjoyable to make things in Art/Tech and especially useful to be able to cook. It was impossible from the information I had to be able to suggest whether or not these apparent diversions were in keeping with Paul's habitus and had grown out of some inspiration from home. Paul's attitude to his future, and in particular his preferred occupation, convincingly displayed evidence (as far as could be judged) of social and cultural reproduction driven by his habitus. However, those other elements mentioned above are more difficult to locate.

The fact that five out of ten boys anticipated being employed in a similar occupation to a parent seemed to provide a strongly gendered argument for the motivating power of habitus, although within the confines of my small, qualitative study it was possible to see that beneath this appearance were many deviations and uncertainties. There was room for manoeuvre, and selections were being made both for and against the examples provided by family members. Gary, for example, had a pragmatic approach and his ambitions were subdivided into realistic and unrealistic occupations. The positive influence came from his mother and the negative from his father, as Gary was aware that his father was unhappy in his work.

Surprisingly no girl professed an interest in an occupation similar to a parent, although there was evidence of supportive and interested parents. Evidence of habitus and cultural capital being the predominant, defining element in occupational ambition was not easy to detect here. Certain attitudes may well have been in play in the construction of ambition, but it would not have been possible within the remit of this research to discover the multitude of positionalities occupied by family members that might influence each pupil in her/his own dispositions.

In order to use the concept of habitus in this research I felt that the concept would need to remain generalised and generalisable, but that in making it so, the concept would become a less effective tool. As a generalised theory of consumption practices, habitus could help to explain why Paul wanted to be a heating engineer and why he thought an occupation of this type would be

considered a 'proper' job. According to Bourdieu, it seems that all practice and interest is built on to the initial dispositions of the habitus and that encounters with other fields have impact only at the point that they interconnect somewhere with the existing habitus. Therefore a great deal of further information would be needed to analyse the influences that had inspired those other elements Paul saw fit to mention as being interesting and worthwhile aspects of his school learning. Although a generalised statement about liking practical rather than academic activities might contribute towards an explanation based on habitus, I feel that it would not adequately explain why these subjects in particular were chosen and certainly would not explain Paul's very specific consumption of History. As I have commented above, the depth of information that would be needed to make a truly valid analysis of the pupils in this sample on that basis is well outside the scope of this research.

I also do not feel that it would be valid or justifiable to state per se that within the sample of pupils represented in this research that half the boys were influenced by their background in their selection of a future occupation or that no girl was influenced in a similar way. This would not reflect the whole picture, nor does it provide an explanation for the opposition to family that is apparently there. Whilst Bourdieu explains that the habitus is constitutive of transposable dispositions (Bourdieu 1984, 170; 1977a, 72), which can be transferred to any number of new situations, he does not indicate any room for oppositional attitudes or resistance to home background and this theory is therefore difficult to articulate with the pupils in my sample who declared little interest even vaguely in 'following in their parents footsteps'.

10.3 Can ‘tactics’ better explain non-rebellious opposition and deflection of power?

De Certeau’s theory of tactics seemed better able to account for the unaccountable. In particular it is useful to employ in examining the actions of agents who are disempowered within a system of powerfully hegemonic practices. As pupils encounter school, few actually rebel, most sit in class and consume their lessons in some way throughout the day without openly refusing to take part, although this does sometimes happen. Very few of the pupils interviewed in this research engaged wholeheartedly with the ideologies of the system, particularly not in terms of qualifications, nor did they even appear to consider that the specifics of what they were learning were particularly relevant to their future lives and occupations, particularly not on a subject to subject basis. At the same time, most professed some enjoyment in coming to school, particularly in relation to the social aspect and showed very limited dissatisfaction with subjects they considered to be irrelevant.

De Certeau states that consumption is devious and ‘insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly’ because it manifests itself not in what it produces itself, but through the way it uses the products imposed by a dominant order (de Certeau, 1984, xiii). The tactics he writes about are practices that are not as predictable as those described by Bourdieu and take more account of speculations made in relation to what is seen to be on offer. Some consumption practices seemed to escape ‘the nets of “discipline”’ (p. xiv), i.e. both the influence of the home and the hegemony of the school. India’s consumption of

her science lessons was possibly the most creative or 'tactical' within the sample. She made her own meaning from the system, or in de Certeau's words, she 'made it function in another register'(p. 32), her own register and like the American Indians referred to by de Certeau, she diverted the system to her own agenda without ever leaving it or being overtly rebellious. Her navigation through the jungle of representations and the rhetoric of authority demonstrated 'the need to understand more thoroughly the complex ways in which people mediate and respond to the interface between their own lived experiences and structures of domination and constraint' (Giroux, 1983, 108).

The need to better understand the consumption practices of young adolescents in school is of crucial importance if the education system is serious about wanting to benefit the interests of all the pupils it serves. Jim's enjoyment of music and his belief that it influenced him was also unpredictable and might well be viewed as an attitude that appeared to be in opposition to what Jim explained about his family background. Given the sort of information that ordinarily would be available to teachers or researchers in assessing the potential of a pupil, music would possibly not be high on the list for Jim.

In searching to find models or theories which will support an understanding of the lived lives and consumption practices of young teenagers in school at a point in their education careers where their engagement with the system may well define how much they are able to use it to their advantage in the future, it might be useful to engage both Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* as well as de Certeau's theory of *tactics*. While *habitus* provides a useful framework to understand the

power of influences from the home where there is resistance to influence from the school, tactics provides a useful explanation to behaviour and practices that takes account of more diverse influences and less predictable and less regular responses to those influences.

It seems that tactics can explain Jim's enjoyment of Music and Ruth's decision to teach herself the guitar, as well as India's manipulation of the system, while habitus explains why both Paul and Jim still intend to follow family occupations. However, the theory of tactics does seem to allow for a less biased examination of the micro-context of individual attitudes which takes into account the pluralism of modern life and the complexities of socio-cultural contexts.

10.4 Bricolage as practice

The practice of active cultural consumption which poaches and realigns meanings to practices, such as was in evidence with India, has been referred to as 'bricolage' (Levi-Strauss, 1972) and is mentioned by de Certeau in connection with tactics (1984, xv & xvi). This conscious selection and piecing together, or redefining of, those elements of school experience that are deemed worthwhile for some particular reason, was evident in the consumption practices of several pupils in this sample. Again, these instances were often both surprising and creative, such as Paul's interpretation of how the experience of planning stories in English, for those who could do that well, could be put to good use in an office, where it would be necessary to organise and plan work for a variety of people.

