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HOW THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERS AFFECT THEIR DAUGHTERS' EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence that a mother has upon her daughter's educational decision-making processes that occur between the age of 14 and the age upon leaving education and, also, her educational and career aspirations. It focuses on subject choice at GCSE, decisions to progress to further/higher education, when to leave education, choice of future career and the mother-daughter relationship. The research findings were based on qualitative research carried out in the form of semi-structured, tape-recorded, interviews with 60 mother-daughter pairings (daughters being aged 14-23). The findings show that mothers have contributed to a change in the educational aspirations and achievements of their daughters. Mothers emphasise the acquisition of skills, academic qualifications and they believe in the value of education. Their aspirations for their daughters are passed on via the mother-daughter relationship and resulting messages have a very strong influence upon the daughters with regard to education and, also, help to shape the daughters' educational experiences and career aspirations. Daughters acknowledge the importance of education and qualifications and know that they are essential for success in the labour market. They desire careers and are happy to embark upon several years of study to acquire relevant qualifications to be able to enter their desired occupation. However, although daughters desire rewarding and well-paid careers they are prepared to shelve these careers, for at least a minimum of five years, in order to perform childcare duties and responsibilities at home. Although they hear their mothers' messages about the value of education and the benefits it entails and thus make declarations about careers, daughters' long-term intentions are to revert to the same lifestyle that their mothers had in order to remain at home with young children. Gender continues to influence girls' behaviour and it is this that appears to have the greatest impact on a daughter's long-term career aspirations.

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DEDICATION

This work is sincerely dedicated to my beloved mother, Brenda Sealey, and my late father, Edward Sealey, for their unfailing love, sacrifice and patience. I am indebted to them for their help, support – emotional and financial – and guidance.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

During the second half of the twentieth century there were extensive social and economic changes within UK society. Women's rights had improved through the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and Equal Opportunities policies in the 1980s. Due to such legislation and policies school girls had been encouraged to widen their career aspirations and they had become better informed about the range of careers available to them and were also considering the possibility of working in non-traditional areas of employment. Whilst their mothers had been brought up in a time when society believed that a woman's place was in the home raising children, school girls of the 1980s and 1990s were beginning to challenge this traditional stereotype of women's role as housewives and mothers and were prepared to look further than this for their main role in life. Changes in attitudes and beliefs had been demonstrated in the last two decades by the ever-increasing numbers of women engaged in full-time employment.

Before the 1970s most sociological studies about education had focused on boys and class inequalities and it had been the educational experiences and performances of boys that had been analysed. Research findings and results were considered to be applicable to both sexes (Charles, 2002). However, since the 1970s with the growth of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, Equal Opportunities legislation and the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988,

sexual divisions in education came to be researched extensively. During the last three decades sociologists began substantial research into the experiences of girls at school and their academic aspirations and future career aspirations and it was argued that girls' attitudes and values were changing (Sharpe, 1994, Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995, Arnot et al, 1999).

In addition, following the introduction of the National Curriculum and GCSEs, the proportion of girls achieving five A-C grades at GCSE increased rapidly and girls began outperforming boys in virtually all subjects including traditionally 'masculine' subjects such as mathematics and science (Sukhnandan, 1999). Girls' priorities had changed and there was a value placed upon education (Sharpe, op. cit). Francis (2000a) found that pupils no longer took for granted the belief that girls were less academically able than boys. The educational attainment of girls had improved significantly at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century and this was coupled with girls' changing attitudes and values.

1.2   Identification Of The Problem

As the twenty-first century began I considered that a study was needed to examine whether girls' attitudes had changed when compared with the attitudes held by their mothers with regard to education and future careers. It was discovered that no research had been undertaken with two generations of females from one family into the areas of education and careers.

When I began to identify the area that I wished to investigate I started the research process from my personal standpoint and also from the role of autobiography. I

chose to research a topic within the area of the sociology of education as I am a teacher/lecturer and it meant it would be based upon my individual experience and knowledge. I wanted to interview women and girls only as I was interested in feminist research and wanted to hear about females' personal experiences with regard to education and their schooling. This led to the desire to interview both a mother and her daughter because they would have experienced two very different forms of education due to the introduction of equal opportunities legislation, the introduction of the comprehensive school system and also the raising of the school leaving age.

The interviewing of mother-daughter pairings, in the field of the sociology of education, was quite distinctive and unusual. These pairings were my unique point and offered the opportunity to compare and contrast views, attitudes and beliefs and also allowed for an examination of the quality of the mother-daughter relationship. Of particular interest was any possible influence the mother might have had upon her daughter's educational experiences and career aspirations. I wanted to hear the two generations discuss their schooling, any perceived successes and/or failures, their likes, dislikes, regrets and desires for the future and then be able to re/present their voices within academic research.

The focus of the research then became the influence of the mother upon her daughter's educational decision-making processes that occurred between the age of 14 and the age upon leaving education and also her educational and career aspirations. In particular, themes were subject choice at GCSE, the decision to progress to further education or leave education, any decision to progress to higher education and choice of future career. If the mother's educational experiences did

affect her daughter then how these experiences were conveyed was an area that I wanted to investigate.

1.3   Aims Of The Research

In the light of the research that had already been conducted with regard to girls' educational experiences and career aspirations and the conclusions from such research, I thought it imperative to conduct a study with mothers and their daughters to determine their views about education. I was particularly interested in changes within the family which is why I interviewed two generations of women. Thus, I conducted qualitative research by interviewing and tape-recording 60 mother-daughter pairings. The daughters were all aged between 14 and 23 and had made decisions about their schooling such as what subjects to study at GCSE.

The research was conducted in order to ascertain whether the attitudes and values held by girls today had changed dramatically from the attitudes held by their mothers who were educated before the introduction of the aforementioned equal opportunities legislation. The research investigated the decision-making processes that occurred during education. It also considered the mother's influence on her daughter with regard to decision-making and also about future career aspirations. It also considered mothers' and daughters' views of career women and the role of women in performing childcare duties.

The research also aimed to discover how girls viewed their own position and role in society and to study their behaviour patterns, academic choices and career choices. Another aim of the research was to determine whether the academic choices being

made by teenage girls in relation to their career aspirations demonstrated a confidence about their prospects and their future lives as working women.

The above factors led to the development of the research title: "How The Educational Experiences Of Mothers Affect Their Daughters' Educational Experiences And Career Aspirations".

1.4   The Structure Of The Research

The research findings have been divided into two sections: findings relating to the mothers and then findings relating to their daughters. Within each of these two sections there are four distinct themes. Theme one concerns general views such as mothers/daughters' views about the purpose of school/education and its value and also parental influence and encouragement. Theme two relates to decision-making and covers areas including choice of school subjects at age 14, whether to leave school at the earliest opportunity or to continue with further education, views on marriage and motherhood, progression to further education and progression to higher education. Theme three investigates choice of careers, views of women in the labour market, career women, role models and gender discrimination. Theme four explores the mother-daughter relationship and the influence of the mother via her 'spoken message' about education.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW – PARENTAL INFLUENCE

2.1   The Mother-Daughter Relationship

Due to the nature of the research that was conducted, it was important to commence with an analysis of the literature concerning the mother-daughter relationship. Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) demonstrated that research studies suggested that parents favoured sons over daughters in various ways, for example, fathers who had sons were more involved with their children whilst mothers of sons were more concerned about child obedience and the possible negative effects of their own employment. Although such studies have shown this favouritism towards sons one of the most influential relationships within families is the mother-daughter relationship as it is this that affects girls' formation of their gender identity.

Chodorow (1978) argued that the mother was the early caregiver and primary source of identification for all children and that girls learned about gender roles at home with their mothers. Social norms about the female role were translated and reproduced as the daughter identified primarily with the mother role and related emotionally to this role. The daughter would learn what her culture expected of her and she would form an image of herself. She would learn that women took the burden of childcare responsibilities and that men engaged in paid employment. She would also learn and internalise notions of femininity and motherhood through the relationship she had with her mother. In our culture femininity implies "dependency, non-assertiveness

and a tendency to live in and through others – to rely more on relationships than on one's sense of oneself" (Hammer, 1976, p.27).

A daughter continued to identify with her mother, thereby maintaining the mother-daughter relationship, while establishing her own personal identity (Dally, 1976). It could be seen, however, that a young boy's identification with his mother was broken and switched to his father (or another male figure). Our culture expected a son to separate from his mother. For a daughter, however, it was expected that she must develop her own personal identity that is separate from her mother, whilst at the same time accepting her mother as a model for her gender identity (Wodak and Schulz, 1986).

Chodorow (op. cit) also argued that there was a kind of shared identification between mothers and daughters because mothers identified with their daughters (having been daughters/girls themselves), often experiencing the daughter as an extension of themselves, whilst daughters identified with their mothers because they were of the same sex and were very involved with their mothers. But as Richardson (1993) claimed, this was not to ignore the powerful influence, both positive and negative, which fathers could have on their daughters. However, in a society divided by gender, "the mother-daughter relationship will be marked by the fact that, as two women, there is far greater potential for each to identify with the other's position" (Richardson, ibid, p.129).

As the daughter got older she needed to separate from her mother in order to achieve maturity and independence. She needed to assert herself in order to

establish a separate identity and to hold different values. This meant that the mother-daughter relationship was filled with conflict and for the daughter this separation, although vital to differentiate herself, may be very painful because of the special relationship she had had with her mother. Although wanting to be independent the daughter still needed her mother.

Miller-Day (2004) showed that debates during the past thirty years had focused on how mothers had been participants in the oppression of their own daughters. Some feminists have argued that as girls learned their gender identity from their mothers they had also learned such behaviours as the suppression of desire, deference and submission. This also led to a tendency to develop dependency and passivity. Mothers passed on strong messages about learning and knowledge to their daughters and these messages could have a "deep and pervasive influence" (Quinn, 2004, p.377). Mothers were perpetuating the oppression of women by socialising their daughters into traditional female roles and that was helping to limit daughters' academic success. Thus, female subordination was associated with continuing low achievement (Sharpe, 1976). In addition, schools were preparing daughters for their future roles as wife and mother.

It needed to be considered whether mothers had affected the educational aspirations and achievements of their daughters. Magrab (1979) believed that as women developed a role as individuals (instead of just wives and mothers) they would no longer transmit a dependent image to their daughters but instead would teach their daughters the value of independence through their own example. Thus, daughters of employed mothers were more likely to be independent.

Ex and Janssens (1998) claimed that current literature revealed that there was a relationship between mothers' employment status and their level of education, and the gender role attitudes of daughters. In general, the daughters of employed, and in particular more educated, mothers were less traditional and stereotyped and more egalitarian in their gender role attitudes than daughters of non-employed and less educated mothers. A traditional gender role attitude would be characterised by the belief that women should attend to the care of the home and children whilst men were in paid employment. In contrast, a non-traditional gender role attitude would be characterised by the belief that both women and men should share the responsibility for paid work, housework and childcare. Mothers were, therefore, seen to be very important in the development of their daughters' gender role attitudes. If the mother held traditional gender role attitudes she would pass these to her daughter. In addition, daughters "may directly internalise their mothers' attitudes, because they perceive these attitudes to be realised in the practice of their mother's daily life" (Ex and Janssens, ibid, p.182).

Due to societal changes in the last two decades it could be argued that now educated mothers would be more aware of the importance of education for their daughters and that their own educational attainments could affect their daughters' educational performance (Bach, 1985). LeVine (1980) argued that the more educated mother could provide her daughter with more useful forms of instruction, encouragement, interaction and skills and would help to shape her psychological development.

Mothers' relationships with their daughters could strongly influence daughters' academic experience. In her research, Chris Mann (1998) found that mother-daughter relationships seemed to favour girls' educational achievement in three main and interconnected ways: 1) by emphasising independence, 2) by providing emotional support (girls were reassured that a mother was emotionally 'there' for them, when she made time to 'talk') and 3) by influencing the girls' values.

Ex and Janssens (op. cit) further argued that daughters were now beginning to hold more non-traditional attitudes (about motherhood and women's role) than their mothers. Daughters were now emphasising egalitarianism toward the roles of women and men and believed that a woman's identity was no longer fixed to her role as a mother and wife only. As more women took up full-time employment and less became full-time homemakers and mothers (and more men took on the responsibility for home and childcare) Ex and Janssens claimed that the daughters of working mothers might be better prepared for their future adult roles because of the more liberal attitudes they were developing. Also, working mothers found it easier to separate from their daughters because "their identities and energies are less bound up in their daughters" (Hammer, op. cit, p.102).

Researchers had also discovered that what mothers had experienced for themselves in their own lives they did not want for their daughters. Mothers might share with their daughters their own experiences of "lost opportunities, feelings of being cheated, or future of 'dead end' jobs" (Mann, op. cit). Mothers might wish for their daughters a better marriage, a higher standard of living, a career, or a severance from traditional roles. However, this did not mean necessarily that daughters concurred with their

mother's aspirations as "when confronted with her mother's ambitions, a daughter sometimes responds with a complete volte face" (Park and Heaton, 1987, p.xiii).

The mother-daughter relationship formed the basis of this research and established the framework that was used. It was the relationship that a mother had with her daughter and how the mother transmitted her own educational values (based on her own academic experiences) that could greatly influence how the daughter should view her own schooling, education and future career aspirations. Belenky et al argued that "women often feel alienated in academic settings and experience 'formal' education as either peripheral or irrelevant to their central interests and development" (Belenky et al, 1986, p.4). I was interested to discover whether the mothers in my sample had experienced difficulties and problems during their formal education and if such negative experiences had been passed on to their daughters. In accordance with Belenky et al I was interested in the woman's experience and her views on education and learning and the decision-making contained within. It was these views that could help to establish the mothers' visions of the future for their daughters. A comparison would be able to be made between what mothers experienced themselves educationally and the education that they wished for their own daughters. It would then be possible to see how much of an influence these views had on daughters' aspirations and goals.

2.2   The Educational Under-Achievement Of Girls Prior To The 1990s

The mothers in my sample had all undertaken their schooling prior to the 1980s and in the majority of cases before the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975. An analysis of the factors internal to schools and the external factors relating to

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society that occurred prior to the 1990s needed to be undertaken in order to determine the aspects and issues that would influence the educational experiences that a mother could undergo.

There was a perception in society in the 1970s and 1980s that girls were under-performing and under-achieving in schools in comparison with boys. However, between 1975 and 1987 (after the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act and equal opportunities policies), statistics revealed that roughly similar proportions of boys and girls obtained five 'O' level A-C grades and a statistical analysis of 'O' level and CSE results showed evidence that "the overall performance of girls was beginning to improve at a greater rate than that of boys" (Sukhnandan, 1999, p.4). The 'O' level passes that girls were achieving tended to include subjects seen as having low status ('feminine' subjects) such as home economics so the figures showing girls' good performance were "not taken seriously" (Francis and Skelton, 2001, p.1). At this time males discounted girls' successes and positioned them as intellectually inferior (Paechter, 1998).

As there was an overall assumption in society, and widespread belief in the 1970s and 1980s that girls were under-achieving, it was important to examine the factors that could have influenced such an educational under-achievement of girls. However, when considering the under-achievement of girls at school it had to be remembered that there were factors that could be considered internal to the school (such as in-school experiences and gendered opinions regarding subjects being considered male or female) and factors and influences that were external to the school (such as reactions of parents to male and female children, experiences

occurring out of school, the development of the child's self-image, and experiences used as a basis upon which to form attitudes) and which related more to aspects of attitudes within society (Gipps and Murphy, 1994).

One of the first factors to affect girls and their educational achievement was the availability of financial resources and this factor was highlighted by Douglas (1964). In his study of school pupils he found that in some families more financial resources were devoted to the education of sons rather than to daughters as there was a belief in society, at that time, that a son's education was of more importance than a daughter's because the son would be a future breadwinner and would need to secure a well paid job.

Another factor to greatly affect girls was their socialisation which would occur within the home and also at school. Whilst growing up girls could have the stereotype of women as 'carers and nurturers' reinforced whilst boys could have the stereotype of 'breadwinner' reinforced. Such stereotypes could thus be further reinforced by the media, comics, books, television, films and various types of advertising.

In the 1960s and 1970s research found that gender stereotyping (as described above) led to girls attaching less value to education than boys did. Sue Sharpe's study of girls in four London schools found that girls did not value education and that, instead, their priorities were "love, marriage, husbands, children, jobs and careers, more or less in that order" (Sharpe, op. cit, p.129). As Sharpe argued, if the future was perceived to be a predetermined life of marriage and motherhood then there

would not be any incentive to improve school performance and achieve high educational standards and gain qualifications.

However, when discussing the issue of gender stereotyping and its impact on the academic performance of girls it must be remembered that the idea of girls as being a single undifferentiated, homogeneous group was itself a stereotype. Girls could "individually and collectively be bright or dull; noisy or quiet; riotously uncontrollable and wild or passive, dutiful and co-operative" (Barnard and Burgess, 1996, p.172).

Another factor to affect the educational achievement of girls was the type of school that was attended. Girls were discovered to perform better academically if they attended a single sex school. It had been argued that the co-educational nature of state maintained schools disadvantaged girls because mixed schools were really boys' schools "with girls fitted into a male paradigm" (Purvis, 1991, p.126). Another disadvantage of co-educational schools was that the staffing structure in them frequently denied girls high-achieving role models (Mahony, 1985) The management structure within education was predominantly male with female staff holding positions lower down the schools' hierarchy. In addition, the subjects where teachers were predominantly male e.g. science and mathematics were the subjects that were compulsory and had high status and were those in which boys excelled. It was not surprising that girls had low self-esteem when 'female subjects' e.g. food technology and childcare were those subjects that were not compulsory, had low status and were taught by females who did not hold managerial positions.

This research explored mothers and daughters' educational experiences via their description of what they underwent in their schooling and education and about their decision-making. Mothers' interpretations of their experiences were essential because they highlighted their influence on their daughters' aspirations and goals. However, in the past, women's experiences had been ignored. Spender (1982) argued that within education more knowledge was made about men and that their experiences were of great importance – women's knowledge and experiences were insignificant. As the curriculum was biased towards boys this was bound to undermine girls' self-confidence and hinder their progress. She claimed that education "helps to undermine the self-confidence and lower the self-esteem of girls for they are surrounded by evidence that they are not as important as boys" (Spender, ibid, p.60). This led to them feeling rejected and not participating fully in lessons within the classroom. Thus the gendered nature of knowledge could be a factor influencing the educational under-achievement of girls.

It was also discovered by Spender (ibid) that gender inequality in the classroom during lessons occurred and that girls received less attention than boys, had to wait a long time to receive any attention and found that their contribution to discussions could be treated dismissively by the boys present. She also found that although boys could be abusive and insulting, they were rarely rebuked by the teachers. Her findings were supported by research undertaken by Stanworth (1983) and Mahony (op. cit) who also found that girls were frequently marginalized in the classroom and that teachers responded more readily to boys who monopolised linguistic and physical space and teacher attention.

Therefore, boys' behaviour in the classroom could play a very important role in affecting girls' education. "That boys do not like girls, that they find them inferior and unworthy – and even despicable – is a conclusion hard to avoid when observing and documenting the behaviour of boys towards girls in schools" (Spender, op. cit, p.63). Spender argued that for many girls their educational experience reinforced the message provided by society that they were 'invisible'. And such rejection and feeling of invisibility could lead to girls retreating and keeping a low profile and hence missed out on important educational opportunities.

The way that girls perceived their ability and their apparent lack of self-esteem when undertaking tasks and activities within the classroom could affect their educational performance. Licht and Dweck (1987, cited by Arnot and Weiner 1987) claimed that girls lacked confidence in their ability to carry out intellectual tasks successfully. Girls continually underestimated their academic ability and, should they fail when performing a task, they blamed this failure on their intellectual inadequacies and lost confidence for future activities. Any successes within the classroom were explained in terms of luck. This was in contrast to boys who claimed that any failures were because they did not try hard enough or because the teacher did not assess their work fairly. Such lack of self-belief on the part of girls meant that they could start to avoid any new and challenging situations because they were worried that they would fail and not achieve something of educational value or importance.

Spender (op. cit) argued that, although girls were able to evaluate their own academic performance in relation to other girls, there were difficulties when girls tried to relate their performance to that of boys. Girls saw boys performing much better

than themselves (even if boys were performing worse) and boys saw themselves as performing much better than girls (even if they were not). Girls consistently underestimated their own abilities and performances whilst overestimating the abilities and performances of boys.

In the 1970s and 1980s it was the relationship between gender and achievement that was used to explain the under-achievement of girls (especially with regard to mathematics and science) and the issue of girls' under-achievement was usually considered through the effect of gender inequality in the classroom (Jones and Myhill, 2004).

2.3   The Purpose Of School And Education

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1983) education is "the systematic instruction, schooling or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life…It is the whole course of scholastic instruction which a person has received".

In the first instance children learnt in the family home before they commenced their compulsory schooling at the age of 4 or 5. It was in the home where mothers had a key role because it was here that primary socialisation took place. Invariably it was the mother who was responsible for the child's initial knowledge.

If primary socialisation occurred at home, then the school was the first place where secondary socialisation occurred. It was here that children would move from the particular values of the family to the wider, general values of society. Wolpe argued that "the nature, form and content of education for children is inextricably linked with

their future roles in adult society" (Wolpe, 1974, p.138) and in preparation for these adult roles a whole range of different forms of knowledge would be transmitted. Children would learn the basic fundamental skills of numeracy and literacy that were essential in an industrial society and would also learn the types of skills that were necessary for many vocational jobs. Whilst at school children would acquire a great amount of knowledge and it was knowledge that gave power. Knowledge gained through learning made it possible to gain qualifications that led to employment in good jobs or to high status degrees, or to gain positions of authority (Cullingford, 1990).

Sex role socialisation meant that schools prepared each sex for quite different styles of life and places in life. Feminist writers from all theoretical approaches argued that in schools boys were oriented towards a lifetime of paid work and girls were oriented towards the home and child-rearing, or towards the kinds of job that were an extension of nurturing and home-making roles such as nursing or being nursery nurses. Due to this, girls left school underqualified and unprepared for paid work in the labour market (Measor and Sikes, 1992).

Delamont argued that girls did not seem to realise that they would have to work for most of their lives in badly paid, unskilled jobs unless they left school with qualifications, and that they seemed "blinded to the realities of the labour market by the rosy glow of romance" (Delamont, 1980, p.70). But due to experiences at school some girls considered low-paid work preferable to continuing their education. This research was now dated and it was important to ascertain whether girls undertaking their schooling currently still held such views.

Sue Lees (1993) analysed girls' attitudes towards school and developed four possible strategies that girls could be pursuing towards the school and its role in their lives.

Pro-school

Academic, career orientated	Pro-school for social rather than learning activities

Pro-learning _____ **Anti-learning**

Learning orientated but alienated from school	Little interest in either learning or social activities

Anti-school
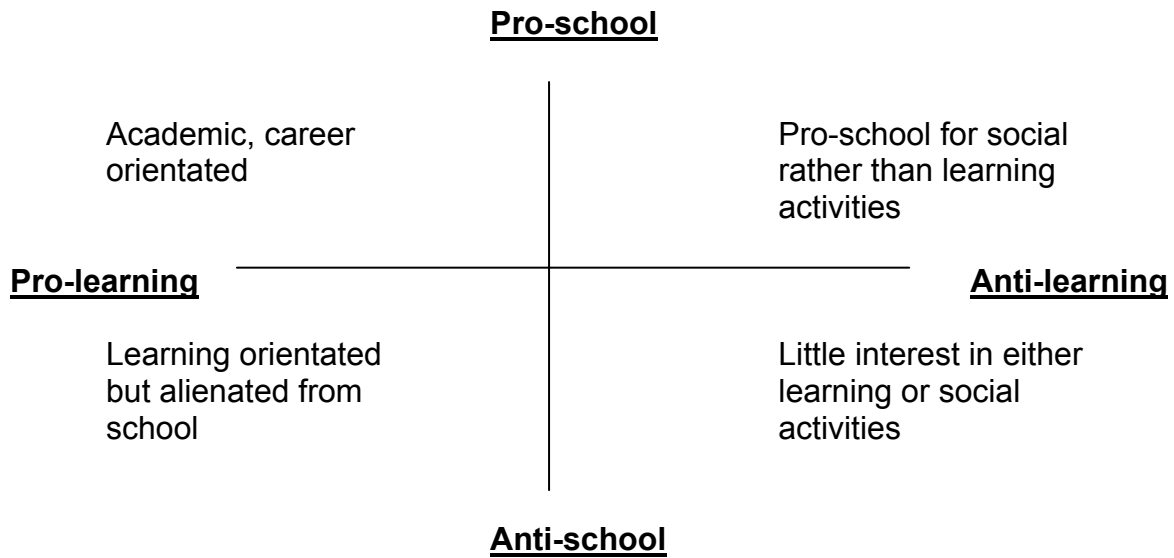
[Lees, 1993, p.160)

She found that some girls were pro-school and liked going to school but were very much alienated from the teaching process. By contrast others wanted to learn and were strongly oriented towards the formal teaching process but were bored and alienated from school for various reasons.

Table 1 – Strategies Towards School

<u>ACADEMIC and PRO-SCHOOL</u>	• most likely to be middle-class girls • gaining formal qualifications • at 16 do not usually aspire to marriage (which they view realistically) • talk in terms of having a career or at least working outside the home
<u>ACADEMIC and ANTI-SCHOOL</u>	• want to learn and have careers but are alienated from school • surrounded by other girls who have abandoned the orientation to career and work
<u>PRO-SCHOOL and ANTI-WORK</u>	• find school boring, irrelevant and involving constant conflicts • attend school for mainly social reasons • ignore academic work because they expect part-time work to fit in with their family responsibilities
<u>ANTI-SCHOOL and ANTI-WORK</u>	• reject both the learning process and any orientation to a career • do not focus their lives around school as a social environment • girls cannot wait to leave school to get a job • already heavily socialised into domestic labour and housework routines • see their future in marriage

[Adapted from Lees, 1993, pp.160-170]

If girls, who are undertaking their education currently, intend to succeed in the world of employment, then they must be following a strategy of 'pro-learning'. The advances in technology, in all sectors of industry, have eradicated numerous jobs that previously unskilled or poorly qualified adults could perform. In a highly

competitive market place qualifications are the required currency to gain employment.

Lees (ibid) argued that there were several factors that determined the strategy that girls might pursue. The type of school that a girl attended was an important influence because girls studying in single-sex schools became more career oriented. Another factor was social class as middle-class girls were more likely to be career oriented whilst working-class girls were more likely to be involved at home with performing domestic chores which was at the expense of school and homework. In addition, working-class girls were less likely to receive support from home and to face educational disadvantages. However, if it were the jobs that traditionally working-class girls would have undertaken that were disappearing it was essential that these girls pursued a 'pro-learning' strategy.

Whilst pupils were undergoing their schooling and following one of the four strategies proposed by Lees, they were forming opinions about education and the purpose of school. Cullingford believed that by the time pupils finished their school education they would have a "clear perspective on what schools are for, what they have learnt and why" (Cullingford, 2002, p.48). He argued that pupils perceived the underlying purpose of school was to leave it – to look towards the end, towards qualifications and skills to be gained, all as a preparation for the next stage in life, whether that be further education or the labour market. Keys and Fernandes' (1993) review of the literature on education found that many pupils, and their parents, believed that an important purpose of school and education was to help pupils gain a job in the future. Pupils believed in "the 'utilitarian' purposes of school" (Keys and Fernandes, ibid,

p.24). The purpose of schools was to help the pupils do well in examinations, teach them skills to benefit them once they had acquired jobs and to teach them how to be independent.

Education was the means to an end – the pathway to a career. Therefore, the justification for attending school, for at least 11 years, was the final acquisition of a job. However, it was the nature of the work sought by girls, and whether it offered the opportunities of promotion and lifestyle benefits, that was important. If education and schooling were the stepping stones to success in the labour market then the careers that girls were actively seeking had to be the ones that could reward and satisfy them financially and emotionally.

2.3.1 Parental Influence Upon Children's Education

Once it had been established how mothers viewed schools, their purpose and the value of education, a link would be able to be determined between this and their influence upon their daughters. This was important because one of the greatest influences upon a child's education and their level of achievement was the impact that their parents had. Cullingford (1985) argued that parents were the people who influenced children's attitudes towards learning. It was within the home that attitudes towards learning were created and these attitudes would determine subsequent achievement. It was parental aspirations and expectations that would affect pupils throughout their educational careers and these aspirations and expectations could cover areas such as encouragement to attend school and do homework, help when choosing subject options, advice on whether to proceed to further and higher education or whether to seek employment (Powney, 1997).

A parent's influence upon their child with regard to education would be affected greatly by their own personal experiences of school. Cullingford (1996) found that parents acknowledged how important their own education had been to their subsequent lives and they realised how important it was and how much it mattered. Therefore, parents held high expectations for their children and wanted them to do well. Fogelman (1976) in a survey of 16 year olds asked how anxious they thought their parents were that they should do well at school. 53% said that their parents were 'contented if I do my best'. However, he found that 24% said they were 'very anxious' and 15% 'fairly anxious'. Only 5% said that their parents 'don't mind one way or the other' and 3% were uncertain about their parents' feelings. In addition, Griffin in a study of sixth form girls found that many parents wanted their daughters "to make the best of their education" and had quite specific ambitions for their daughters wanting them to have better lives than they had had (Griffin, 1985, p.90). Furthermore, Walkerdine et al (2001) found that middle-class parents were prepared to push their children to achieve and maintain a high academic performance. There was great emphasis on the "value of education in fulfilling potential, extending choices and providing possibilities for the future" (Walkerdine et al, ibid, p.136).

The desire for one's children to do better in employment than oneself was common and Cullingford (1985) argued that this was partly from unfulfilled ambition and partly from fear of the consequences of not doing well. Parents believed that schools could help their children with their subsequent careers by helping them to gain qualifications and would also give their children a better chance within the labour

market than they themselves experienced which was important because jobs were harder to secure.

However, a problem that parents encountered now when trying to give advice and when discussing issues such as the choice between academic courses or vocational courses or actual subject choice, was that the current educational system could be entirely unfamiliar to them (Walkerdine et al., op. cit). So, whilst they were interested in their children's education, the major basis of their knowledge of education was largely dependent upon their own memories of schooling. To a great extent this knowledge had been made irrelevant by the pace of change in areas such as curriculum choice. Therefore, quite often, for parents their children's experiences of education were drastically different from their own. This may have had a negative or positive effect upon the help that a mother was able to give her daughter – whether she felt adequately equipped to offer advice and guidance. Through the interpretation of the mothers voicing their own educational experiences I would be able to determine the extent to which they had affected their own daughter's educational and career aspirations.

When examining the mother's influence on her daughter it was important to establish the role that a mother played in her daughter's education and subsequent decision-making processes. Mothers played a very important part in their daughter's education because initial decisions concerning a daughter's schooling were made primarily by the mother. It was clear that there was not an equal division of labour between a husband and wife with relation to the duties and tasks involved in a child's schooling. Dudley-Marling argued that "it has been well established that the burdens

of schooling do not fall evenly on fathers and mothers" (Dudley-Marling, 2001, p.184) and that the domestic role of mothers had expanded to include responsibility for their children's schooling. Vincent argued that the mother was "expected to take the key role in, and 'total' responsibility for, the development of the child, particularly in his/her early years" (Vincent, 2000, p.27). And as the child got older the mother took on more responsibility.

David et al (1997) believed that women were making choices about their children's education on a daily basis. The work that mothers undertook included: gaining information about schools when it came to choosing a school to attend; monitoring how their children were progressing and achieving at school; communicating with teachers; helping children organise their time to do homework; helping children with their homework; and, should children be having any problems at school, then liaising with the school to rectify the problems.