A more generalised practice of bricolage, which could be observed across the whole sample, was the issue of friends. Fiske explains that 'bricolage is the means by which the subordinated make their own culture out of the resources of the "other"' (Fiske, 1989, 150). Whilst the ideologies of educational documents such as the National Curriculum focus on itemised learning programmes and progressive development of knowledge and skills with attainment levels being evaluated almost constantly throughout this process, the adolescents in my sample appeared to value friendships and the social life that evolved around those friendships as their primary concern. The school was seen as a resource for friendships; it was portrayed by the adolescents in my sample as a place where pupils could learn how to make friends, learn how to get on with people and was also a locus to meet and socialise with those friends. Mia's comments seemed to sum up the general attitude on this issue: 'I think the knowledge is important, but I think friends are even more important, because if you don't have loads of friends round you...you don't feel like learning...'. That the nature of this practice is important and relevant to the future lives of pupils in school may be judged in part by the success of the Friends Reunited web site which is structured almost entirely around reconnecting with old school and college associates.

It seemed from the responses in my sample that the consumption practices of these pupils showed a degree of passivity and compliance, insomuch as they felt that school was worth attending and only a few subjects seemed to be considered a waste of time. However, beneath the surface, their active consumption practices appeared to either take the meanings incorporated into lessons and reconstruct them to suit their own ends, or else quietly reject, or at least not assimilate them,

because they were not useful to their futures. Some practices seemed not so much to ignore or challenge the power and rhetoric of the school, as to deflect it, as was seen with the attitude towards friends. They seemed to reflect de Certeau's description of 'making do' with the materials at hand from the controlling forces in authority and where possible, some pupils seized the opportunities that presented themselves, occasionally in the most unlikely situations, to subvert meanings, manipulate spaces and create something very personalised for themselves. From their interview conversations, these young adolescents appeared to cruise the lessons, quite possibly enjoying some of them and probably doing most of the work required of them. However, on the whole, they appeared to have little awareness of what might be useful to them in constructing a future and were content to drift. Where they did take something, they appeared to be highly selective and they seemed not to be overly dominated by the authority of the school in what they selected. The ideas they had for their futures did not seem to clearly connect for them with what was on offer at school. In fact the pupil with the most dogmatic response concerning his future occupation (woodwork), was the only pupil to mention as many as five specific subjects that supported what he wanted to do, to be and to have in life, and none of those subjects was Craft Technology.

What these pupils wanted from life was far more diverse than what was on offer on the National Curriculum and even though nearly all mentioned a specific occupation, their perception of how school could help them either towards this goal, or any of the other ambitions that were mentioned, was remarkably unclear,

to the point that at times their attitude to their education appeared to have very little in connection with their perceived future lives.

It may be that the young adolescents in this research had not yet really engaged with the idea of specific subject qualifications connected to career pathways, as neither school included GCSE year groups. However, this age group is considered to be at a 'pivotal point' (Eccles and Midgely, 1990, 130) in their school careers. Early adolescence is an age when attitudes can start to spiral downwards and 'commitment to learning can begin to drift' (Batty et al., 1999, 365). It is perhaps not sufficient to explain the objective of each lesson to a class at the outset of that lesson, what may be of more use or benefit, is a clearer indication of how their education is contributing towards a better future for themselves and how they can take control of shaping that future. Recently, a move towards increased consultation with pupils about their learning has recognised the right of pupils to be treated as consumers (Arnot et al., 2004; Rudduck et al., 1996; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004), although what can be achieved is still constrained by the external curriculum and assessment requirements which are non negotiable.

In the final chapter I would like to summarize the key issues that have come to light through this research and consider what contribution it might be able to make.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusion

In this chapter I will review the findings in relation to the research questions that guided the study and suggest how they might be useful.

What were the pupils' hopes and ambitions for their futures?

The young adolescents in this research had a variety of ideas about what they wanted for their futures. For nearly all of them these ambitions included some idea of an occupation, or several possible occupations. However, what they desired for their futures constructed a much broader picture that included family, activities, travel, quality of life and state of mind.

What were the key influences on these hopes and ambitions?

The influences that inspired them outside of school ranged from family members and real-life heroes, through to images and representations, such as lifestyles and television celebrities that inspired admiration. Negative influences were also important, like the father who was unhappy in his job; and in this respect,

parental occupations seemed, at this point in the pupils' lives, to be more frequently a negative rather than a positive influence.

For the five boys who demonstrated a tendency towards social reproduction in their potential choice of occupation, it could also be seen that other issues were important and for several of these pupils other quite different occupations were also being considered. Their desire for particular future occupations certainly did not tell the whole story of their consumption of school. However, the issue of gender differentiation, in terms of the influence of cultural capital (rather than ability and qualifications), appears to support Roberts's observation that boys seem to be more influenced by social and cultural capital than girls (Roberts, 2001, 221) and may well be an issue worth exploring with further research.

What were pupils' perceptions of how schooling related to their hopes and ambitions?

How pupils engaged with the official curriculum was sometimes unexpected and surprising and pupils found use for experiences and skills in unpredictable places, which seemed to indicate cognitive and personalised adaptations acting at a tangent to the dominant ideologies of the system and at the same time apparently unconnected with background. Occasionally pupils like Sam showed frustration with the school system when they did not get what they wanted, but there was little sign of rebellious opposition.

In order to understand the dynamics of competing influences, Bourdieu's theory of habitus was useful in analysing entrenched attitudes that seemed to resist the potential of school to make changes and offer different opportunities. One boy in this study showed a particularly well developed predisposition in what he wanted from life. However, de Certeau's theory of tactics offered scope for unpredictable practices of consumption that saw the expansion of possibilities in modern life as a menu from which anyone could choose anything they could see. One girl in particular demonstrated this sort of opportunism in the way she went about consuming school and preparing for her future, but several others seemed also to connect with media representations they found attractive for no obvious reason and which they incorporated into their potential ambitions.

Different fields provided interconnecting patterns of influence as was seen with one boy's account, where it was difficult to locate the original inspiration, or to what extent subsequent experiences and their contexts added further weight to an initial idea. If it were possible, it would be interesting to be able to trace the evolution of an ambition or desire and the webs or chains of connections that interact with the first thought. However, one difficulty encountered in this research was the issue that the origins of ideas are not easy to trace and when dealing with issues such as the composition of a habitus, which encompasses concepts of subconscious and unconscious predispositions, it becomes very difficult or even impossible to assign a location to an origin. It is nonetheless possible that over time chains or webs of influence might build up to enforce an ambition or change it, with different elements impacting at each stage.

Certain ideologies of the school were bought into as presenting opportunities to learn how to behave or how to make friends, but subject specific knowledge was seldom mentioned as being useful. School seemed to be viewed as a process that would somehow lead in the right direction and although subjects might not be particularly useful, they could be interesting for their own sake.

There appeared to be a general belief that school helped develop skills, particularly social skills and ethical values and there was an awareness, by just under half the sample, that at the end of the line there were qualifications that would open doors to employment opportunities for the future. Nonetheless, there was little indication of any clear pathway through the system to the things that were desired and very little indication was given of any clear connection between curricular work and desires for the future, including occupations, however and wherever those desires were inspired.

The most devious relocation of ideologies concerned friends. While the objective for providing an education for all children is principally to promote knowledge and understanding and develop skills, the primary reason for attending school, in terms of the pupils, related to their social interactions, which were facilitated by the various structures of the school and enhanced their lives, many felt, more than what was offered on the curriculum menu.