Due to changes in the structure of families and the increase in maternal employment greater responsibility now fell on the mother. Irrespective of whether mothers were middle-class or working-class, married or single, in employment or unemployed, they assumed the main responsibility for their children's education that took place at home.

2.3.2 Mothers' Views About Daughters' Education

Walkerdine et al discovered that the working-class parents in their study often talked about how they had tried to give their daughters the message that "life was a struggle and something that must be survived" (Walkerdine et al, op. cit, p.151).

They also found that one of the effects of the girls' sense of their parents being heavily burdened was that the girls did not want to add to their burden in any way. It was found that daughters of middle-class parents viewed educational success as being important because daughters wished to be like their parents in "the sense of having the same kind of career as them, the same levels of income, material comfort and lifestyle" (Walkerdine et al, ibid, p.158). These daughters received the message from birth that they were able and clever and that they were destined to go to university and acquire professional jobs. For them 'working hard' at school was constantly stressed because it would lead to ultimate success and was necessary "to ensure the continuity of privilege in times of economic uncertainty and when men and marriage could not be relied upon to maintain class status and lifestyle in the new and uncertain labour market" (Walkerdine et al, ibid, p.182). However, for working-class daughters of aspirational parents the message was quite different and hard work was stressed to them in that it was "necessary to become a willing worker who would be employed and paid" (Walkerdine et al, ibid, p.182). These daughters did not wish to become like their parents and this helped their drive towards higher education.

Walkerdine et al (ibid) discovered that most of the mothers in their study did not have established careers as they had had their daughters at a relatively young age and then tried to develop a career at the same time as raising their children. It was this scenario that their daughters wanted to avoid. They were also well aware that, although their mothers held full-time jobs, they were also expected to perform all household tasks and duties. In effect, mothers performed a dual role in the home

and the labour market. Daughters acknowledged how difficult their mothers' lives had been and did not want to copy the life-patterns of their mothers.

Often because mothers were aware of how they managed a dual role in the home and the labour market, a minority of them were fundamentally challenging power relations in their own family and they gave encouragement to their own daughters to try and consider alternatives to the traditional paths expected of women (Riddell, 1992). However, although they hoped that their daughters would be successful at school and in employment, most mothers were realistic enough to recognise the "continued existence of gender divisions in the labour market" (Riddell, ibid, p.203).

It could be argued that family and personal circumstances had greatly affected the message that a mother passed on to her daughter. For example, a mother heading a lone parent family had a strong message about not relying upon a man (husband) for financial and personal security. It was important for the daughter to have a good education in case she was alone and heading up her own lone parent family in the future.

2.3.3 Regrets About Education

It was possible that if mothers had had regrets about their own schooling and education that these would have been conveyed to their daughters and thus affected the daughters' educational experiences. It was found that having regrets was quite common as according to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2007 33% of adults in the UK regretted not having gained better qualifications whilst at school, 27% regretted not making the most of the opportunities at school and 28% said they

did not work hard enough while they were at school and felt they were now living with the consequences (LSC, cited in BBC, 2007).

Parents, and in particular mothers, had strong views about their children's education and, as seen above, mothers may have had a message that they wished to pass on to their daughters. Often this message was a result of the mothers' own education and any regrets that they may have had about their own schooling.

Throughout their schooling pupils had to make choices and be involved in decision-making and these became more important as they progressed further through their education. With hindsight pupils could regret the mistakes they had made and realised that poor decision-making occurred during schooling. They could realise that: different choices should have been made; they could have taken up more opportunities; they could have worked harder and gained more qualifications; they could have achieved more and that they could have had more meaningful relationships with their classmates and teachers during their time at school. Cullingford discovered that the major regret shared by respondents in his study was "the fact that they could have done better, by working harder" (Cullingford, 2002, p.65) and he found that they acknowledged their personal failure to become deeply engaged with school life. They expressed a personal sense of disappointment that they had not fulfilled their potential. Although it could be argued that it was easy to have regrets with hindsight pupils were aware of missed and wasted opportunities – even at the time of schooling they may have been aware of the presence of inequalities and a denial of opportunity to study certain subjects and at certain levels

– and how these could affect their future lives. They did realise the "difference between what happened and what might have been" (Cullingford, ibid, p.74).

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW – DECISION-MAKING THROUGHOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This chapter studies the area of decision-making and explores how and why decision-making is gendered. In particular it examines the subjects chosen by girls at the age of 14, the reasons why some girls leave school at the earliest opportunity, the reasons why others will proceed on to further education and the reasons why a smaller, but significant, number will continue with higher education. It is of interest to note factors that are internal within the school and the education system that affect decision-making and also any external factors that have an influence such as family, friends, the media and the attitudes held in wider society.

3.1   Choice Of School Subjects At Age 14

Normally adolescence is a time for making choices about educational and career goals. One of the main choices about subjects to be taken usually occurs at the end of Year 9 (formerly known as the third year) when pupils are aged 14. These subjects will then be studied so that a formal qualification can be taken e.g. GCSE or in the past 'O' level or CSE. These choices can have an important impact on a young person's future as a subject that is not studied at GCSE might not be permitted to be studied at 'A' level or certain careers might be dependent upon certain GCSE subjects having been taken.

Measor and Sikes (1992) argued that it was the subjects pupils chose to study (together with the number of overall passes they gained) that was the important factor for determining entry into particular areas of the labour market. Subject choice had serious implications for pupils' careers and therefore their standard of living.

According to Noller and Callan (1991), decision-making was a problem in adolescence for two related reasons. Firstly, adolescents were wanting generally to have more control over their lives and to make the decisions that directly affected them such as choosing the subjects which would be studied during the last two years of compulsory education. Secondly, these decisions could have far-reaching consequences for the pupil. At this stage in a pupil's education parents could get anxious about the young person's ability to make such decisions. Although parents might have had more realistic ideas about the likely consequences of such decision-making they might have found that, if they attempted to influence anything, children reacted negatively and any influence may have been lost and, worse still, the child became alienated from its parents.

The subjects chosen to be studied should be based on a pupil's abilities, interests and personality. However, it had been argued that the role of schools at this time of decision-making was to reflect wider society. There was a traditional allocation of roles of men and women in society and schools socialised boys and girls to fit in with that pattern. Schools actively contributed to the further differentiation of these roles by effectively closing off certain options to each gender (Meighan, 1981).

One of the first pieces of research into subject choice was by Stephen Ball (1981). His book 'Beachside Comprehensive', was a study of a single, co-educational, comprehensive school in the mid-1970s, that investigated the process of subject choice and viewed it as a crucial point in the school careers of pupils. Decisions made by pupils, their parents and teachers would influence their future lives.

At Beachside Comprehensive the policy of the school was presented to the pupils and their parents as being that any child should be able to take the subject they wanted at the level they wanted. However, Ball (ibid) found three important constraints upon the choice that pupils had, both in terms of subjects and of whether to do 'O' level or CSE courses.

The first important limitation upon freedom of choice was the arrangement of the option-sheet into 'lines' from which choices had to be made. This constraint was a primarily practical one from the point of view of the school and stemmed from administrative expedience. Groups of subjects were categorised together and only one choice could be made from each category. This arrangement was used to ensure that timetabling was made easier but it did mean that some combinations of choices were logistically impossible. This meant the arbitrariness of some choices was clearly apparent. This was also found by Ryrie et al (1979) in a study of eight Scottish schools in the late 1970s. In some cases recommended subjects or courses were indicated by the school for each pupil on the option sheet. In addition, when looking at the columns containing lists of subjects it was clear that the subjects had been arranged, intentionally or otherwise, in a rough hierarchy, with the more highly valued, traditional, academic subjects being placed at the top of the columns. Then

when option sheets were returned to the schools, necessary or appropriate adjustments could be made prior to the sheets being used as a basis for making up classes and timetables.

Grafton et al (1987) discovered in their study that the design of the timetable meant that traditional girls' subjects (needlework and commercial skills) competed with traditional boys' subjects (woodwork and metalwork). Guidelines were issued to teachers which stressed that all subjects were open to both sexes, but 'prior discussion' was necessary for boys who wanted to take the 'family and child option', while girls had to show a 'sincere desire' to take metalwork and woodwork (Grafton et al, ibid, p.112).

This practice still occurs within many comprehensive schools: sometimes all technology subjects form one option (so a pupil may not study both food technology and resistant materials); sometimes all expressive arts subjects form one option (so a pupil may not study both drama and music); and sometimes all humanities subjects form one option (so a pupil may not study both history and geography). Therefore, a decision to timetable child development at the same time as resistant materials helps to reproduce traditionally gendered subject choices (Burr, 1998). By listing subjects into option blocks to reflect the school timetable pupils are being fitted to the timetable rather than the timetable being fitted to pupils' choices. Schools often defend their arrangements on grounds of inadequate resources, or discipline problems arising from compulsion to study non-traditional subjects (Pratt et al, 1984).

The second important limitation found by Ball (op. cit) was the size of teaching-groups for certain subjects. This, again, was an administrative constraint imposed by the school because some subjects became over-subscribed and some under-subscribed. Sometimes it became necessary to encourage some pupils to change their choices because too many people had chosen a particular subject. This limitation is still found to be imposed on certain subjects due to resource availability. For example, the number of pupils able to study I.C.T. will be determined by the number of computers located in a classroom.

Ball (ibid) argued that the third constraint that impinged upon the choice of subjects was the negotiation of a set of options that was acceptable to the pupils, to their teachers and, in some cases, to their parents. The options had to match the teachers' perceptions of the pupils' level of ability, behaviour and motivation. Although pupils should have been allowed to select any subject that they liked and enjoyed, teachers had a vested interest in this selection procedure. Achievement rates were scrutinised and no department wished a high failure rate.

Ball (ibid) found that in some situations the original choices made by pupils turned out to be unacceptable to the members of staff responsible for teaching the courses they had chosen. Reasons for rejection included: not being suitable; not being 'O' level material; having made no progress in the subject and perceived as being unable to cope. Pupils that were rejected from certain subjects tended to be those whom the teacher considered to lack any ability in the subject concerned and those who had gained a reputation of poor behaviour.

Whenever a pupil comes to choosing subjects both the pupil's orientation and the school's organisation are involved. Even in a relatively open system, where pupils feel able to choose among options, school staff limit the available choices, shape the way pupils see themselves and their options, and offer advice, encouragement and strongly worded suggestions. Pupils need to be encouraged to see that the subjects they are taking are in their best interests. 'Choice' needs to incorporate both the orientation of the pupil and the organisation of the school (Gaskell, 1992).

I have examined the choice given to the daughters in my sample when they were selecting the subjects that they wished to take to GCSE level. My research has investigated whether girls were faced with any timetable constraints that disadvantaged them from taking subjects that could offer more employment opportunities, thus having an adverse effect upon their career opportunities.

As well as the individual pupil and the school, parents could have a profound influence on decision-making. Ball (op. cit) found amongst his sample of pupils at Beachside Comprehensive that, during this time of decision-making, some parents had made the final decision about subject choice for their children and in some instances had insisted on a particular combination of subjects that was against the child's own wishes. Ball argued that it was the direct intervention of parents at the school that was the most effective method of allocating pupils to courses to which they would normally have been denied access. However, in these circumstances, parents did require some knowledge of the relative status of different subjects and courses. In most cases the major basis of their knowledge of education was via their own schooling and this was usually out-of-date due to the changes that occurred in

education over the years. Without having the relevant knowledge of current trends in education it was extremely difficult for parents to give support and guidance when faced with a large range of curriculum choices and a proliferation of examinations of different types. However, where parents did possess this knowledge (and it was usually middle-class ones), they were able to ensure that their children studied subjects, at an appropriate level, which would provide qualifications of high status and high negotiable value in the market place.

In his study of the subject choice process in a secondary modern school Woods found that during this period of decision-making many parents gave general advice such as "do those [subjects] you're best at" or "do those [subjects] you want to" (Woods, 1979, p.46). He identified five types of parental influence: compulsion; strong guidance; mutual resolution; reassurance; and little or none. Although all the parents were anxious for their child to 'do the right thing' some parents had more influence over the decision-making, for example, by contacting the school directly they were able to change decisions made by teachers. Other parents, usually working-class ones, had a limited idea of their children's capabilities and achievements and of career prospects and the educational routes required for certain careers.

Ryrie et al (op. cit) attempted to categorise parents according to the extent of their involvement in the decision-making process. They identified 3 groups. The first group had little or no discussion with their children – they let the children make the decisions themselves. They felt that parents should not push children in any particular direction and that decisions such as these ought to be left to the pupils

themselves or to the school. The second group had sufficient interest to discuss the matter with their children but ultimately left the matter with their children to decide, without further involvement on their part. The third group had considerable involvement – they had taken an interest, studied the available options, discussed the matter seriously with their children, and helped to decide the subjects.

It was discovered that it was taken for granted by pupils, parents and teachers that a pupil's ability or performance would largely determine the kinds of subjects that the school would recommend. Ryrie et al (ibid) placed great importance on the capacity of pupils to internalise the school's expectations with regard to choice of subjects.

Parents' attitudes towards the division of labour in the family home could have an impact on their views of appropriate subjects for girls and boys. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) argued that the family had a huge influence on the decision-making of young people. They felt that choices made during adolescence were "a synthesis of inherited values and emerging individual values" (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, ibid, p.204). Inherited values are replicated from generation to generation and played a significant part in the patterns of choice in education.

The influence of the family could be very strong but when Poole and Gelder (1985, cited by Noller and Callan 1991) studied the decision-making of 15 year olds they found that the pupils generally saw themselves as making most of the decisions affecting their lives, although the influences of the family were still evident. The mother's opinion was considered as more important by female adolescents whilst adolescent boys tended to be more influenced by their father's opinions.

Grafton et al (op. cit) carried out a study of a co-educational comprehensive school in the southwest of England and studied the subject choice process and found the main parties to be the school, parents (particularly mothers) and pupils themselves [this being similar to Woods' findings in 1979]. However, they also found another influence on pupils which was the experience of others who had taken the course previously, particularly sisters or friends. They found that the relevant factors that lay behind girls' selection of subjects were future job aspirations and choosing subjects that they liked best or were best at. Nevertheless, the organisation of the school timetable and the sorts of advice that girls received from teachers played a major part in directing them towards traditional and predictable subject areas.

The above shows the importance of the influence of other parties on adolescent girls' decision-making with regard to choice of subjects. This is an area that I examined in my research with particular emphasis on the influence of the mother upon her daughter.

The next aspect to be investigated was to find out why teenagers selected certain subjects. In the study by Ryrie et al (op. cit) pupils felt that the responsibility for choosing subjects to be largely their own. There were 4 main criteria by which they explained their choices: interest in or liking for the subject; usefulness of the subject for job or career; chosen on someone else's recommendation or because there seemed to be no other possibility.

John Abraham (1995) in his book 'Divide and School: Gender and Class Dynamics in Comprehensive Education' categorised the reasons for subject option into nine different types.

1. liking for subject

2. dislike of other subjects

3. usefulness for career

4. good ability at the subject

5. poor ability at other subjects

6. liking for teachers

7. dislike for teachers

8. desire to be with friends

9. new subject

He argued that 'liking' and 'disliking' were only superficial explanations for subject options and an understanding was needed of the underlying reasoning for such choices. Like Woods (op. cit) earlier he found that pupils' reasons for liking/disliking a subject/teacher took two distinct forms: those that were supportive of the academic value system of the school and those not.

When making decisions about subjects it could be seen that pupils viewed the status of subjects differently. For example, a subject that was allocated only a little time in the curriculum (music, R.E.) may be regarded as of low status. Gaskell in her study discovered that girls attempted to "pick the best set of courses they could out of a bad lot" (Gaskell, op. cit, p.43). They tried to come up with personal solutions that

would minimize the discomfort schools caused them. They took courses that were 'easy' (that did not intrude too much into other more important aspects of life), that were 'fun' (that involved less time sitting at a desk, more work experience and more interaction) and that were 'useful' (that transmitted skills that had some direct utility in the labour market or in leisure activities). However, Gaskell found that these criteria led the girls far away from an academic programme.

The data from the research undertaken by Ball (op. cit) and by Woods (op. cit) was very old and both researchers concentrated on class rather than gender divisions and the way in which gender shaped the choices pupils made and teachers' perceptions of what courses were 'appropriate' to particular pupils. It was imperative to see how gender affected decision-making.

Up until the mid-1970s it was legal for educational institutions to treat boys and girls quite differently, both in terms of the subjects made available to them and the quota system restricting the numbers from a particular sex on courses. This treatment was justified by the belief that "males and females had different intellectual capacities and interests" (Garrett, 1987, p.61). In 1975 the Sex Discrimination Act was passed. Its major objective was to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sex in areas where discrimination had prevented women from achieving social and economic equality with men. It became unlawful to discriminate on grounds of sex in education such as ending discrimination in entry to mixed schools and in direct discrimination in the kind of courses offered to pupils (Harman, 1978). The Sex Discrimination Act helped to draw attention to areas such as the lack of scientific education for girls and the limit of subject choices previously offered to girls. This led to recommendations to

improve girls' education in the areas of scientific and technological subjects. Therefore, in my research I analysed the mothers' decision-making with regard to subject choice as this occurred pre the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act. Such decision-making was then compared to the daughters' experiences as post introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act subject limitations should have been removed and gendered restrictions eliminated.

During adolescence girls and boys might have felt the need to assert their sexual identity and one way of doing this was via subject choice. In the past girls, when given a choice, tended to follow a curriculum that excluded subjects such as the physical sciences (apart from biology) and vocationally oriented ones that related to the trades. Physics and chemistry were conventionally seen as 'masculine' subjects with such qualifications leading to 'male' jobs and girls tended to reject these two subjects in order to be seen as 'feminine'. Instead they pursued subjects that were regarded as more suitable for femininity such as the arts, languages, social sciences and home economics (Wolpe, 1974). In contrast boys studied physics and chemistry which gave easier access into a wide range of occupations than biology which girls opted for. Boys also pursued subjects such as woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing that, again, gave entry into a wide range of careers and technologically-based courses at college. For example, in an analysis of 'O' levels in 1982 it was found that only 1% of candidates for woodwork and metalwork 'O' levels were girls, only 3% of candidates for technical drawing 'O' level were girls and only 4% of candidates for design and technology 'O' level were girls. However, 100% of candidates for needlework 'O' level were girls and 97% of candidates for cookery 'O' level were girls (Arnot et al, 1999).

Pratt et al (op. cit) found that girls were more influenced in their choices by perception of subject difficulty than boys. While both boys and girls had similar perceptions of subject difficulty – traditionally male subjects such as the physical sciences and mathematics being seen as most difficult – girls were more likely to avoid subjects on the grounds of difficulty. In addition, Francis argued that as 'the sciences' had been perceived as masculine and 'the arts' had been perceived as feminine it had created a hierarchy in terms of subject status: "'the sciences' are associated with high-status traits such as rationality and objectivity, while 'the arts' are associated with emotion and subjectivity" (Francis, 2000b, p.35).

The masculine/feminine dichotomy of subjects continues. Archer and Macrae (1991, cited by Archer and Lloyd 2002) found that subjects such as personal and social education, religious education, and home economics were perceived as feminine, whereas craft, design and technology, information technology, and physics were viewed as masculine. Stables and Wikeley (1996, cited by Paechter 1998) found that, when a technology subject had to be studied, boys were more likely to opt for graphics or resistant materials and girls for food technology. Where subjects were not compulsory, boys were more likely to choose P.E. and geography whilst girls opted for child care/child development and French. This could be a reflection on the actual content of the subject e.g. if design and technology involved the design and construction of a push-chair or high chair, or if resistant materials meant creating a make-up box, or if P.E. featured disciplines such as yoga or dance, then perhaps more girls would select these subjects. Although these subjects are supposedly appropriate for both sexes the content to be studied means they remain gendered.

Riddell (1992) found in her study that in the process of establishing their own gender identity, girls were using different subjects to identify male areas from female areas. Subjects perceived as masculine tended to be seen as "unattractive, uninteresting and suitable only for those who could be labelled 'weird'" (Riddell, ibid, p.114). Peer-group pressure and the need to identify oneself from the opposite gender were important factors in gender identity.

However, it must be remembered that it takes a lot of determination for a fourteen year old pupil to select a subject which is not considered appropriate to their gender, especially in co-educational schools, and pupils who do eschew gender stereotypes often experience problems that are not necessarily related to the subject itself but that have more to do with imbalances between the sexes in the classroom and how boys, girls and teachers work and co-operate in these situations (Elwood and Gipps, 1999). It is easier to select a subject that is associated with 'comfort' (a gendered subject) than opt for a subject that will put the pupil in a situation of pressure and anxiety (Shaw, 1995a).

As well as pupils perceiving subjects as being gendered, teachers could easily assume a decisive role in the process of decision-making as they may deliberately, or unintentionally, direct girls and boys towards subjects seen as traditionally feminine or masculine. Sharpe (1976) recognised that the education system itself played a part in directing girls towards 'feminine' subjects. She believed that girls tended to be steered towards arts subjects, and particularly to subjects such as cookery, needlework and typing. Teachers could reinforce beliefs about male and

female attributes that led to assumptions by pupils that jobs involving the exercise of authority, or involving what was seen as mechanical or dirty work, to be inappropriate for girls (Yates, 1985).

If a girl was aware of what employment was available in her locality it could also influence her decisions about what certain school subjects to study. Sharma and Meighan (1980, cited by OECD 1986) showed that in the past, young, adolescent girls tended to aspire to traditionally feminine occupations which, during the secondary school years, were seen to comprise six main areas: teaching (especially at primary level), nursing, catering, office work, hairdressing and employment in retail organisations and these aspirations tended to influence decision-making with regard to subject choice.

Whilst Ball, Woods, Abraham and Ryrie et al studied the subject option process they did not investigate the effects of gender on this process. It could be argued that the subject option process was a system of academic selection. For example, pupils identified as 'able' were encouraged to choose high-status subjects that had a wide reputation of being 'academic'. Alternatively, many pupils were encouraged to choose other subjects of lesser academic standing (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000). But, due to this system of 'encouragement' by teachers/school, it was girls that had frequently found themselves channelled towards lower-status subjects and/or non-examination groups. The implicit acceptance that girls were "destined for mainly subsidiary roles in society led to girls traditionally being directed away from choosing subjects considered to be unsuitable for their gender" (Brown, 2001, p.173).

When considering opportunities in the labour market there is a reliance on grades achieved at examination. Therefore, girls need to be selecting subjects where they will guarantee examination success (subjects they are 'good at'), as well as subjects they 'enjoy' (Cullingford, 2002).

My research examined why daughters were selecting the subjects that they did opt for. I needed to determine whether girls were considering long-term employment prospects, making decisions purely on the basis of remaining with friends, selecting subjects that they were 'good at' or that they 'enjoyed' or choosing subjects that they felt were 'appropriate' for their gender. I also examined the mother's influence on the decision-making process.

Anne Colley (1998) argued that one of the major goals of any educational system ought to be to try to promote equality of opportunity and choice. If boys and girls tended to take different pathways through the educational system it may not be regarded as particularly problematic if they have had equal access to different subjects and that achievement in these subjects was possible. However, there was concern if girls, because of their educational pathways, did not have access to key occupational areas that carry power and status.

In the late 1990s Colley (ibid) examined why there was a persistence of gender inequalities in subject choice and reviewed the reasons why differences in subject choice continued in secondary schools. In particular she investigated "the adult social roles of men and women, the abilities that are considered typical of these roles, and the consequent gender-related stereotypes of academic subjects,

according to which some subjects are more appropriate for males and some for females" (Colley, ibid, p.18). She believed the most significant factor was perceptions of male and female attributes and roles and how these interacted with subject preferences and choice.

Colley (ibid) argued that research had shown that certain attributes were seen as desirable for men and a quite different set were seen as desirable for women. Masculinity was positively associated with "self-reliance, individualism, ambition, dominance and the ability to lead" whilst femininity had been positively associated with "kindness, being affectionate and being eager to soothe hurt feelings" (Colley, ibid, p.19). Despite all the changes in society in recent decades the above remain the dominant definitions of masculinity and femininity.

Girls who adhered to traditional ideas of female roles were more likely to be attracted to humanities and music as subject choices, whereas they tended to dislike physical education. On the other hand, boys who had conventional ideas of masculinity were attracted to physical education but they tended to dislike English.

According to Colley (ibid) socialisation and attitudes to adult male and female social roles were more important than ability. Ideas about gender interacted with the way subjects were perceived and taught in shaping subject choices. The images of the different subjects and the aspects of them that were stressed influenced whether they were seen as masculine or feminine. For example, computer studies involved working with machines rather than working with people, so immediately this gave it something of a masculine image.

The progress of girls over the last decade had been helped by the 'desegregation' of subject choices. The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 as a standardised compulsory set of subjects played a key role in reducing the sex segregation of subjects up to the age of sixteen because it restricted choices. All pupils had to study English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), a design and technology subject (non-statutory from September 2004), a modern foreign language (non-statutory from September 2004), physical education and citizenship. Religious education, careers education and sex education were compulsory but not part of the National Curriculum (Parents Centre, 2005).

The National Curriculum restricted pupils' choice of subjects and so helped to reduce gender differentiation as it was meant to prevent girls from being able to opt out of traditionally male areas of the curriculum such as technical and scientific subjects. One of its aims was balanced science at GCSE with pupils taking a GCSE that combined physics, chemistry and biology. In addition, pupils had to take a design and technology subject such as food technology, textiles, resistant materials, graphic design or craft, design and technology. The intention was to give girls the opportunity to gain qualifications that would equip them for a much wider range of jobs. Subject choices and occupational choices were mutually reinforcing and pupils needed freedom of subject choice as a prerequisite for freedom of occupational choice. By allowing girls the opportunity to study previously 'unavailable' subjects and creating a standardised compulsory set of subjects girls had greater occupational choice (Brown, op. cit).

Before the introduction of the National Curriculum boys and girls were able to follow very different educational routes. By 1994 most of these differences had reduced, although substantial gender differences still remained in subjects such as physics, economics, food technology, social studies and craft, design and technology (Arnot et al, op. cit). Many schools in the 1990s offered vocational qualifications e.g. GNVQ in Health and Social Care, GNVQ in Leisure and Tourism. However, Elwood and Gipps (op. cit) found that the patterns of entry into these vocational qualifications was still highly differentiated by sex and influenced by future work aspirations. Also, Colley (op. cit) argued that substantial differences remained at GCSE level. She concluded that subject choice continued to reflect: "adult male and female social roles and the abilities and attributes assigned to males and females on the basis of these roles in the gender stereotypes of academic subject areas. The information contained in these stereotypes is acquired during socialisation and reinforced by prevailing beliefs, observations of the status quo, and educational practices which themselves are influenced by the same stereotypes" (Colley, ibid, p.32).

Colley and Comber (2003) suggested that females adopted more rigid rules of adult gender roles for behaviour at adolescence. They claimed that despite some optimism that gender differences may be diminishing, such differences were continuing as female pupils progressed through secondary school because of the "enduring influence from societal gender roles and the beliefs associated with them" (Colley and Comber, ibid, p.66).

The above has shown that there were several factors that contributed to the subject choice process at the age of 14. Schools had a major impact - factors included here

were how schools organised their timetables, the size of classes that were permitted, pupils' perceptions of what subjects males and females were good at (influenced by stereotypes of adult male and female social roles), teacher perception of a pupil's ability and a pupil's like/dislike of subjects/teachers and the support/guidance perceived to be offered. Outside of the school environment there were influences by parents, siblings and friends. Also, any career aspirations held by a pupil could play a part in influencing subject choice. However, the most important factor was the perception of gender roles held within society and how this interacted upon the female and male subject selection process. All of these factors were investigated within my research in order to clarify the position regarding teenage girls and educational decision-making.

3.2   Leaving School At The Earliest Opportunity – The Influence Of Marriage And Motherhood

A very important decision to be made is what to do at 16: whether to stay on in the education system (at school or go to college) or leave to get employment. Staying on in the education system can bring the possibility of enhanced career opportunities later in life through the acquisition of additional qualifications. Employment obviously offers the prospect of a salary and independence. However, it needs to be noted that until the late 1970s it was possible to leave school and claim unemployment benefit with immediate effect (go 'on the dole').

3.2.1 The Educational Environment Of The Mothers

During the 1960s there was low unemployment and jobs for school leavers were widely available and relatively easy to obtain. For pupils who had not attended grammar school, the majority left at the age of 15 and many without any qualifications. In the 1970s only a small percentage of working-class girls attended grammar schools and, regardless of ability level, more working-class girls left grammar school at an earlier age than boys. It was considered likely that one important reason for this was the belief that the education of a girl, who would almost certainly marry, was of less importance than the education of a boy, who would have to work for most of his life and support a family. The fact that girls, especially working-class ones, came to see marriage and a family as their 'career' was recorded by a wide range of studies including those by Ann Oakley (1972) and Rosemary Deem (1978). Sue Sharpe's (op. cit) study within four London schools found that, although much was spoken about the changing role of women, for working-class girls there seemed to be little change. Girls were still brought up to marry, have children and care for their homes, husbands and families. Although it was assumed that they should seek jobs these were to take second place. Sharpe's research revealed that girls perceived themselves as being at home for most of their married lives. She found that the girls in her study saw marriage and motherhood as important, and inevitable facts of life as childrearing and childcare were seen as women's responsibility. She discovered that 82% of her sample wanted to marry – "a third of them hoped to be married by the time they were twenty, and three-quarters of them by the 'critical' age of twenty-five" (Sharpe, ibid, p.217). They accepted that a husband and family were the most satisfying things in a woman's life.

Lees argued that despite the ambitions of many girls to have careers they "reconcile themselves to the reality of marriage and poor opportunities" (Lees, 1986, p.123). This was reflected in girls' homes and leisure activities as many working-class schoolgirls were already "participating in their future roles of domestic labour – to the detriment of their schoolwork – by helping mother with housework" (Lees, ibid, p.131). Griffin (1985) found that the young girls, 17-21 years old, in her study expected conflict between any jobs they held and their family commitments. They acknowledged that their future employment would be shaped by their childcare and domestic responsibilities. Although they had chosen subjects and courses with a view to future careers these would be discarded in order to pursue domestic commitments and childcare because these responsibilities were not seen as compatible with a full-time job.

It must be remembered that at that time educational policy assumed that boys and girls differed in their needs and interests, because girls' primary role was to be wives and mothers and boys were interested in becoming wage earners. The Newsom Report, 1963, proposed a scheme of education suitable for the majority of girls but claimed that the 'most important vocational concern' of girls was marriage. Girls would "respond to work relating to the wider aspects of homemaking and family life and the care and upbringing of children" (Newsom, 1963, p.37). Therefore, schools were also playing their part in reinforcing the message that a girl's ultimate role was of one within the family home.

As well as the belief that a girl would simply become a housewife and mother there were other reasons why female pupils decided to leave school at the earliest opportunity. For example, Rauta and Hunt (1975) studied a sample of fifth form (now Year 11) girls in London and Oxfordshire and discovered that the most common reasons, for wanting to leave school, which the girls they interviewed gave were: that they wanted to start work and earn money; that they wanted to continue their education elsewhere (sometimes specifically in order to get training that was not provided by the school) and that they were tired of school work and examinations.

In addition, Joan Maizels (1970, p.28) in her study of pupils leaving school was offered the following reasons for leaving.

Table 2 – Reasons For Leaving School

REASONS GIVEN FOR LEAVING SCHOOL	**THE FEELINGS BEHIND THE REASONS GIVEN FOR LEAVING SCHOOL**
• Disliked school or some aspect of it	• Associated with their: *teachers* (about their treatment of the pupils rather than about their professional demerits) *school work* (study and homework was a strain) *school atmosphere* (too restrictive)
• Felt not learning anything	• The lack of anything new and interesting in the school curriculum or in school life
• Felt lacked ability	• Feelings of doubt about ability insofar as the position in the 'streaming' system and in class
• Wanted to be independent	• To start work (linked with 'wanting to earn money')
• Wanted to earn money	
• Had job to go to or in mind*	• Apprenticeships
• Course completed	
• Friends leaving	
• Family circumstances	• To help their parents financially especially if there were other dependent children in the family

* Some girls already had jobs arranged or planned for them. Some leavers would have preferred to have stayed on at school but left either because they felt that they would lose the chance of securing a particular job in mind or entry to a skilled trade, or because they preferred the certainty of prospective employment to what they felt was the uncertain outcome of a longer school life.