Although the young adolescents in this sample seemed to enjoy school life on the whole and were mostly compliant within the system, they also seemed to find ways to escape the hegemony of educational discourses by sometimes re-

inscribing practices with changed meanings or simply by sidelining the ideologies of the 'other' with ideologies of their own.

The limitations of this research, apart from the element mentioned above concerning the complexities and difficulties of tracing the origins of an idea, relate largely to the common problems of case study research: information shared by pupils will have been influenced by the interpersonal dynamics of the group interviews, as well as the limitations of time allowed and the location. There is also the probability that despite my efforts to correctly understand my informants' meanings, that my view and thus my representation has been refracted through 'the lens of [my] own interests and concerns' (Rudduck et al., 1996, 177). Another limitation is that despite efforts to hear opinions and voices from a variety of backgrounds, both in terms of family connections and interaction with media, I feel that those less socially confident (in terms of the interviews) and those with less well developed literacy competence (in terms of the questionnaires) have possibly not been able to articulate their views as clearly as those with greater social and literacy competence and are therefore underrepresented.

With these limitations in mind, I do not go even so far as to propose that such a small study on its own can submit a 'fuzzy generalization' (Bassegy, 1999, 12) about its findings, hedged with uncertainties as it is, but that if other pupils at the same stage of their education consume school in a similar way, and previous research seems to suggest that the attitudes of pupils recorded here are not exceptional, then there are certain implications that seem to present themselves.

The practical in-school issues raised in this research relate particularly closely to recent debates concerning school improvement (Rudduck et al., 1996; Doddington et al., 1998; Arnot et al., 2004; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). Contemporary discourse has for some years surrounded the subject of greater pupil participation in order to increase motivation and engagement with school learning. The findings of this research seem to suggest that alongside the agenda to include pupils in critiquing the teaching – learning process, is firstly a very real need to explain and demonstrate how the specific day-to-day elements of the curriculum connect with ‘real-life’ and pathways to real-life possibilities or life-enhancing opportunities, and these need not always be occupationally orientated. Much stronger connections need to be made between what is on offer to be learnt or experienced, why it is being offered and how it can improve the lives of individuals. It is important that the rationale and ideologies that have informed the construction of curricula and in particular the National Curriculum, as it impacts on all pupils in compulsory education, are made more transparent so that they may be perceived to be relevant: pupils in school need to be able to ‘see the point’ of what they are being asked to do.

Over thirty years ago Stenhouse (1975) wrote a comment (which I have quoted in the introduction to this thesis) in his discussion about conflict between school culture, home culture and peer culture and the question of how to teach what is ‘worthwhile’. He remarked that ‘to accept the discipline of learning what appears to be useless for the present in the trust that it will serve in the future – appears likely to commend itself to only a small minority of pupils’ (Stenhouse, 1975, 9). The observation is no less pertinent today. In the light of contemporary attitudes

towards increased pupil inclusiveness in the teaching – learning process and an acknowledgement that young people in school are ‘accomplished social actors’ (Ruddock and Flutter, 2004, 4) capable of making valuable and constructive criticisms about the conditions of their own education, we should also consider carefully the need to make clear how and why what pupils are learning is relevant to their lives.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

what do I want to do?

What do I want to have?

Who do I want to be?

Appendix 2

INFLUENCES IN MY LIFE

Number on register -----

1. Do most of your family live in this region? (include grandparents, cousins etc.)
2. Do you see quite a lot of your family?
3. What sort of things do your Mum and/or Dad like doing?

all most some few
 yes sometimes occasionally

4. Does your Mum/Dad go to work?
5. Do you share interests with anyone in your family?
6. What things do you enjoy doing outside of school?
7. Do you do those things mainly with family or friends?
8. Do you think you'll still be doing those things in 10 years time?

both mum dad neither

9. Are you ambitious in any way?
10. What sort of person do you **not** want to be like?

mainly family both mainly friends
 yes probably possibly no

11. Is there anyone on TV/radio (real or fictional) or film you want to be like?
12. What sort of programmes do you like?
13. What sort of programmes do you **not** like?

yes quite a bit not really

14. Is there a computer at home?
15. Do you use the internet?
16. What sites do you visit most?
17. Have you ever not given your full name or real name for any reason?

more than one one none
 yes sometimes never

18. Do you read any magazines/newspapers? Which ones?
19. Do you read about how to do things?
20. Do you read articles about people?

yes never

mostly sometimes hardly ever
 mostly sometimes hardly ever

Briefly describe the sort of person you would like to be when you're 25. Is this person like anyone you know or know about?

INFLUENCES IN MY LIFE

Number on register -----

all most some few
 yes sometimes occasionally

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mostly sometimes hardly ever
 mostly sometimes hardly ever

Describe the sort of person you would like to be when you're 25. Is this person like anyone you know or know about?

June 2004

Dear Parent / Guardian,

Mr. _____ has given me permission to do some research at this school as part of a doctoral study comparing the ambitions of Y8 pupils in different parts of the country. This research will be in the form of questionnaires and interviews.

Any published information that follows as a result will not identify individuals or the school, but I would be very grateful for your permission to use your child's opinions.

Yours sincerely,

R. Sutton.

PLEASE RETURN THIS SLIP TO MR.

I give / do not give permission for my child_____ class_____
To take part in Ms Sutton's research.

Signed: _____ (Parent / Guardian)

Appendix 4

TRANSCRIPTION OF AUDIO-TAPED INTERVIEW AT GREENWAYS HIGH SCHOOL **JULY 2004** **GROUP 1**

REFERS TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Q: Abby, you said that you were influenced by your cat, Dennis. Can you tell me what you meant by that?

Abby: 'Cos he's an artist.

Q: An artist, how?

Abby: Just when I first, like I was a baby and my dad told me he came up to me and licked me (inaudible). (10)

Q: Does he influence you because you would do things for him or because he impresses you as a personality or what?

Abby: (inaudible)...when he dies I'll always remember him.

Q: OK, fair enough.

REFERS TO BEN'S QUESTIONNAIRE

You said that you don't like fighting and violence programmes?

Ben: Yeah.

Q: Can you tell me a bit more about that. (20)

Ben: I don't really think that violence is a good way to solve things, so when I see wrestling I think, 'What's the point of doing that?' It's stupid cos you can break people's legs and make them bleed and think well what's the point of that cos you're just going to lose blood if you do fight.

Q: So...that actually influences you in a negative way, so much as you would definitely not do something, after you've seen the effects.

Ben: Yeah.

Q: What about some thing like Tom and Jerry?

Ben: Oh, I know, that's just like a TV programme, that's fictional. But like wrestling's non-fictional and it's proper violence and that's proper people doing it, but Tom and Jerry, that's just a TV programme... (30)

Q: Do you watch the news at all?

Ben: Sometimes, yeah.

Q: Does that make...if you see violence on television there, how does that affect you?