Ashton and Field (1976) surveyed girls leaving school in Leicester in the 1960s and found that such girls were expected to leave school at the earliest opportunity in order to take low skilled jobs that required few or no qualifications. They did not think that school was of any long-term benefit and the decision to leave school was made at a very early stage. The girls had taken the initiative to prepare for their futures, not through education, but by seeking employment well in advance of leaving school. Before the time to leave had occurred the girls were actively searching for, and securing, employment through their female contacts. They were looking forward to leaving school and gaining money, independence and the recognition of being an adult. Cullingford (2004) claimed that such an interest in employment was a kind of judgement on the relevance of schooling. He argued that the desire to enter the labour market could demonstrate a: lack of loyalty to school; wish to end the drudgery of school; belief that the formal curriculum was dreary and irrelevant and to escape from discrimination and mistreatment.

When they had been younger the girls in Ashton and Field's (op. cit) study had held relatively ambitious aspirations for careers but these aspirations did not correspond with the types of employment available (jobs mainly in factories or shops). The girls discovered that they had less choice than expected and consequently had to lower their aspirations in order to enter the labour market. As many found out, "the notion of occupational choice was something of a myth and the opportunities available in the local labour market largely dictated the employment destinations of most school leavers" (O'Connor and Goodwin, 2004, p.109).

An important feature to come out of Ashton and Field's (op. cit) study was the role of careers advice. Whilst at school, in the 1960s, girls were able to seek careers guidance and advice from the Youth Employment Office (YEO) or the school but many found the guidance very limited. The main function of the YEO was to secure employment for school leavers rather than to offer vocational guidance. Many of the girls in Ashton and Field's study were disparaging and critical about the service provided as it became clear that the YEO "reinforced the perception that girls should only apply for certain jobs, usually 'suitable female jobs', regardless of the job the school leaver was interested in" (O'Connor and Goodwin, op. cit, p.111). Those who found the service very poor were girls who had held ambitious career plans and had wanted to avoid traditional female routes. Instead they found that they were actively discouraged from entering non-traditional areas of employment. But whilst at school careers guidance is very important so that pupils of either sex "do not make curriculum decisions ignorant of the dangers of specialisation" (Millman and Weiner, 1985, p.12).

When looking at the factors that influence the decision to leave school Halpin (1991) commented that there were two factors, in particular, that appeared to make a big contribution to early school leaving: the experience of education pre-16 and the pull of the local labour market. The former factor played a significant role in discouraging certain pupils from continuing in full-time education. He argued that the 'O' level examination system appeared to be designed to "produce failure for the majority and success for a minority" (Halpin, ibid, p.133). Smithers and Robinson (1989) estimated that 40% of pupils failed to gain the top 3 grades at 'O' level and less than 50% of pupils failed to gain the top 3 grades at CSE level. They argued that many

young people did not stay on beyond compulsory schooling because they were not qualified to do so. If pupils had progressed through school for over ten years and would not achieve any qualifications at the end of their schooling, Smithers and Robinson added that it was not surprising that so many of them left at the first opportunity.

To progress through school and not gain any qualifications could lead to pupils being labelled as 'failures' and Measor and Sikes (op. cit) claimed that some anti-school girls wanted to retaliate at a system that had branded them as such. To be labelled as a 'failure' caused 'discomfort and distress' and girls tried to avoid such distress in a number of ways. They may have used the fact that they were girls as a means to escape from the pressure to be academically successful. Instead, they turned to marriage and domesticity which they felt provided greater fulfilment.

This was highlighted by Sharpe's (op. cit) study as she found that amongst her sample of girls if they were performing well at school then they were likely to stay on for the qualifications that would provide a better job or entrance to college or university. They emphasised "the importance of a good education" (Sharpe, ibid, p.127). If the girls were not performing well but they and their parents had high aspirations then the girls would struggle on to get through the necessary examinations. But any girls who were not performing well at school began thinking about leaving school, getting a job, earning money and developing socially. As Sharpe argued the implications of the way that girls viewed themselves and their abilities determined their range of job opportunities. It also affected their views on

"the substance and value of working and having careers, getting married and setting up a home" (Sharpe, ibid, p.128).

Sharpe (ibid) found the level of school performance as being very important as girls who were performing well were interested and enthusiastic about subjects and had positive attitudes towards studying. She found that if, in the early years of school, a girl did not do well and was placed in the lower forms, the girl "defined and labelled herself as not being intelligent, and absorbed and reflected her teachers' limited expectations of her" (Sharpe, ibid, p.143).

When the mothers in my sample were at school it was taken for granted for many of them (by their school, their parents and themselves) that they would leave at the earliest opportunity. Jobs were relatively easy to find and secure and the mothers had been exposed to a lifetime of society's prevailing attitude that they would marry and become mothers therefore a job, rather than a career, was all that was needed. Girls at that time knew that childcare duties were the responsibility of women so if they had not been performing well academically it seemed logical to gain employment immediately for the interim time until they married and then started to perform the inevitable childcare role. I was interested to discover whether the mothers themselves held such beliefs and therefore had limited views regarding employment and careers. I also wanted to establish whether external factors played a major part in the decision to leave school; for example the role of the local labour market and/or family circumstances. Did the position in the family (elder children leaving school for employment in order to help financially support younger siblings) have an important bearing on the decision to leave school early? From an analysis of

these factors I was able to determine the degree of influence these experiences of the mothers had filtered down to their daughters.

3.2.2 The Educational Environment Of The Daughters

It has been seen above that when the mothers in the sample had been at school working-class girls did not really consider educational success or long-term employment (Arnot et al, op. cit). Plummer argued that there was a reliance of girls on marriage with "a high dependency on men" (Plummer, 2000, p.77). Researchers notably Pollert (1981) and Griffin (op. cit) highlighted the pressures that girls were under to fulfil traditional female occupational roles in factories and offices. And it was seen that working-class girls strongly identified with female work and qualifications were viewed as being less important than securing a good job (Plummer, op. cit).

Research conducted after Sue Sharpe's (op. cit) original study of the early 1970s found that girls still possessed the same views. They would remain at home for most of their married lives, running a home, having children and caring for them (Llewellyn, 1980, Davies, 1984). However, Sharpe (1994) in her second study, undertaken twenty years after her original study, did discover that some girls were becoming more self-aware and had an interest in their own futures. She found that the majority of girls rejected traditional views of sex and gender differences, including the belief in male dominance, and that they had "a greater sense of the equal importance of women, and their own individuality and independence" (Sharpe, ibid, p.292). She also discovered that the 82% of girls wanting to marry in the 1970s had dropped to 45% in 1991and the 33% who wished to marry by the age of twenty in the 1970s had dropped dramatically to 4% in 1991.

Lees (1993) argued that mothers in general had a lot of influence on their daughters, albeit indirectly, because daughters had witnessed their mothers struggling with caring for children, often alone and working part-time, and the experiences of mothers in trying to return to work after having children affected daughters. Girls no longer accepted that domestic work was a woman's role, they were very aware of the power relations in marriage and they expressed strong disapproval of the way that their mothers were treated. Also Lees argued that girls were now considering delaying marriage in order to be able to pursue careers or travel the world. By acknowledging their own mother's experiences and lives, and the little autonomy they had had, daughters now wished to postpone marriage and motherhood.

Arnot et al identified that "there are some indications of a 'sea-change' in female attitudes towards career planning, family and work" (Arnot et al, 1998, p.74). Support for this could be found in the study conducted by Wilkinson and Mulgan. Younger women who had grown up in the aftermath of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 were attracted to "living life on the edge, to taking risks and to hedonism" (Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995, p.27) and they also had "a greater desire to translate educational achievements into success at work; a greater assumption of autonomy and the capacity to make choices" (Wilkinson and Mulgan, ibid, p.26).

Arnot et al (1999) in a study of schools around the country in 1995 found that students' perceptions were more open and more sensitive to changed cultural expectations about women's position in society. Girls and younger women appeared "more confident about their prospects, talking positively about their future lives as

involving a combination of work inside and outside the home" (Arnot et al, ibid, p.24). They were attached to the values of risks, excitement, hedonism, sexuality and image-awareness. However, Arnot et al did point out that these girls were unlikely to consider the difficulties of combining family life, the demands of being wives and workers with the stresses and strains of adult life such as divorce, partnership, poverty and unemployment.

Although adolescent girls now wanted to pursue careers it was discovered that they still had strong beliefs about the role of motherhood. Marks and Houston studied 92 grammar school girls, aged 15 to 17, and found that the education and career plans of these girls were influenced by "their anticipated role as a mother and their perception of social pressure to give up work to care for their children" (Marks and Houston, 2002, p.321). Although these school girls originally had strong intentions to pursue a career and gain further educational qualifications, these plans were influenced by the expectation of having to combine work with motherhood. Banks et al discovered that better-qualified young women from sixth forms and in further education viewed themselves as future 'career' women, who would perhaps "enter business or science careers" (Banks et al, 1992, p.106). However, these girls still believed that they would pursue a prolonged period of social and economic independence before settling down to marriage when a domestic career would take over. Abele (2000, cited by Marks and Houston, op. cit) argued that it was difficult to ascertain why high-achieving young women with a 'brilliant educational biography' may go on to develop a 'poor occupational biography'.

Over the last two decades there had been a trend for more women to combine motherhood with paid employment. This may have had an influence on the daughters' attitudes because they would have noticed this change in the employment pattern of their mothers, perhaps viewing their mothers as positive role models, and then becoming more aware of the possible option of returning to work after the birth of children (Marks and Houston, op.cit).

Marks and Houston (ibid) believed that their study revealed that high-ability girls were making plans about their proposed careers and also about their anticipated roles as wives and mothers. Due to this belief that work could be combined with motherhood girls were now choosing academic subjects and job opportunities that they considered would enable them to do both, for example, nursing and teaching. Francis (2000a) agreed that girls were now becoming far more career oriented. Girls in her study saw their chosen careers as "reflecting their identity rather than viewing paid work as a stopgap before marriage" (Francis, ibid, p.89). Francis believed that this had happened partly because of equal opportunities programmes but also because more women (including married women) were participating in, and succeeding in, the labour market and that they were acting as role models for younger girls. Added to these factors were changes in society, for example the increasing divorce rate and the increase in lone-parent families headed by the mother. This has led to young girls believing that "women must fend for themselves as you 'cannot rely on a man'" (Francis, ibid, p.89). In addition, Wilkinson (1994) had argued that, on average, women now had their first child at 29, and this was so that they could establish an identity at work first. She believed that young women wanted to control parenting and place it within a context of their other goals and aspirations.

In conclusion, it can be seen that over the last two decades attitudes in society have changed significantly and marriage and motherhood are no longer seen as the only option for women. Careers do not have to be sacrificed for the benefit of the family. Tinklin et al (2005) researched into the responsibility for childcare in the family and found that young people believed that it should be a joint responsibility. In addition, the majority agreed that it was acceptable for a man to stay at home and look after the children while his wife worked. Therefore, girls are now valuing education and realise that it is essential for their future to equip themselves with academic, practical or vocational qualifications that will help them gain long-term security (French, 1990). In order to gain these required qualifications adolescent girls will need to remain within education rather than leaving at the earliest opportunity. They will need to be educated and qualified should it occur that they divorce or decide to become a lone-parent needing to support themselves, and any children, financially. As the acquisition of qualifications can determine possible career pathways and opportunities I thought it was imperative to determine the reasons why females opted to progress to further education or opted out of schooling at the first opportunity. I investigated whether such decisions were due to external factors such as local economic conditions and the perception of the labour market and I also determined how much of an influence the mothers had on their daughters' decision-making processes.

3.3 Education After Compulsory Schooling

The next area to be investigated was that of any further education and higher education that took place once compulsory schooling had ended.

3.3.1 Progression To Further Education

Prior to the mid-1980s the majority of pupils, upon reaching the age upon which they could leave school, chose to leave education and enter the labour market. However, since the mid-1980s the trend has been for more young people to stay on at school, or participate in other forms of education and training, after compulsory school age. By the late 1990s participation in education or training was the choice of 70% of 16/17 year olds (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, op. cit). Amongst those staying on, a high proportion is girls.

There is a process of decision-making here once it has been decided to continue with education. Girls need to decide whether they wish to remain at school in a sixth form, go to a 6th form college or pursue their education at a local F.E. college (full-time or part-time linked with employment), whether to select vocational courses or traditional academic ones and to decide which subjects to study.

Researchers had claimed that there was a range of factors that increased the attraction of continuing with education in order to gain qualifications. Factors included: the rise in unemployment for people of all ages during the last couple of decades; an occupational shift away from industry and manufacturing and changing labour markets; a reduction in the availability of long-term apprenticeships schemes;

changes in the financial support available by the Government for young people; the Government's policies designed to enhance participation via the Education Reform Act's emphasis on performance and the National Curriculum's establishment of a common 16+ examination; the opening up of higher education to more young people; and changes in the expectations of society with regard to the value of education (Powney, 1997; Jones, 2003; Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, op. cit). I wanted to determine whether the reasons for continuing with education had changed between the mothers and their daughters and to discover how much of an influence the mothers had upon their daughters' decision-making.

Sharpe (1976) found in her research that girls had varying reasons for remaining at school: to gain qualifications; to remain with friends; the enjoyment at being at school; from fear of leaving the familiarity and protection of school life and from fear of being unable to cope with independence. At this time girls were remaining in education for reasons mainly of a social aspect. I was interested to discover whether this was the situation for the mothers in my sample because education was not valued so highly.

Two decades later, Francis (2000a) found that it was the consideration of long-term career prospects that became paramount. She argued that there were 6 main reasons, among secondary school pupils, why further education was selected.

1. the importance of being educated (an emphasis upon the value of education in its own rights)

2. the developmental usefulness of education (education is providing one with the knowledge and the experience to make informed decisions)

3. the status and value of post-16 education and qualifications

4. meritocracy (a belief that further education would lead to a good job)

5. competition (qualifications would help in a competitive labour market)

6. hard times (an emphasis on the high levels of youth unemployment)

[Francis, ibid, p.91]

Francis (ibid) discovered that many girls believed that gender discrimination occurred in the adult workplace and that there were also high levels of youth unemployment. Girls felt that the world of employment would be 'hard and competitive', and that qualifications provided by further education would be 'an insurance or an investment' to use "to combat any disadvantage they might face as a result of discrimination in the employment market" (Francis, ibid, p.92). I was interested to discover whether the daughters in my sample were staying in education for reasons other than social ones and whether they were looking long-term in order to achieve their career aspirations.

3.3.1.1   Further Education – Choice Of Course/Subjects Studied

It was seen earlier (section 3.1) that subject choice at GCSE level tended to be gendered with girls selecting subjects that were perceived as 'feminine' (languages and arts subjects) and boys selecting subjects that were perceived as 'masculine' (mathematics, science and technology subjects). This gendered split tended to become even more pronounced at 'A' level. Therefore, girls were favouring sociology, French, English Literature, biology, and art and design whilst boys were favouring physics, economics, mathematics, chemistry and geography (OFSTED and EOC, 1996).

The following table shows the number of pupils that sat 'A' levels by subject in 2005 arranged by subject popularity as selected by girls. This shows clearly the gendered split with girls favouring English, psychology, biology and art and design subjects.