Ben: It makes me feel as if... we're the same inside, we might not be the same on the outside, but we're the same on the inside. Why do we keep on fighting?

Q: But does that influence you in your future? I mean does that make you resolve in your own mind, 'Right, I'm not going to go there, or I'm going to do this, or I'm not going to do that?

Ben: Yeah, I'm not going to do that in the future, because...if you do do violence then the only place you're going to go is into prison. (40)

Q: So...would you say you see more violence in reality or on, on television? Or what about computer games?

Ben: I don't go on fighting games on the computers because I'm not interested in fighting games, I'm more interested in cars.

Q: Ah, yes, I know somebody who works for L---- and drives a nice, fast sports car. Is that the sort of thing you'd be interested in?

Ben: Yeah, I want to be a mechanic when I'm older and fix cars and put different designs on them.

Q: What has given you that idea... to do that?

Ben: My dad can ...fixes cars. Um, one time I was about five years old and I...one time my dad couldn't fix this light and I pushed it a little way and I fixed it and that's when I became interested. (50)

Q: So a feeling of satisfaction, actually having done something, and mended something?

Ben: Yeah.

Q: When you were five?!

Ben: Yes.

Q: So that's left a pretty strong impression on you?

Ben: Yeah.

 TURNS BACK TO ABBY (Sorts through questionnaire for a moment)

One of the things you said was 'School makes you *better*'. What did you mean by that?

Abby: Helps me learn at school.

Q: Can't you do that on the internet?

Abby: Well, (inaudible)...set up. (60)

Q: (laughs) Fair enough. But what about magazines? You can learn things from magazines?

Abby: I don't have time to read them.

Q: You don't have time? Why? Why don't you have time?

Abby: I'm either outside playing football with my brother or watching TV, or out doing clubs.

Q: Well what about TV? You can learn things from TV.

Abby: Yeah.

Q: Documentaries and stuff like that, you'd learn a whole load of stuff from documentaries which you can't perhaps learn in the same way from school?

Abby: Yeah, but, this brings you through it, doesn't it?

Q: How do you mean?

Abby: You do it five times a week, so you're bound to learn something... (70)

Q: Are the things that you learn in school similar to the sort of stuff you can learn from the television or from the internet or some other place?

Abby: Not really. Not that prepares you for life.

Q: Which prepares you for life?

Abby: School.

Q: How?

Abby: making friends.

Q: OK, You've actually mentioned something social: you learn how to make friends at school. Are you both saying that you don't think you can make friends outside of school?

Abby: Yeah, of course. But, I guess there's the chance to make loads of friends in school, but...

Q: What, because there are loads of people?

Abby: Yeah.

(80)

Q: What about outside of school? Have you got a big family?

Abby: Yeah, me mum an me dad have got about five brothers and sisters.

Q: So what about learning to make friends? If you're saying that it's quite important to learn how to make friends...then surely you can learn those sorts of skills among your family?

Abby: Well, yeah, but they're family though, got to be nice to them, haven't I?

Q: (laughs) So are you saying you don't have to be nice to your friends then?.

Abby: Yeah, I'll be nice to my friends if I want to; a family's related to me, so...

Q: (laughs) OK.

URNS TO BEN

**What's your take on this?...that your family have got to be nice to you or you've got to be nice to your family?
Do you have the same views?**

(90)

Ben: Well if you don't be nice to your family, your family's going to think that you're kind of a rude person and they aren't going to buy you stuff and treat you to nice things, but if you be nice to them and polite and give them manners then they're going to be polite and give you manners back.

Q: OK, OK, yes.

Ben: So if you...you've got to treat people how you want to be tret...

Q: And where have you got that from?

Ben: I've learnt that from my mum.

Q: Ah, so not school?

Ben: Er, yeah, and school, but I mostly learnt it from my mum when I was little child, because I used to be...I didn't used to give my manners and then...

(100)

(A short interruption).

URNS TO ABBY

Q: (Reviews her point about learning to make friends in school) What is the most important thing, do you think, that you learn in school? Is it about making friends, is it knowledge that you gain, is it skills? What do you think?

Abby: Well knowledge and skills, cos there's lots of clubs...(inaudible)

Q: Are those more important than learning how to make friends? (110)

Abby: Er, no, 'cos friends can help you through life, but you just learn skills in clubs, don't you?

Q: That's a really interesting point, that friends help you through life. Don't skills help you through life as well?

Abby: Well, yeah, but if you choose skills over friends, you won't have any support.

Ben: Skills you can learn from, at clubs but if you have a best friend, they're going to stick by all your life and they're going to give you good advice when you're in trouble and then you're going to give them good advice when they're in trouble, but...

Q: You have a lot of faith, that they're going to give you good advice?

Ben: Yeah, 'cos I've got a good friend, but it's Abby's brother.

Q: Oh, right?

Ben: And, um, he gives me good advice and I give him good advice. (120)

Q: OK, so you look out for one another?

Ben: Yeah.

Q: And you care about what happens to one another? Do you think you could do those things though, without school? Is school necessary to have those sort of friends, if you're saying friends are the thing... the investment for life, don't you think you could do without school?

Ben: You can't go without school because if you didn't go to school you wouldn't learn about things that have happened in the past or what, how to do things in the future.

Q: Don't you think you could learn all that on the internet? If you had a different system, which was individual learning via the internet, and didn't involve having to come into this building, wouldn't it be as effective? (130)

URNS TO FIRST INTERVIEWEE

Abby: Well I've got most of my friends here, you can't exactly go on the internet and go: 'Friends of Abby'!

Q: (laughter) Why not? You have...chat rooms and all the rest of it. So you can still chat on the internet as well as learn. Why do you need the building?

Abby: I've met most of my friends there.

(Pause for interruption).

Q: OK, back to you two. I don't know what your mum or your dad do, what do they do?

Abby: My mum works at the ---- (name of a shop or company?) My dad's a professional decorator, he works for himself.

Q: What other things do they enjoy doing? Have any of the things they've enjoyed doing influenced you? (140)

Abby: Well my dad does the gardening and does cars and that's influenced my brother to, to like cars and...

Q: But what about you?

Abby: Me? My dad used to take me to the park to play football and that, that's why I'm so interested in it now. I go out with Ben...

Q: But aren't you interested in cars?

Abby: Not really, they're boring.

Q: (laughs) Why?

Abby: They just drive you from A to B and ...You just need them to get to places.

Q: You don't fancy designing your own kind of super sports car that you could drive around in?

Abby: When you take your driving test, you're just going to have a banger anyway, in't you? So you can't exactly have a sports car first time. You can't afford it.

Q: But if you, you know, picked up your dad's interest in this and he helped you along with it, don't you think you could get an interesting job in designing cars, like Ben says he'd like to do? (150)

Abby: I could, Dad would help me through it, but I'm not interested in it now.

Q: What about your mum, has she got any other interests that she...enjoys doing?

Abby: She enjoys working, like with my homework and she likes going on the computer, gardening and stuff.

Q: Has that influenced you?

Abby: Yes, to do my homework, but...

Q: (Pause to refer back to questionnaire sheet)

You talked about influences. One of your influences was idols, what sort of idols influence you?

Abby: Actresses and that.

Q: From film or from television?

(160)

Abby: Both.

Q: Can you name anybody in particular?

Abby: Er, no, not really.

Q: What sort of programmes? What sort of films?

Abby: Oh, soaps, action, horror and that, they're all good.

Q: And does it... influence you in wanting to be in the movie business, or acting business? Or do the kind of characters they play have an influence on you?

Abby: They just make me excited and wish I could do something like that.

Q: Do you ever watch anything, you mentioned 'horror', that actually gives you a negative influence? You think, 'Oh, there is no way I would do that or get involved in that or anything like that?'

Abby: No, I get scared easily, so I wouldn't want to be in a horror.

Q: But you enjoy watching them?

Abby: Oh, yeah.

Q: Why?

(170)

Abby: Just exciting, you never know what's going to happen next.

Q: So is that something you want out of your life, interest, excitement and to be frightened? Out of your future life?

Abby: Well, I'm frightened of lots of things, but... I wouldn't like it to all be like that. 'Cos you never know what's going to happen next, but sometimes you can't know what's going to happen.

Q: OK, out of all the things, what do you think influenced you positively the most about what you want out of your, you know what your ambitions are for your life in the future? What would you say is the single most influential thing, um, that gives you the ideas about who or whatever you want to be?

Abby: TV like The Bill and things like that, 'cos it makes you wanna...and the news, make you want to stop people that are terrorists and don't go by the law. (190)

Q: OK, that's an interesting answer.

REDIRECTS THE QUESTION FOR BEN

...[What] is the biggest influence on you, do you recon about what you want from your life ahead of you?

Ben: I want to be popular... I want people to like me.

Q: Why, why has that influenced you so much?

Ben: Because in the school not very many people like me, I haven't got very many friends.

Q: So the issue of friends, which has come up for everybody pretty much, is the most important thing for you, rather than knowledge or jobs or skills?

Ben: Yeah, I'd rather have friends and no job and no skills, I'd rather have friends.

Q: That's really interesting, OK, thank you both. (190)

THE SECOND TWO INTERVIEWEES FROM THIS GROUP ARE SHOWN INTO THE ROOM

Q: (Consults questionnaires) You do Tai-Kwan Do?

Deepa: Yeah.

Q: Where, why do you do it? *It might be* interesting to start with that.

Deepa: Well, I just saw it on a poster and decided I'd just come up and see it...

Q: So you didn't know anybody, you just saw it and thought...is it the image or, had you heard about it before?

Deepa: Um, no, my mate goes though, so I sort of heard it off of her.

Q: Oh, right...and how long have you been doing it for then?

Deepa: Um, about three months, I think.

Q: And is this something that you're continuing?

Deepa: Yeah.. because, um, it's something that you can like (pause), er, I don't know how to explain it...

Q: What do you get out of doing it? (200)

Deepa: Um, self-discipline and just generally knowing how to stand up for yourself and...

Q: And that's important to you?

Deepa: Um, sort of, yeah.

Q: Does it give you self-esteem?

Deepa: Yeah, you feel more confident when you come out of (inaudible)

Q: Is it something that you can actually see doing when you're twenty-five?

Deepa: Probably not, but, um...

Q: Maybe? Or something similar?

Deepa: I don't know, I like *stocks*, I could, I don't know...

Q: OK, if you weren't doing that, would you be doing something else that's active and exciting?

Deepa: Er, I don't know really.

(210)

Q: So you don't have ambitions in that kind of line? I'm a rock climber... and I can't ever see myself kind of giving that up. I just wondered how you felt about the things you'd like for your adult life.

Deepa: Oh, right, well, it is interesting to carry on with it, but I wouldn't like to, you know...I don't really see myself doing anything like active, sort of ...or really extreme, or active like that.

Q: You don't?

Deepa: No.

Q: Why? What about your family and things, is there anybody there who does stuff like Tai Kwan Do as an adult now?

Deepa: Er, no, it's just me and my little brother.

Q: So neither your mum nor your dad do anything like that?

(220)

Deepa: No

Q: What do they think of you doing it?

Deepa: They think it's a good idea. They think it's quite interesting to do that.

Q: OK.

URNS TO LAST INTERVIEWEE

Carl, you were saying 'Yes' to climbing or something like that. Tell me about the things that you actually do outside of school.

Carl: I do scouts and I've been with scouts...I started at the earliest stage I could when I was a beaver...

Q: How old?

Carl: Um, I'm not sure how old it was.

Q: Six, seven?

Carl: Yeah.

Q: Right.

Carl: Then I went up to cubs and I was there for quite a long while.

Q: What sort of stuff did you do?

Carl: We go on camps, we learn how to make fires, um, first aid, we go rock climbing and canoeing and... (230)

Q: Do, do you anticipate still doing that when you're an adult?

Carl: Um, yeah, because you can go, from scouts you can go really high up to becoming a leader as well. So I wouldn't mind, I'd like to be a leader of a pack.

Q: But before you go, Abby, do you still see yourself playing football into you know, your forties, fifties or so?

Abby: Yeah and the rugby, I love them both.

Q: Rugby as well?

Abby: Yes, I went to the youth games (inaudible).

Q: Would you like a job that enables you to be doing something like that?

Abby: Yeah: a karate instructor or a football coach or something like that.

URNS TO BEN

Do you do anything like that, um, outside of school? Do you do any activities that you can see yourself doing when you're older?

Ben: I only play football, but I can't see myself doing that when I'm older.

Q: Why not?

Ben: Because most of my time I'll be probably fixing cars and that's the only thing I'd like to do.

Q: OK, well I wish you luck with fixing cars. Excellent, thanks very much. (240)

ABBY AND BEN LEAVE

Back to Carl at the moment. You say about, that you'd like to be like Jamie Oliver? Um, do you watch a lot of television?

Carl: Yeah, I do. I watch loads.

Q: What sort of programmes do you watch?

Carl: Comedies, Reality, um, when I say 'Reality' I mean like, Ten Years Younger or How Clean is Your House.

Q: Big Brother?

Carl: Big Brother, yeah, um...

Q: Do you watch those sorts of things more than films?

Carl: Probably yeah, cos I, once I've saw a film I think the second time is boring through, so I watch most things and I watch cooking programmes as well and everything.

Q: Do you play videos, do you play games on the computer?

Carl: Play station, yeah.

(250)

Q: A lot?

Carl: Um, yeah, I've, since I did the quiz I've met someone and like he's a game tester and that, I'm thinking about that, it's really cool.

Q: Oh, OK....Do you go on the internet?

Carl: Yeah I do...But I don't...

Q: Chat rooms?