Table 3 – A Level Results, 2005, By Subject Popularity Of Girls

	BOYS	GIRLS
English	26332	59526
Psychology	12798	37237
Biology	22046	31922
General Studies	28083	31320
Art and Design Subjects	12523	27931
History	22342	22771
Mathematics	32719	20718
Sociology	6528	20189
Chemistry	19671	19180
Media Studies	12725	15536
Geography	17760	15071
Expressive Arts/Drama	5079	13231
Business Studies	18135	12584
Religious Studies	5053	11806
French	4591	9893
Sport/PE Studies	12532	7594
Technology	10914	7000
Physics	21922	6197
Economics	11895	5730
ICT	9606	5277
Music	5191	4583
Spanish	2007	4223
German	2222	3679
Home Economics	51	1134
Computing	6426	816

[adapted from: 'A-Level Results By Subject 2005', EducationGuardian]

An investigation of vocational courses showed the same gendered split as for academic courses. Arnot et al (1999) discovered that girls chose the following courses: business and commerce; hairdressing and beauty, and caring service courses e.g. nursery nursing related to the female-identified sector of the labour market. At the same time, boys opted for vocational courses in science, construction and engineering. Marks and Houston (op. cit) pointed out that since educational attainment influenced girls' access to the labour market, it was worrying that there remained a stereotyping of subject choices and courses and that there was an under-representation of girls with higher-level vocational qualifications.

A concern about the gender pattern of sixth form study was that, despite successes in these subjects at GCSE, few girls were taking 'A' level courses that were wholly mathematical, scientific or technological. As the choice of subjects influenced future career opportunities this meant that girls were therefore less likely to participate in careers in science, engineering and technology (Mitsos and Browne, 1998).

It had been seen that on the whole girls were reluctant to continue with subjects that were perceived as having a masculine image once they were no longer compulsory. However, as Paechter (1998) argued the subjects girls tended to reject (physical sciences and mathematics) because they were seen as being 'masculine and difficult' were the ones with more status than the ones boys rejected for being 'feminine' such as food technology or textiles.

Another important area to consider was that although there was now only one formal qualification, the GCSE, in some subjects e.g. English and science there were two tiers. The 'higher tier' covered grades A*-D and the 'foundation tier' covered grades C-G. This allowed all candidates the opportunity to achieve a grade C should their work deserve it. However, any pupil entered for the foundation tier could not achieve a grade higher than a C grade. More girls than boys were entered for the foundation tier in mathematics and this meant that many girls would never have the opportunity to achieve a grade higher than a C grade. As some sixth forms stipulated entry requirements such as achievement of a B grade or higher at GCSE level to be able to pursue a subject at 'A' level, then girls would be denied the opportunity to study mathematics further and to a higher level.

I was interested to know what subjects/courses had been selected by the daughters in my sample because, as argued above, such choices could influence future career opportunities. I wanted to know whether the daughters were choosing traditional gendered subjects/courses or whether they were considering occupations that may have been considered traditionally a 'man's job'.

3.3.1.2 Further Education – Influences On Decision-Making

Banks et al (op. cit) argued that when decision-making was taking place choices about future pathways were not made in isolation. Young people were influenced by social factors and by aspects relating to their cultural group. Therefore, young people when considering their aspirations were affected by factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity and the locality in which they lived.

When investigating the choice of subjects during the decision-making process it was also essential to analyse the influences of various parties when decisions were being made. Coldwell and Holland (2001) found that girls were more likely to be influenced by their parents, their teachers (or a school careers lesson), the careers service and friends when making decisions about further education. However, it was interesting to note the level of influence. Parents felt that, although they had discussed choice of subjects and plans for the future, their role was really one of guidance and advice. Although parents' views did continue to prevail, final decisions tended to be made by the pupils themselves. I analysed my findings to see whether they concurred with the findings of Coldwell and Holland about parents (in particular mothers) and whether the influences, if any, were purely of an advising and guidance nature. As most of

the mothers in my sample had not proceeded to further education it would be important to ascertain whether this was an important influence. It was possible that daughters might have believed that they could succeed in the labour market because their mothers had done so and they had left school at the earliest opportunity or the opposite may have occurred – the daughters were aware that the mothers had had limited opportunities throughout their working lives because they did not gain additional qualifications.

Since Sharpe (1976) conducted her research in the 1970s it could be seen that girls were now more ambitious concerning their aspirations and their future working lives. It would appear that girls were wanting to obtain qualifications in order to compete in a competitive labour market which they saw as demanding and also prone to gender discrimination. As Francis (2000a) argued one of the ways that girls could demonstrate their ability and potential to be suitable for a diverse range of occupational careers was via qualifications held. This desire for academic and vocational qualifications maintained their motivation and was reflected in their achievements. Jones (op. cit) believed that a new student culture had been created which acknowledged successful examination performance and girls were happy to be part of this student culture.

Although girls were ambitious when considering their careers prospects and appeared to be valuing education as a pathway to good employment opportunities, in general the subjects and courses they were choosing to study and pursue were still the traditional gendered ones. Although girls were able to choose any subjects they wished for their post-compulsory education, once they have left behind the

constraints of the National Curriculum, they were still selecting highly traditional subjects and concentrating on the arts.

3.3.2 Progression To Higher Education

Since the 1990s there had been a massive expansion in higher education participation and six in ten 18 year olds could expect to enter universities or colleges at some stage in their lives (Smithers and Robinson, 1995). The huge increase in student numbers had occurred by increasing the number and size of the universities in the UK. This, in effect, was allowing a much wider range of people the opportunity to progress to higher education. By the end of the twentieth century, women accounted for over 50% of the students in higher education (Gayle et al, 2002). In addition, more students were progressing to higher education without 'A' levels (having gained vocational qualifications), more were studying part-time and more were working towards higher national diplomas (Smithers and Robinson, 1995).

An important feature to appear from the analysis of reasons why teenagers wished to pursue higher education was that traditional academic routes were seen as popular and significant ways to gain the qualifications that held substantial value in the labour market. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown argued that young people believed that university degrees were the route to "economic enhancement, social status and lifestyle benefits" (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, op. cit, p.207). In order to gain access to university courses young people felt that they needed to pursue a traditional, academic route ('A' levels).

Higher education was now viewed by many teenagers as a way to prepare them for working life and also for a lifetime of learning. Vocational degrees, including business and law, had increased in popularity tremendously (business degrees being the most popular subject in 2003 and 2004) when compared to academic courses such as the sciences and humanities (Smithers and Robinson, 1995).

In the past, higher education was only for the elite minority of the population. When studying decision-making, in particular amongst the mothers in the research sample, it must be remembered that the academic opportunities at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century were not available for those being educated in the 1950s or 1960s. Up until the 1970s, twice as many young women studied at teacher training colleges than studied at university. Although the courses were full-time, grant-aided higher education, teacher training was perceived to be of lower status than a university degree and had lower entrance requirements (Crompton, 1992). Jackson and Marsden (1962) discovered various reasons why so many women opted for teacher training: ignorance about what a university course was; only having to train at college for two years to become a teacher rather than studying at university for four years; the belief that one year at university would cost parents far more than one year at college; lack of knowledge about the range of jobs available for women once achieving a degree and society's beliefs that education for a woman was not really important. Then, in the 1970s, the severe cut in teacher training places led to a substantial proportion of women moving into other professions, for example, within the finance sector or public services.

Although higher education had been opened up to more students and this included more first generation students, there were some teenagers who accepted that progressing to higher education was an inevitable stage in their individual education and had believed since childhood that they would go to university (Power et al, 2003). In particular, this included a high proportion of pupils from private schools in the independent sector. I wanted to determine how many daughters in the sample believed that higher education was attainable and/or inevitable and had been led to hold this belief by their mothers.

When reviewing the transition from further education to higher education I wanted to examine the other attitudes and beliefs held amongst the daughters. This was because Walkerdine et al (2001) argued that the progression to higher education was different for girls from working-class families compared with girls from middle-class families. They believed that daughters from middle-class families wanted to become "like their parents in the sense of having the same kind of career as them, the same levels of income, material comfort and lifestyle" (Walkerdine et al, ibid, p.158) but daughters from working-class families did not want to become like their parents and wanted to improve on their parents' lives and it was this desire that motivated them regarding higher education. I was interested to discover whether daughters wished to be like their mothers career-wise or whether they wished to reject the types of jobs and careers their mothers had undertaken.

3.3.2.1   Higher Education – Influences On Decision-Making

When analysing the decision-making process used with regard to higher education choices, research had shown that there were a number of groups of people with

important influence. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (op. cit) claimed that influence came from parents, teachers (particularly subject-based staff), careers teachers, siblings and television. Teachers had a significant influence as pupils progressed through the schooling system.

Factors salient in the decision-making process had been identified as: expected attainment levels at 'A' level; earlier school experiences; any careers advice and guidance by teachers at the child's school/college; expectations from school and home; parents' social networks (what they gleaned about higher education from their place of work) and parents' own educational experiences (whether they had any direct experience of higher education themselves) (Connor et al, 1999).

Although girls considered the above factors and were subject to influences from a variety of interested parties, it was the influence of parents, in particular mothers, that I investigated. Obviously parents were a heavy influence on teenagers' attitudes towards higher education. Over 90% of respondents in research studies claimed that they discussed their choices with their parents (Brooks, 2004). However, due to differences in parents' knowledge about higher education, the relative status of academic institutions and subjects, the amount of involvement in the decision-making process did vary. Brooks (ibid) claimed that research on parental involvement in educational 'choice' had highlighted clear disparities between "the close and active involvement of mothers and the more distant role of fathers" (Brooks, ibid, p.495). It could be seen that the level of involvement of mothers and fathers with their children's decision-making was substantially different. Ball (2003, cited by Brooks, ibid) claimed that middle-class mothers were involved in activities

such as visiting universities, making telephone calls, collecting brochures and searching for information. Whilst mothers undertook responsibility for these activities, fathers had a role in confirming choices.

The importance of parental advice (particularly from mothers) was greater for girls. Mann (1998) found that few traditional working-class girls looked to their fathers for encouragement and less than 25% of the girls in her study talked of fathers in positive terms. David et al (2003) argued that girls were happy for mothers and daughters to make the decision-making process a joint exercise. Boys, on the other hand, tended to reject maternal intervention and were resistant to the involvement by their mothers, seeing it as 'intrusive or irrelevant' (David et al, ibid, p.35). It needed to be remembered though that there was an unwillingness by many older teenagers to acknowledge the influence that their parents had upon them. When investigating the decision-making process regarding higher education it was the mother-daughter relationship in particular that I examined.

3.3.2.2 Higher Education – Choice Of Academic Institution And Course

Although parents had a key role in decision-making about higher education, Brooks (2003) claimed that when it came to deciding upon the actual academic institutions to apply to and the choice of particular courses, then parents' influence became less. Decisions then became influenced by pupils' perceptions of their own 'academic ability' as learnt from their current school/college.

Research had shown that when deciding upon progression to higher education, more traditional applicants (i.e. those who had taken academic rather than vocational

qualifications) were more likely to seek a balance between academic quality and social life. Other aspects that were considered important when deciding where to apply were: that the institution offered the right subject, the overall image of the institution, the social life on offer, the teaching reputation at the institution, good future employment prospects (of particular importance to females) and the entry qualifications. The institution's distance from home was not considered important (Connor et al, op. cit).

Although it has been documented earlier (see section 1.1) that girls were now achieving better academic results than boys at GCSE level, at age 16, relatively few young women were choosing science or science-related subjects for further study (DfES 2006). Connor et al (op. cit) claimed that when investigating subject choice in higher education gender was most likely to affect choices made rather than social class, family income, family experience of higher education or qualifications held. It could also be seen that with regard to subject choice in higher education the traditional gender split was still evident. As Purvis (1991) argued, female and male students tended to follow different educational routes: female students were mainly concentrated in the typically 'feminine' subjects such as the arts and languages whilst male students were mainly concentrated in the typically 'masculine' subjects such as mathematics, physical sciences, engineering and technology. Post-compulsory subject choice remained highly traditional and gendered.

I examined the attitudes and beliefs held by the daughters in my sample about higher education. It was important to determine how they viewed their own mother's lives and whether they believed that higher education was a way of maintaining the

status quo or altering it. The mother-daughter relationship needed to be analysed in relation to decision-making to ascertain what aspects, if any, of higher education were discussed jointly. The mother's influence needed to be examined to see whether it affected daughter's choice of university/higher education college and course.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW – CAREERS AND THE LABOUR MARKET

4.1   Girls' Choice Of Career

It was important to commence with an analysis of the types of jobs school girls were choosing in the 1970s and then determine whether school girls' choice of career in the 1990s had changed during the intervening twenty years. This secondary evidence would help to support the main arguments of my research.

Ann Oakley, (1974) writing in the early 1970s, described the continuing 'domesticity' of women's work roles as revealed in employment figures. Women workers were to be found in "teaching, nursing, shop work, clerical work and factories making domestic products like clothes and food" (Oakley, ibid, p.119).

Rauta and Hunt (1975) in their study of fifth-form girls in London and Oxfordshire found that the range of jobs that the girls were expecting to have was narrow and largely confined to those which were mainly carried out by women. Supporting Oakley's findings the most popular choices were clerical work, secretarial work and teaching. Also popular were jobs of a 'caring' or personal service type.

In addition, Sue Sharpe's (1976) Ealing girls selected jobs such as teachers, nurses, shop assistants, bank clerks, receptionists, telephonists, air hostesses, hairdressers, children's nurses/nannies and jobs in hospitals and offices. These jobs were all traditionally areas with high levels of female employment. Sharpe also discovered

that the girls tended to reject many jobs (such as mechanics, electricians, driving instructors and engineers), either because they defined them as men's work (being seen as hard, manual, with dirty, noisy conditions and long hours and overtime), or because they felt that employers and society at large defined them as such. Therefore, as Arnot et al (1999) argued girls (particularly, white, working-class ones) tended to pursue occupations associated with feminine roles.

Francis (2000a) claimed that girls in the 1970s and the early 1980s did not want to be viewed as being clever as they believed that this would make them seem less, rather than more, desirable. Girls were worried that being seen as academically successful might intimidate and put off boys. Therefore, girls kept their job aspirations low, looking at the sorts of opportunities available locally for members of their own sex with similar social backgrounds and educational experiences (Furlong, 1993). Thus, as Francis (2002) later stated girls, in the past, opted for a very narrow range of stereotypically feminine, non-professional occupations which had low pay, no career opportunities for promotion and few employment rights. In addition, the careers advice for girls in schools was very limited, covering only a small variety of occupations, coupled with careers teachers that tended to direct girls into traditionally female work.

Abbott and Wallace (1990) believed that research had shown that two things could happen with regard to girls' aspirations and decision-making regarding jobs. The first argument was that girls entered the jobs available in the local labour market and adjusted their expectations accordingly. The second argument was that girls' preferences were unrealistic, reflecting ideas of glamour rather than labour market

realities. This meant that office work was seen as very desirable and 'feminine' by many girls and also by their parents, believing that such work would be an ideal job for their daughters. A glamorous job would be something such as an air hostess but this, again, was an extension of a feminine role.

One reason why girls progressed into employment at the earliest opportunity and tended to find work in a traditional area was that there were family related restrictions on their aspirations. Many girls would have been expected to help out financially with younger siblings or to care for their own parents, especially widowed fathers and elderly mothers. They might have been expected to care for younger siblings or elderly grandparents or to do domestic work to help the family (Adkins, 1995).

Another important reason for the influx of girls into traditional areas was due to the conditions within the labour market and the demands of employers. Many managers would have acted in a discriminatory manner (particularly before the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975) and would have recruited girls for what were seen as girls' jobs and boys for what were seen as boys' jobs. Also for factory work there would have been recruiting networks where relatives would have been able to get family members employment or tell them of impending job vacancies.

Studies in the 1970s and early 1980s showed how school girls' view of employment was shaped by their expectations of marriage and how they considered employment to be temporary between school and marriage or motherhood. Girls expected fully to cease work upon marriage when they became housewives and mothers and to become financially dependent upon their husbands. It was possible that they might

return to work once their children were of school-age but they viewed themselves as the secondary breadwinner. It was the conviction that marriage was inevitable that made it possible for girls to abstain from making serious decisions about future employment. Girls, in particular non-academic ones, were able to lower their aspirations because of their future domestic roles in the family as housewife and mother (Abbott and Wallace, op. cit). This attitude was also reflected in society, with parents, teachers and employers believing that girls were to become housewives and mothers and this attitude would have filtered through to girls so that they could have been socialised into assuming that their major role in life would be as a wife and mother. Therefore, attitudes that were directly linked to education, such as those about motherhood and the care of children, also influenced the choices young girls made.