Carl: Yeah, I'm on (names a chat room)

Q: So do you recon you actually go on a computer, watch film and watch television more than actually going outside and doing things, or not necessarily going outside but like doing stuff, reading or art or whatever else inside the house?

Carl: I think it's about the same 'cos I go out with my mates quite a lot, you know, in the evening, um, we just hang out in W... or somewhere round here, or sometimes we'll go watch a film or something.

Q: Who do you think is a bigger influence on you: your mates or your family...or the school? (260)

Carl: Probably my mates. Probably, I think.

Q: Really?

Carl: Yeah.

Q: Why? Why more your mates than anyone else?

Carl: Well, I think the school has a bit of an influence really. I don't know, it's... Probably school really 'cos like they make the decisions like, help you to make your decisions and everything.

Q: Does the school help you to make your decisions more that your family helps you to make decisions?

Carl: No. No, they don't.

Q: The school doesn't help you more?

Carl: No. my family helps me more. My family's really supportive and everything. My mum knows what I want to be and she's getting me a drum kit for my birthday, 'cos I'm taking that up as well.

Q: Where did you get the idea to be a drummer? Where's that come from? (270)

Carl: Well, I wanted to play an instrument and I wasn't sure really what I wanted to play and Ms D----- gave me a couple of instruments and one of them was the guitar, but I thought I don't really like that much and one of them was drums and I thought 'Well..' I tried that out and tried it for about a year in Year Seven and I really liked it so I've carried on with it.

Q: So school actually gave you opportunities to try different things?

Carl: Yeah.

Q: So, it's kind of helped you towards an interest, um, which...would you have had that opportunity at home? Drums at home? Dad's got drums? Mum got drums? Anybody got drums?

Carl: No, nobody's got drums, but I was actually nagging at my mum before that I wanted to play the drums, so, but when I mentioned it to Ms-----, she said there was no spaces, but then someone dropped out and we had a space and I got in it.

Q: OK, so what do your mum and dad do? (280)

Carl: My mum is, works at ----- Boxes, she's like a floor manager and everything and my dad is manager of M----'s News and my grandma like owns it so.

Q: Oh, right, so...are they businesses...you're thinking of going into, you know ...?

Carl: No, no

Q: Why not?

Carl: Well, I'd prefer to do like, something I like, more than my family's business and everything.

Q: That's interesting.

URNS TO DEEPA

What about you? What plans have you got for your future?

Deepa: Don't know. Depends what you mean.

Q: In any direction. Either work, or, um, like we were talking about, kind of like hobbies, we were talking about your Tai Kwan Do, or family. Um, what sort of things? (290)

Deepa: Um well, like I wanted to have like a career as um, either something like a fashion designer, or, um something like an actress or something. Um, yeah.

Q: Where has that come from? Where have you got that idea from?

Deepa: I don't know, just all me mates go to the ----- an' I got the idea from that. Quite cool.

Q: What so you talked to the sister of a friend of yours who was saying: 'What about fashion designing?' ?

Deepa: Oh no, about the whole actress thing. The whole B.Tech .

Q: Have you looked into it at all?

Deepa: Well, no not really. But, um...

Q: It's an idea?

Deepa : Yeah.

Q: What about, what do parents think of this?

Deepa: Um, I don't know, I don't really talk to them...about it much. I just sort of think about it, just, yeah. S'pose they'd be OK with it, you know, yeah.

Q: So do your parents kind of, um ,drive, I don't mean 'drive you on', but really encourage you to pass exams?

Some people think exams are important, some don't, what do you... (300)

Deepa: Well, they don't exactly like, um, you know, say 'You've got to'. But, they encourage me and then they don't exactly get really disappointed if I don't do well. But you can, you know, tell they are, but, y'know, they're not exactly like really angry, y'know, or anything.

Q: Have you got brothers and sisters?

Deepa: Yeeeah...

Q: (laughs at tone of voice) older or younger?

Deepa: Um, two older sisters and one younger brother.

Q: And, um, what do they do?

Deepa: Um, what do you mean?

Q: Are they working or are they at school or are they at college?

Deepa: Um, well, both my sisters work and my little brother goes to school.

Q: Right, what do they work as, your sisters?

Deepa: Um, sister works, um, at administration or something in the council and my sister works at this place called ----- or something.

Q: OK. Right.

(310)

URNS BACK TO CARL

(Glances over his questionnaire again)

OK, Carl, Ibiza. Also you crossed out going over to America! I don't know why you crossed that...

Carl: Can you read that?!

Q: Yeah, sure, I read every bit, I read it over several times *before coming* here...so why Ibiza?

Carl: It's like, 'cos there's a party sort of place that everyone goes and me and my mates decided we're all going to go down there when we're older.

Q: Where did you get that idea from?

Carl: Um, holiday, no, that airport show.

Q: Oh, yes, I enjoy that...

Carl: Where everyone goes...over to Ibiza and that holiday rep. show thing.

Q: Right

Carl: That one.

Q: Right, so off the television again?

Carl: Yeah

Q: Parents ever been to Ibiza?

Carl: Um, we used to go quite a lot, but then we went America one year and we absolutely loved it there and we been back there every year except for last year when me dad couldn't get any time off work, so it was me and me mum and my sister and my sister's mate and we all went down Ibiza.

(320)

Q: And had a good time, I guess?

Carl: Yeah.

Q: So can you see yourself doing that into your future? When you're twenty-five?

Carl: Going Ibiza?

Q: Yeah, why not?

Carl: I'd prefer to go to America really, cos I really like it there.

Q: Whereabouts?

Carl: Orlando, the Disney part of it.

Q: OK, right.

URNS TO DEEPA (refers again to the questionnaire)

Where did you get the idea about sky-diving? There were several other people who mentioned it as well.

Deepa: Um...I just, I don't know, I saw it on TV once and I just thought, 'Wow, I really want to do that when I'm older'.

Q: OK. What was it about it that made you...that appealed?

Deepa: I don't know just the fact that, you know, you control it yourself and you know, like, just, that one moment when you let go and stuff, yeah. I suppose it's kind of like exciting because it's like an extreme sort of...

Q: It's an extreme sport, sure. Yeah. (330)

Deepa: Yeah,

Q: So does... this tally in with the acting at all? Do you like the buzz, I mean, acting is meant to be a buzz in some ways 'cos you're on show in a sense, you're talking about, y'know, the buzz of sky-diving. Is that something you're looking for in your future life? Or is it something that is contemporary to being a teenager, presumably you're thirteen now?

Deepa: Yeah. Um, yeah, I mean, I'd like to think of myself as quite adventurous and I wouldn't like want to end up something, doing a career that I'm not really, like happy with, so I like sky-diving and being an actress and stuff. It's just like exciting and 'll keep me like...I don't know...(pause)

Q: You like having fun?

Deepa: Yeah.

Q: OK, but do you see ...what you're going to get out of your adult life as being fun?

Deepa: Um, I don't know. Er...

Q: Maybe?

Deepa: Maybe, yeah.

Q: What about you, Carl? Adult life: fun? (340)

Carl: Yeah.

Q: How much does school prepare you for it then?

Carl: It prepares you quite a lot, because most jobs you need good grades and things 'n' school pushes you to get the good grades and helps you along. And like some kids'll say that teachers are being strict, but like they're being strict for your own good really, so you get a better job when you're older and things.

Q: All the right answers there, Carl (laughs).

URNS BACK TO DEEPA

OK How does school help you, you've talked about, um, sky-diving and talked about being an actress and you've talked about, er, Tai Kwan Do. Does school come into any of these ambitions at all in any way?

Deepa: Well, y'know, it helps you when you, like, um I mean we generally just do plays or something in English and like...

Q: It gets you started on ideas? Connections?

Deepa: Yeaah. It like introduces like quite a few ideas and stuff for careers and just generally what you might want to be when you're older and...

Q: Do both your parents work?

Deepa: Yeah.

Q: What does your mum do?

(350)

Deepa: She works at J----- (a company), I'm not sure what she does.

Q: And your dad?

Deepa: (A company handling post and parcels) office thing.

Q: OK, do you want to do anything like either of your parents?

Deepa: No! (with feeling) (laughter) So boring!

Q: OK, I think we'll leave it there, before you descend into a depression!

Potential influences exerted on individuals within sample to include parental interests and occupations

(The location of the catchment area for both schools fell within areas that had 80% and over employment rates according to HMSO Social Trends in 2001).

Parent occupations were given during the interviews. The rest of the information presented in this chart was written down by the pupils in their responses to questionnaire 1 several weeks before the interviews.

Name	Exp./ Fm.	Exp./ Md.	Exp./ Fr.	Parental Interests	Parent Occupation
Abby	7	3	2	Taking kids out	M – employed by company or shop F – professional decorator
Ben	7	2	3	F – fixing cars M – chilling out	M – at home F – mechanic
Carl	6	3	2	F – football M – dolls' houses	M – company floor manager F – manages family news agency
Deepa	6	3	3	F – collecting cars	M – works for a company F – works for parcel company
Ed	6	2	3	Going out	M – bank employee F – works at airport
Faye	5	2	2	Gardening/ shopping/ going out.	M – radiographer F – (not mentioned)
Gary	5	2	2	F – likes football	M – teacher F – buys/sells/rents property
Hannah	4	1	3	-	M – at home F – works w. computers
India	4	2	2	Going out	(Parents have nothing to do with legal system)
Jim	5	1	2	-	M – ? F – woodwork
Kim	5	3	2	Canoeing and cycling	M – takes people to hospital F – paramedic
Liam	7	2	3	Rally driving	M – works w. children F – drives lorries
Mia	6	3	3	Going to pub and walking	M – framework typer for council F – government contract director
Nicky	3	2	3	Looking around garden centres	M – works in care home F – mushroom farm employee
Oliver	3	3	3	Going to pub	M – civil servant F – at home
Paul	4	3	2	Shooting	M – looks after old people F – assistant manager at quarry
Questa	5	2	2	Gardening/ TV/ being w. family	M – at home F – ?
Ruth	3	2	3	Reading	M – cook in pub F – policeman
Sam	6	1	1	Fishing and watching TV	M – works w. elderly F – works at printers
Tanya	5	1	2	-	M – cleaner/ dinner lady/ works nights in children's home F – factory technician

Appendix 6

Questionnaire 2 Motivating Factors

Findings for questions 1 / 2 / 3: What do I want to do, to have and to be?

Y indicates 'yes', this element was indicated on the questionnaire response.

Motivation	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
<i>Family/relationship</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Occupations</i>	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
<i>Possessions</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y
<i>Pleasure/State of mind</i>	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	-	Y
<i>Personal qualities</i>	Y	Y	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y
<i>Money</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	-	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	-
<i>Ethics / morality</i>	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	Y
<i>Friends</i>	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	-
<i>Lifestyle/Image</i>	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y
<i>Travel/Location</i>	-	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	Y	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	-	Y
<i>Qualifications</i>	-	-	Y	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	Y	-	-	Y
<i>Activities</i>	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	-	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-
<i>Success (+ Fame)</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	Y	-	Y
<i>Role models/ celebs</i>	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	Y
<i>Skills / subjects</i>	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-
<i>Popularity</i>	-	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Appendix 7

BAY MIDDLE
NICKY
Group2 (less exposure)

Mum works in a care home. Dad works on a mushroom farm.

At 25 *'I would like to be a vet or a animal carer. I want to still be happy and great to hang out with.'* I don't want to be a *'bossy person'*. (questionnaire)

(Do?)

university
vet
marriage/husband at 22
twin babies at 23
house

Qualifications
Occupations
Family
Possessions

I've always wanted to be a vet, I have quite a few pets at home. Dad helps me look after them, he grew up w pets. (5 - 25)

(Have?)

good job - vet
husband / children
pets
car
laptop

Occupation
Family
Possessions

(Be?)

happy
loving family
adventurous
holiday abroad

Pleasure
Family
Personal Quality
Travel

I don't want to do the same work as my parents: *'It's not my thing really'* They enjoy their work, but to me it's not *'adventurous'*. (160)
'I love animals and they love me.' (35)

4. Who/what influences me?

wanting to *'stick with my best mates'*
I like going places
wanting *'to do my best in tests'*

Friends
Travel
Qualifications

I used to watch animal programmes on TV. (165)

Friends are very important to me (284)
Don't remember Dad introducing me to pets *'It's just something I...grew up with'*, from about 7 when I first asked for one. (27)

5. How does school help me?

To learn things
Helps me be a step closer to being a vet
learn about computers so can store information
helps me get on better w other people

Skills & knowledge
Social skills

If I didn't have to, I would still go to school... *'at times, anyway, because I don't want to sit around at home being bored and not knowing much...I still want to learn.'* (230)
I'm not sure about learning things like Art and Geography which I'm not keen on, but History: yes. *'I like to learn at school. I don't like reading up books or watching TV about information.'* (282)
'I've got loads of friends here' they're as important as the information. (293)
All you learn in school is useful *'it plays a good part in life, even the things you don't really need'*.
Even the things that are boring... *'life isn't always fair but you have to put up with some things'*
School isn't always a good place for learning... *home is.* (338)

Appendix 8

Squirrel Cottage,
Low Road East,
North Tuddenham,
Norfolk,
NR20 3DQ.

10th July 2006

Dear

Thank you very much for allowing me to undertake the research for my Doctor of Education degree into how young teenagers use or 'consume' school to get what they want out of their future lives, at Abington High School.

I have enclosed a copy of the conclusions I have reached after analysing the tape and questionnaire data I obtained from the interviews with pupils at both schools. All the pupils were most informative to talk with and I enjoyed considering and listening to their opinions. A graph from my research showing the sorts of things the pupils indicated they wanted for their future lives, in terms of what they wanted to do, to have and to be is also included, as I thought this might be of interest to you.