After the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and equal opportunities legislation it was an important task to widen girls' horizons with regard to the occupational opportunities available to them. Whyte et al (1985) argued that improvements in careers advice and guidance were needed to encourage girls to consider jobs that had traditionally been dominated by boys.

Research undertaken in the late twentieth century showed that girls' occupational choices were more far-reaching and more diverse. Secondary school girls showed that they had become far more career-oriented and were far more ambitious concerning their future careers and occupational aspirations than was the case 20 years ago. Girls were now more willing to consider jobs traditionally performed by boys. Research studies showed that girls were prepared to consider jobs such as

banker, businessperson, computer scientist, soldier and mathematician although there was still a limited number of girls choosing such jobs (Francis, 2002).

Girls were now prepared to consider a far wider range of occupations than was reported in studies in the 1970s and early 1980s. A Panorama documentary, 'The Future Is Female', in 1994, showed interviews with girls and concluded that there had been a revolution in young women's aspirations and that they now had expectations of better jobs with better earning power (Panorama, 1994). Popular choices for jobs now were within the arts and media (including acting, television presentation and journalism) and the financial sector (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2001). Research also showed that popular choices for girls were doctor or solicitor which showed an increased interest for their future careers in jobs of a professional nature. They were also choosing jobs that normally required a degree (nursing, for example, is a career which has become increasingly a graduate field), demonstrating a high level of ambition, and they appeared to see their chosen career as reflecting their identity, rather than simply a stopgap before marriage (Francis et al, 2005). There was a great diversity in girls' aspirations and they felt that there were plenty of job roles that were potentially appropriate for them. As Francis stated this "represents a dramatic shift from the situation twenty years ago" (Francis, 2002, p.79).

There were still some gender stereotypical jobs present in the choices of girls, for example, hairdresser, nurse and clerical worker, but these choices were not nearly as prominent as before. Although there was increased diversity of choice and greater aspiration on the part of girls regarding their future occupations there was still a

tendency for girls to select creative or caring jobs and few girls selecting predominantly technical, business or scientific jobs. Furlong and Biggart (1999) in a study of the aspirations of 13-16 year olds found that young people still tended to aspire to very gender-specific occupations. Girls were still working predominantly in lower paid areas, the 5 Cs – cleaning, catering, caring, cashiering and clerical work – which was one of the reasons why their full-time pay on average remained 18% less per hour than full-time men (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005).

Although girls were now placing a high value on both work and family roles they still took up traditional gender-specific roles (Marks and Houston, 2002). In addition, although the educational achievements of girls had been increasing over the last two decades this did not seem to have impacted on their occupational attainments. Francis (2002) believed that gender was still playing a large part in girls' selection of occupation and therefore affected their future position in the labour market, financial remuneration and life outcomes. Thirty years after the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 large groups of girls still chose gender specific jobs where females formed the majority of employees and where income levels and opportunity were more restricted.

As well as investigating girls' choice of career amongst my sample of daughters, I also examined the role of careers advice and careers teachers within the school. For example, Millman and Weiner (1985) had been critical about careers advisors in schools and had argued that they had neglected to inform girls about the serious issues in society that could affect them such as the high divorce rate, the increase in one-parent families and the social changes that had been brought about by male

unemployment. It was essential that, in order to help young girls achieve their full potential, they should be given careers advice "which does not make outdated assumptions" (Marks and Houston, op. cit, p.323). Therefore, in the long term girls could make appropriate plans and should avoid the loss of earnings and promotion from poor occupational judgements.

Research was carried out by the Equal Opportunities Commission into people's attitudes towards jobs traditionally carried out on gendered terms. Adults were asked whether the careers advice received at school or college was influenced by their sex and half of women surveyed thought that the advice they had received when leaving school and during decision-making was influenced by their sex. Adults were asked if they had known that there was such differences between rates of pay for jobs mainly done by women and those mainly done by men whether they then would have considered a wider range of options and two-thirds of women surveyed, aged 16-24, agreed that they would have considered other options (Equal Opportunities Commission, op. cit).

The Equal Opportunities Commission (ibid) was critical about the current education system and claimed that it failed to support entry to non-traditional employment via vocational routes. It argued also that careers advice in schools and colleges reinforced traditional choices and young people had no information on the pay advantages of non-traditional routes. For example, wages earned in childcare, the only female-dominated sector, were generally half, or less than half, than wages earned in construction, engineering, plumbing or ICT. A careers advisor was quoted as saying: "If a young person wanted to choose an atypical job we would back them,

but I don't think we would go out of our way to encourage a youngster into non-stereotyped jobs" (Equal Opportunities Commission, ibid, p.6). Therefore, girls were not being encouraged, and may have been positively discouraged, from taking up traditionally male-dominated careers. It would appear that careers advice for girls had not progressed since the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

One of the strongest influences on teenagers' occupational aspirations was that of parents. The role of parents in helping teenagers choose a career was paramount and as Noller and Callan (1991) stated, career choice was an extension of the direct and indirect influence parents had over their children. Parents could influence their children by encouraging them to consider the jobs or careers about which they themselves had knowledge. In addition, teenagers would develop ideas about the jobs that their parents performed, and the jobs that other adults such as relatives and neighbours did, and therefore, social background and residential patterns could have a tremendously powerful influence on teenagers' career preferences (Furlong, op. cit). I analysed the mother-daughter relationship to see whether a mother's beliefs and attitudes regarding jobs were transmitted to her daughter and if there was any subsequent effect.

As well as any influence from parents and relatives, the role of the school had to be acknowledged. Furlong and Biggart (op. cit) wrote about the influence of the school and of the strong relationship between academic attainment and occupational aspirations. They believed that experiences in secondary school were significant in shaping aspirations but these aspirations were also influenced by gender and by the constraints of the local employment market. The nature of the local labour market

where the female pupil resides would greatly affect attitudes and aspirations, as would traditional expectations in the community and society about the pattern of 'male' and 'female' employment and also media images of certain jobs which could influence external perceptions of particular career paths.

Teenage girls could be considered to be adopting realistic and sophisticated approaches to decision making with regard to future employment. Although their choices might appear traditional and gender specific (e.g. child care, office studies) as Gillborn and Youdell (2000) argued they were made with a realistic view of the local labour market.

I investigated the reasons for career choice amongst my sample of daughters and analysed the effects of external influences on decision-making. I compared and contrasted choices made by mothers with choices made by daughters.

4.2   The Labour Market At The Beginning Of The 21st Century

In order to analyse the career choices being made by the daughters it was necessary to consider the UK labour market at the beginning of the 21st century as this would have a tremendous effect on the daughters and their career choices.

The UK employment rate – the proportion of working-age people who were in employment – had shown very little change over the past 30 years or so, ranging from 68% to 76%. However, there had been very significant changes for men and women. The employment rate for men fell from 92% in 1971 to 79% in 2004 while the rate for women rose from 56% to 70% (Social Trends, 2005, p.4). The increase

in women's economic activity since the 1970s had mainly been associated with an increase in part-time working, although there had been a smaller rise in full-time working also.

The UK economy experienced structural change in the post-war period, with a decline in the manufacturing sector (leading to fewer men working in skilled manual occupations) and an increase in service industries (leading to more opportunities, especially part-time work, for women). The largest increase in both male and female employee jobs over the last 20 years had been in financial and business services, which accounted for about one in five of both male and female employee jobs in June 2004 (Social Trends, ibid).

The following table shows all males and females in employment by occupation in 2004 in the United Kingdom.

Table 4 – Males And Females In Employment, By Occupation, In The UK, 2004

	Males %	Females %
Managers and senior officials	18	10
Professional	13	11
Associate professional and technical	13	14
Administrative and secretarial	5	22
Skilled trades	19	2
Personal service	2	14
Sales and customer service	5	12
Process, plant and machine operatives	12	2
Elementary	12	12
All occupations	100	100

[Social Trends, 2005, p.52]

The table shows that just over one-fifth of women in employment were employed in administrative and secretarial work, while men were most likely to be employed in skilled trade occupations or as managers and senior officials. These occupations

were among the ones least likely to be followed by women. Conversely women were more likely than men to be in employment in personal services and in sales and customer services.

Although it is 30 years since the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 came into force and women now make up nearly half the workforce they might expect to share power but it must be recognised that within the labour market men still hold the dominant positions and those of power. In the 1990s women participated in the labour market in ever increasing numbers. However, women tended to secure non-management positions, especially working in the tertiary sector, in part-time, low-paid, low-status and often insecure jobs that had no career prospects. Measor and Sikes (1992) argued that when women secured paid employment they occupied a subordinate position in the labour market because within the labour market there was a 'primary' sector (where jobs were secure, well-paid, had promotion opportunities and were based on training and credentials) and a 'secondary' sector (where there was insecurity, little prospect of promotion and low pay). Women were inevitably employed in this 'secondary' sector.

It could be seen that some women had reached positions of junior and middle management but were still under-represented in senior management positions. Although more girls participated in higher education and gained degrees than previously, and in terms of qualifications were considerably more educated than any previous generation of women, they were still under-represented in the senior posts that held status and responsibility. As Francis (2000a) argued, although boys were portrayed as being disadvantaged in terms of school achievement, due to the

reduction in the 'gender gap', this had not affected their future career prospects. Girls may have performed better educationally than boys at 16 but this did not seem to lead to equality in the labour market, with improved employment opportunities, career development or economic independence. Girls were still less likely than boys with similar qualifications to achieve the same levels of success in the workplace – they faced disadvantages with respect to occupational choice, earnings and prestige. This inequity could be explained by the fact that in the past women had been inadequately equipped, educationally and financially, to perform such jobs and also because of the way women were perceived by employers (predominantly male) "both in terms of their abilities and in terms of how employment relates to their lives outside work" (Scott and Creighton, 1998, p. 105).

According to the Equal Opportunities Commission's Report 'Sex and Power: Who Runs Britain? 2007' women were still largely absent in the top jobs as they only comprised 10% of directors of the UK's FTSE 100 firms, 10% of the senior judiciary, 12% of senior police officers, 14% of local authority council leaders, 17% of editors of national newspapers and 20% of MPs. The EOC had calculated that nearly 6,000 women were 'missing' from more than 33,000 top spots across the public and private sector and had forecast that it would take 60 years to have the same number of female directors as men at the UK's FTSE 100 firms, 20 more years for women to gain equality in the civil service top management and 40 more years to have an equal number of senior women in the judiciary (EOC, 2007). In addition, research in 2000 revealed that a woman who chose not to have children and who competed equally with men would still on average earn £100,000 less over a lifetime whilst a mother would earn £250,000 less, a non-manual male worker would earn on

average £525 a week whilst a non-manual woman would earn on average £346 a week (Roberts, 2000).

However, it could be argued that it was not realistic to aim for having 50% of men and 50% of women in every workplace because some leadership roles in senior management required such dedication and commitment (in hours spent working) that they would not accommodate childcare breaks/maternity leave. In addition, people's life choices needed to be considered. The Equal Opportunities Commission's research above had shown that women were making different work-life choices as they preferred to be mothers or tried to combine work and parenting roles. The EOC argued that although so many women were missing from top jobs this was not because of 'sex discrimination' but because women did not wish to take time away from their jobs to start families (EOC, 2007).

The presence of a dependent child in the family had a major effect on the economic activity of women of working age. For many years it had been the case that the majority of women either stopped work, or transferred to part-time work, when they had children. Women with pre-school children were the least likely to be working (although since the 1970s there had been an increase in both full- and part-time working among these women). When the youngest child was still under 11 women tended to work part-time. Once the youngest child was of secondary school age the rates for full- and part-time working were similar, and full-time work became the dominant pattern once all children were 16 or over (Social Trends, op. cit).

As the structure of the labour market changes there are now more opportunities for women. As girls and young women have become more educated, the previous factor of lack of education has become eradicated as a reason for their relatively low pay and poor job opportunities (Wilkinson and Mulgan, 1995). According to Holtermann (1995) there were two features of women's employment that resulted in their lifetime earnings being much lower than men. It was lower participation and lower pay that marked the positions of women in the labour market as being so different from men. Although younger women without children participated in the labour market to similar numbers of men, this number fell dramatically when women had their first child. Women's employment rates then proceeded to rise steadily with the age of their youngest child, but when women did return to the labour market their employment tended to be part-time. In addition to lower participation rates, women's average earnings were lower than men's. This could be due mainly to the fact that large numbers of women tended to pursue certain types of occupations, in the tertiary sector, that tended to be lowly paid. Whilst men secured employment in high status, highly paid jobs within sectors such as financial services, women took up flexible, usually part-time jobs in sectors such as retail and personal services that were poorly paid. 60% of working women were clustered in only 10% of occupations and this would affect their future earnings (DfES, 2006)

Perrons and Shaw (1995) argued that although part-time employment, or full-time employment worked on a flexible working hours system, did enable women to combine paid work with childcare responsibilities, it should be noted that these jobs tended to have limited prospects for career advancement. Women tended to link part-time work with their stage in the life-cycle but once caught in the trap of part-

time working there were "detrimental implications for their continuing employment status and financial security" (Perrons and Shaw, ibid, p.22).

4.3 Women In The Workplace

An analysis was undertaken in order to determine what mothers and daughters perceived to be happening in the workplace with regard to gender stereotyping, gender discrimination, the rise of career women and appropriate female role models and views on the future.

4.3.1 Gender Stereotyping

When considering the role of women in the labour market it was important to evaluate the amount of gender stereotyping that existed. Despite changing attitudes towards women's employment jobs could still be considered as gendered. Although there had been considerable changes in women's employment with more women working full-time and an expectation that they would earn a living, it could be seen that gender segregation was still apparent. Figures from the Equal Opportunities Commission (2005) showed that, in the late 1990s, girls and boys still tended to enter fairly gender-typical occupations and that stereotypical perceptions remained very important when selecting future occupations.

Boys still entered skilled manual employment in large numbers (especially non-academic school leavers). They tended to avoid jobs that were seen as stereotypically feminine, preferring to choose jobs that were scientific, technical or business oriented (Francis et al, op. cit). This was due to the characteristics of the jobs chosen being stereotypically gendered. As Charles commented, men's jobs

were considered "heavy, dirty, dangerous, involving outdoor work, and are associated with qualities such as aggression, ambition, an ability to exercise authority and cope with stress, a natural affinity with machines, and superior intelligence" (Charles, 2002, p.31). In addition, men's work tended to be more highly valued than women's.

In comparison, girls still entered personal service occupations (health care, childcare and hairdressing) in large numbers (especially non-academic school leavers). They tended to select jobs that were characterised by being 'caring or creative' (Francis et al, op. cit). But in contrast to men's jobs, women's jobs were associated with "low pay, are boring, low status, involve subservience, are jobs that men would not want to do and are linked to 'feminine' qualities of caring, being good with people and dexterity" (Charles, op. cit, p.31). Such jobs within the labour market were traditionally viewed as low skilled and low paid and ensured that women were 'trapped' at the bottom of the labour market hierarchy (O'Connor and Goodwin, 2004).

It needed to be understood why girls were still prone to selecting occupations that were gendered. It was possible that such gendered stereotyping was due to impressions based on information from the media, family, wider society, peers, teachers and careers advisors.

Firstly, there was the argument that early socialisation was a prevalent factor. Anderson (1998) believed that boys and girls had different experiences in early life and it was these that prepared them for adulthood. In particular, boys were

socialised to have the skills and possess the attributes that were valued by a patriarchal society. In contrast, girls were socialised to "be of service to others" (Anderson, ibid, p.148). This meant that girls were unlikely to select jobs that did not require the attributes they possessed e.g. a garage mechanic did not require attributes such as 'caregiver' so therefore a girl would not want to choose this job and would restrict her choice of potential careers to those perceived to be gender appropriate.