There is also an adapted sheet of 'findings' that I have produced for those that took part and I would be very grateful if you could pass these on (with the covering letter) to their present school.

*There were a couple of points I thought you might find of particular interest, especially in the light of the interest I know you have in Lawrence Stenhouse's work on curriculum development and I have highlighted these on the sheet. I have in fact used a quote from his book in my thesis that you kindly directed me towards: 'to accept the discipline of learning what appears to be useless for the present in the trust that it will serve in the future... appears likely to commend itself to only a small minority of pupils' (from *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, 1975)*

Although this was only a very small scale study, the findings do seem to support other research that suggests that while most pupils enjoy school, they do not necessarily feel it is useful or specifically relevant to their future lives. The approach taken by Jean Ruddock and others into making education more effective and improving school experience for pupils by increasing pupil participation in their learning process may well be one way in which to help rectify this problem.

I have changed the names of the pupils and the school in line with accepted practice to safeguard those who have kindly contributed to this research.

If there is any further information you would like regarding the findings of this research, or if you would like at some point to read part or the whole of the thesis, please let me know.

I am also hoping to use this research to write a couple of articles for publication, in this event I would send you a copy. Should I produce any other publishable material from this research, I will do likewise.

Once again, thank you for your support and help in enabling me to complete this work.

Squirrel Cottage,
Low Road East,
North Tuddenham,
Norfolk,
NR20 3DQ.

10th July 2006

Dear

I am indebted to... Middle School for allowing me to undertake the research there for my Doctor of Education degree into how young teenagers use or 'consume' school to get what they want out of their future lives.

I have enclosed a copy of the conclusions I have reached after analysing the tape and questionnaire data I obtained from the interviews at both schools and have highlighted a couple of points that you might find of particular interest. The pupils were most informative to talk with and I enjoyed considering and listening to their opinions. A graph from my research showing the sorts of things the pupils indicated they wanted for their future lives, in terms of what they wanted to do, to have and to be is also included, as I thought this might be of interest to you.

I have also produced an adapted sheet of 'findings' for those that took part. I enclose one of these here and have sent the rest to... High School to be given to the pupils that were involved.

Although this was only a very small scale study, the findings do seem to support other research that suggests that while most pupils enjoy school, they do not necessarily feel it is useful or specifically relevant to their future lives. The approach taken by Jean Ruddock and others into making education more effective and improving school experience for pupils by increasing pupil participation in their learning process, may well be one way in which to help rectify this problem.

I have changed the names of the pupils and the school in line with accepted practice to safeguard those who have kindly contributed to this research.

If there is any further information you would like regarding the findings of this research, or if you would like at some point to read part or the whole of the thesis, please let me know.

I am also hoping to use this research to write a couple of articles for publication, in this event I would send you a copy. Should I produce any other publishable material from this research, I will do likewise.

Once again, thank you for your support and help in enabling me to complete this work.

Appendix 8 (cont'd.)

Findings of research

- Most pupils in the sample stated that they would come to school, even if they were not mandated to do so and even if they could learn all they felt they needed to via media communications.
- Most stated that the reason for this was because school was a locus for meeting their friends, whom they considered to be more important to their lives than the knowledge they could gain in school, although in some cases this was only just the case.
- Some indicated that the interactive nature of the classroom made it easier to learn and several indicated that having the support and company of friends made the process both easier and more pleasant.
- Half the boys in this sample expressed the desire for an occupation similar to a parent or close family member and seemed to have been influenced towards this ambition to some extent by their family background and family value systems, although the individual attitudes varied greatly and did not preclude interest or enjoyment of unrelated subjects in school. Influence from a mother and a brother were included in this group.
- No girl indicated an interest in pursuing an occupation similar to a parent, however there was evidence of parents supporting other interests and activities as well as occupational ambitions that were different from their own occupations.
- There was evidence of media influence in giving form to aspirations. Media representations of occupational types (for example police officers) and celebrities produced by, or represented through, the media (for example Bill Gates and Jamie Oliver) provided conscious examples of potential role models.

- Many pupils demonstrated a weak conceptual link between school and ambitions for their futures. School was perceived as a place where exams were taken, but the connections between chosen occupations and the subject knowledge that might be needed, or the qualifications that might enable employment in the desired field, were hazy in most cases, whilst with some pupils no connections had been made at all and the possible role of school in achieving ambitions did not seem to have been considered.
- Although less than half the sample group mentioned qualifications as a motivational issue, it was a subject mentioned by twice as many pupils from the rural school as from the urban school.
- School was considered to be more helpful in terms of teaching and developing skills. The skills mentioned tended to refer more to social skills than to basic academic skills (literacy and numeracy), or to activity skills, although these were mentioned.
- School was considered by a few pupils as a place that offered windows on different pathways: the opportunity to consider options for the future. However, no pupil indicated a view of school as a clear pathway towards a specific goal.
- Consumption was sometimes surprising, unpredictable and very personalised.
- Consumption sometimes appeared to be unconnected to occupational ambitions or parental interests.
- A few pupils demonstrated a belief in line with educational ethics that they would receive a 'good' education at school.

Appendix 9

*Squirrel Cottage,
Low Road East,
North Tuddenham,
Norfolk,
NR20 3DQ.*

11th July 2006

Dear Headteacher,

A couple of years ago a few of the pupils from your school were involved in some research I undertook for my Doctor of Education degree while they were still at....

I would like very briefly to give them some feedback from the research and so if it is at all possible, I should be grateful if you would let the pupils named on the list below have a copy of the sheet on 'Ambitions' that I have enclosed with this letter.

Thank you in anticipation.

Ms. R. Sutton

AMBITIONS

You may remember helping me with my research a while ago.

You answered two questionnaires about what you wanted to do in the future, the sort of person you wanted to be and what you wanted to have. Then I asked you how school helped you to achieve all of this, even the things that didn't seem to have much to do with school.

I really enjoyed interviewing you and hearing what you had to say about your ambitions and the sorts of things that influenced you. Thank you very much for taking part.

Many of you said you enjoyed school and would still want to attend, even if you didn't have to and for many of you this seemed to have a lot to do with friends. I agree that friendships made in school are important. This week-end I am going to a school reunion with people I was at school with 30+ years ago!

Some of the boys said they would like to work in a similar sort of job to someone in their own family, although none of the girls expressed this desire. Others of you had ideas about being famous like Jamie Oliver, or getting involved in veterinary or demolition work. In fact your ideas for occupations were really interesting. So were the aspirations you mentioned outside of the world of paid work and I wish all of you the best of luck, whether you would like to sky-dive, swim with dolphins, get rich or just have a peaceful, happy life.

One thing that seemed to be felt by most of you, was that while you enjoyed quite a few of the things you did in school, you didn't always feel that what you were doing or learning connected closely with what you wanted in the future.

It would be really interesting to know whether you still felt the same way, or if anything has happened, big or small, to change what you want out of life.

Anyway, whatever your goals are, I'd just like to wish you the very best and thank you for taking part in my research.