Secondly, the perception held about jobs could determine whether a boy or girl would wish to select a particular job. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (op. cit) claimed that young people learnt about jobs and made judgements about certain careers through 3 means:

1. Contracted Images – those that came from direct personal experience such as the image a child had of the job of a teacher.

2. Delegated images – those passed to the child by adults. They were second-hand, e.g. the work of a bank manager or of a Member of Parliament.

3. Derived images – those conveyed by the media. Television conveyed impressions about the nature of particular jobs and also about how certain jobs were perceived and valued by society as a whole.

Once young people had learnt about the jobs that were available in society, they tended to categorise these jobs into two main types:

1. High Status Jobs – those that were typically professional careers such as doctor, dentist or barrister. These jobs were characterised by high potential earnings and status but also by a highly selective entry process that required high academic qualifications and a long and demanding training.

2. Customary Jobs – these jobs were available in larger numbers within the labour market e.g. teacher, nurse, engineer, manager, news journalist, administrator, production worker or those involving domestic work or manual labour.

Thirdly, the local labour market was a decisive factor as once young people had learnt about jobs they would need to consider the gender distribution of jobs that were available to them in their locality. Along with this they would need to determine the qualifications required for potential jobs. This meant that some jobs may be disregarded due to not being compatible with the qualifications held, or due to not being acceptable with regard to prestige and status (Furlong and Biggart, op. cit).

Finally, a patriarchal society could influence gender stereotyping with regard to the selection of jobs. Charles (op. cit) argued that British society had changed from a patriarchal strategy of exclusion, where women were kept at home, to a strategy of inclusion, where women were now in the workforce. However, the positions held by women in the workforce were subordinate to men and they were under the control of men. This control was continued by the salaries of women being lower than the salaries of men and by women still having to take responsibility for childcare.

Anderson (op. cit) took this argument further and claimed that it was the culture of having to work long hours as demanded by those employed in professional and managerial occupations (especially linked to seniority) that discriminated against women with childcare responsibilities and commitments such as looking after family members. Anderson believed that people were rewarded "for the hours they work rather than their achievements" (Anderson, ibid, p.153). Since it was men who created and maintained the culture in the workplace it was inevitable that this culture was perpetuated and not open to change. And it was the "values and assumptions of a patriarchal society that continue to undervalue, in pay, status and position", those areas of the labour market which were dominated by women (Warrington and Younger, 2000, p.499). Men did not complain about women being entitled to maternity leave and taking career breaks in order to continue with childcare duties because it meant women had less economic independence and, whilst out of the workplace, it advantaged men as they could proceed with their careers without the fear of female competition.

4.3.2 Gender Discrimination

As well as the problem of gender stereotyping that remained within the workplace it was important to consider how girls and young women viewed sex relations and the possibility of discrimination. During the 1970s the advent of equal pay and sex discrimination legislation was, supposedly, to give women equality at work. Equal opportunities policies within organisations were introduced to end the sexual division of labour. As Cockburn (1991) pointed out they were meant to remove any barriers that might prevent women from entering non-traditional jobs or that might halt their progress to different levels within business hierarchies.

However, as seen above, there were disproportionately few women in the top positions in organisations. Discrimination against women was pervasive at all levels of managerial hierarchies. The obstacles women faced to promotion relative to men systematically increased as they moved up the hierarchy. Employers and top managers may have been willing to let women occupy the lower reaches of the managerial structure but they obstructed the access of women to positions of 'real' power and, as a result, women were largely denied promotions to the higher levels of management.

Tinklin et al discovered from their research at the turn of the century that "young people in the year 2000 had really 'got' the equal opportunities message: they believed that males and females should have the same opportunities and expectations in their future work and family lives" (Tinklin et al, 2005, p.140). Arnot et al argued that young women today accepted many of the principles of equal opportunities, especially insofar as "they endorse women's rights to economic independence and personal respect" (Arnot et al, 1998, p.73). Young women held modern, rather than traditional, views about the roles of men and women in work and the family. However, as Tinklin et al (op. cit) argued, whilst young people believed in the principles of equal opportunities they were aware of discrimination, real or perceived, occurring still. Although they believed that childcare should be a joint responsibility they were aware that it was usually performed by women. They were also aware that men occupied jobs of higher status and with greater pay. They believed that women may still have difficulties in obtaining employment if employers

thought they may leave to have children. And they also believed that entering non-traditional occupations might encounter prejudice.

Francis et al (op. cit) asked pupils why they would not consider a job usually performed by the opposite sex and the reasons forwarded included: not many opportunities for promotion (due to discrimination); friends or family would make fun of them or would not want them to do it, or that they would be embarrassed to be the only woman or man in the workplace.

Francis (2000a) found that girls were concerned about employers discriminating because of gender and that girls would be prevented from entering certain types of occupation and be prevented from acquiring managerial positions within the workplace. Girls felt that employers might have preconceptions regarding them and expect men to work harder and that "where a woman and a man were equally able the man would be more likely to be selected for employment or promotion" (Francis, ibid, p.85). Francis found that many girls were able to give personal examples of how sisters or female cousins had been discriminated against when trying to enter traditionally male occupations. Girls were highly aware of gender discrimination within the workplace and it was this that may have put off many from certain types of occupations.

Despite legislation outlawing unequal pay and sex discrimination, it was inevitable that society's prevailing attitudes and beliefs about the occupational roles of men and women would take a long time to be replaced (Scott and Creighton, op. cit). Employees remained "stratified by gender" which resulted in variations in "pay rates,

work conditions and promotion prospects" and discrimination continued (Shaw, 1995b, p.214). It was important to determine how mothers and daughters perceived the workplace and whether they believed gender discrimination still operated and effectively created barriers against them from achieving their career goals and aspirations.

4.3.3 The Rise Of Career Women and Role Models

Although it has been seen above that men were more likely to be employed as managers and senior officials and that these occupations were among the ones least likely to be followed by women it must be acknowledged that one of the most important changes in the past two decades had been the increase in the number of women who had managed to achieve professional success whilst raising children (Apter, 1985).

At the turn of the twenty-first century there were all kinds of reasons why women found themselves needing to enter paid employment, for example male unemployment, inflation and the discovery that staying at home all the time with children was not idyllic. However, due to the changing demographic structure of society there had been, since the 1960s, an ever increasing number of divorces and now for the majority of mothers employment is an inevitable fact of life. In Great Britain in 2004 22% of all dependent children lived in a lone-mother family (Social Trends, op. cit). Therefore, divorced women need to be in paid employment in order to support themselves and their children. It is now a necessity for women, especially mothers, to work.

When young women considered their future in the labour market it was important that they could observe successful career women and had suitable role models. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s there was an increased availability of role models for girls as growing numbers of women participated, and succeeded, in the labour market and the worlds of politics and entertainment. For example, in the world of entertainment 'The Spice Girls' regularly topped the singles chart, held the record for most singles sold by an all-girl group, and 'Girl Power' was featured in most national newspapers. Women such as Madonna, Roseanne Arnold, Oprah Winfrey, Jodie Foster and Demi Moore were seen to form their own production companies, negotiate $ million deals and direct their own films. There were also many television drama series, some written by women, that showed women in strong, independent roles, for example, *Widows, The Manageress, Prime Suspect, Seekers, The Camomile Lawn* and *Rides* (Wolf, 1993). During the same time Anita Roddick, Nicola Horlick and fashion designer Donna Karan were demonstrating "the growing status and earning power of women" in business and enterprise (Arnot et al, 1999, p.106).

At the time of interviewing my sample the media were using the phrase 'career women' to describe working women, including mothers, who were achieving success in the workplace. Sharpe's (op. cit) research in the 1970s found that both girls and boys held stereotypes of the successful 'career woman', and that this stereotype was of a "domineering and sexually unattractive battle-axe" especially if the woman held a position over men (Sharpe, ibid, p.136). A decade later and Thomas (1990) found that stereotypes about 'career women' had changed. She found that girls defined, quite separately, their images of a 'career woman' and a 'mother'. A 'career woman' was "ambitious, single-minded and selfish… someone who was independent, who

could look after herself" (and some girls wished to disassociate themselves from this image) whilst a 'mother' was "a warm, caring, unselfish person…or boring, unambitious and trapped by convention" (Thomas, ibid, p.23). These images were constructed by their thoughts on women who behaved like women (i.e. who became full-time mothers) and those women who behaved like men (i.e. who became 'career women').

When interviewing my sample Nicola Horlick was constantly in the British press. She was a fund manager at Morgan Grenfell bank but was suspended from her job after suggestions were made that she had been having discussions with a rival bank. The aspect of the story that the press seized upon was not her managerial position, nor her immense salary, nor her unprofessional antics in dealing with a rival organisation, but the fact that she had five young children. Initially she was named 'Superwoman' by the press because she had achieved a top managerial position whilst at the same time rearing five children. However, she was almost universally condemned by journalists who alleged that with such a demanding job she could not be a competent parent. There were numerous articles that claimed that it was impossible for any woman to become a 'Superwoman'. As Benn (1998) argued, throughout the affair the press never once commented upon 'Mr Horlick' who also held a top city job and had the same five children to raise.

It was important to ascertain how the mothers and daughters in the sample viewed 'career women' and whether they believed that holding a top job was compatible with having a young family.

4.3.4 The Future

Whilst attitudes in society had changed about what jobs girls could do and about their occupational aspirations there were still problems within the labour market. Working women were still faced with the 'glass ceiling', gender discrimination and, if they had childcare (and/or other carer) responsibilities, they were still performing two jobs – the 'double shift' (Myers, 2000).

MacInnes (1998) argued that increases in girls' educational attainment had not brought equality for them and certainly not a reversal of the balance of power. However, "women have made substantial progress in achieving greater juridical, political and economy equality" especially during the last decades of the twentieth century (MacInnes, ibid, p.47). Women were now gaining considerable entry to what were previously male-dominated professions and had made gains in earnings through the equal pay legislation that was introduced by the Government.

Nevertheless, the Equal Opportunities Commission (2005) argued that Britain was failing to provide real opportunity and choice for girls and boys entering work from school and college despite the interest of many young people to enter 'non-traditional work'. In particular, a significant number of girls were becoming more ambitious about the range of occupations they were willing to consider and were eager to move away from the traditionally, female dominated jobs that were assigned to them. However, girls and young women were finding barriers stopping them from moving into non-traditional jobs and this was preventing their skills from being used effectively in the labour market. This not only impacted upon the economy but also

upon individual opportunity. Despite the fact that girls and young women were excelling and outperforming boys in education, this was still not translating into earnings and securing the same lifetime advantages or occupational benefits for them as for men (Shaw, op. cit).

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

5.1   Introduction

The starting point for any piece of sociological research is the theory that is adopted as this will determine the direction that the research takes, the techniques considered and used and the questions that are asked. The sociological research undertaken was from a feminist perspective and the following describes the main themes of feminist theory.

For feminist theory gender is the primary concern and it recognises the "central role that gender plays in the lives of people" (Farganis, 1994, p.8). It is concerned with the ways in which women have been written about and discussed. For feminists it is important that sociological writings describe the world from the position of women, showing how women view the structure of society and describe their everyday, unique experiences. Feminist theory must challenge knowledge that views the world from the perspective of men (usually white, middle-class, heterosexual) as being universal. Feminist theory views women's experiences, ideas and needs as valid in their own right and demands that androcentricity ceases being recognised as the only frame of reference for human beings (Duelli Klein, 1983).

Male power is not confined to the public worlds of politics and paid employment, it extends into private life and the personal relationships at home between women and men. This means that traditional concepts of power and politics are challenged and

extended to such 'personal' areas of life as the family and sexuality. Feminism gave rise to the phrase 'the personal is political' because it refused to see gender inequalities as located only in the spheres of public life and paid employment (Burr, 1998). This meant that it was important to consider women's involvement in public life rather than their association with the domestic (private) sphere of the home (where they cared for children) and domestic relationships. Feminists began to study the differences between women's experiences in the public domains of work and politics and their personal and private family lives.

The concepts of both 'public' and 'private' refer directly to interactions between people. Formal, large-scale organisations, formalised policies and legal systems that are goal-oriented and individualistic in their ways of being and knowing tend to be seen as constituting the public domain, whilst the family and home-centred and informal relationships and social networks that are process-oriented in their ways of being and knowing tend to be seen as constituting the private domain (Ribbens and Edwards, 1998).

Miller (1990, cited by David 2003) believed that the original statement 'the personal is political' changed during 1980s feminism to become 'the personal is also the theoretical' (that the personal is part of theory's material). David (2003) takes this further by arguing that in the 1980s and onwards numerous women started to experiment with writing in an autobiographical vein whereby they would present aspects of their personal experiences. Personal elements permeated their writings and they touched on family life experiences and how these had influenced their writings, values and politics.

This focus on 'public' and 'private' areas of women's lives has continued to interest feminist writers who have challenged the authority of 'scientific' knowledge and particular ways of knowing (Stanley and Wise, 1993). 'Private matters' are now being brought into the public domain. As David (op. cit) argued over the last 35 years personal lives have become more public and have become acknowledged in political and economic arenas. Alongside this women have been more involved in economic and educational activities and these transformations have led to a move from a past when "personal, intimate and family lives were deemed to be private and separate from public support or responsibility and when women were held responsible for caring for families" (David, ibid, p.185).

In addition to these changes in personal and family lives there have also been changes in how feminist social scientists understand women's identities and subjective understandings of their lives. Because of this it is important that the correct analytical tools "can be used to understand the public and the private sphere and the changing relationships between the two" (Abbott and Wallace, 1990, p.6). Social analysis now uses the tools of personal reflection, voices, narratives, biography, auto/biography and reflective practice.

The above tools have been used by feminist researchers to gain access to, interpret, analyse and theorise their respondents' experiences. As Ribbens and Edwards argued it is important to "highlight the issues involved in doing this [the above] when applied to a sphere that has been characterized as 'female' or 'women's matters'….thus in our research we have examined 'private' and 'personal' social

worlds, which we then make 'public' for academic audiences" (Ribbens and Edwards, op. cit, p.2). This is not easy because conducting such feminist research on 'private' family lives is challenging and produces "complexities and problems in the kinds of public and private or personal knowledge that might be produced" (David, op. cit, p.154).

Also important to the research process used to examine the private domain is reflexivity whereby the researcher locates herself in the process in relation to her respondents and is aware of her subjectivity in her production of knowledge. Reflexivity means that the researcher must reflect upon and understand her own "personal, political and intellectual autobiographies" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.121) and must acknowledge the role she plays in the creating, interpreting and theorising of her research data. Reflexivity also means making clear the ethics of the research practice and of the researcher's moral and epistemic accountability.

5.2   Methodology

Methodology covers the overall conception of the research project (the procedure of feminist research) as well as the choice of appropriate techniques for this procedure. It is a theory of methods that informs a range of issues from "who to study, how to study, which institutional practices to adopt, how to write and which knowledge to use" (Skeggs, 1997, p.17).

When determining an appropriate methodology feminist social scientists need to begin with the recognition of women's experiences and knowledge of the social world they live in. Stanley and Wise (op. cit) argued that women's experiences are

researched and analysed through a language that is provided by a sexist society and by an androcentric social science. They claim that women need to reject this imposed language and construct their own social science that starts from "women's experience of women's reality" (Stanley and Wise, ibid, p.164). Women should be at the centre of the research study and they should not be compared to, nor measured against, normative (male) standards. It is only by exploring women's experiences that it is possible to see how their world is organised and the extent to which it differs from that of men. Discussions of the private and public spheres will take a gendered form because "women, especially mothers, have a particular social (not biological and essential) positioning within the private domestic sphere of home and family life" (Ribbens and Edwards, op. cit, p.10).

Feminist research demands an approach that allows for the ability to explore experience and it emphasises the importance of listening to, recording and understanding women's own descriptions and accounts. Maynard (1994) claimed that this approach enables researchers to gain knowledge about areas such as schooling and paid work that were previously understood mainly from a male perspective. In addition it is important to make the subjectivity of both respondents and researcher visible in the research process which is something that the more traditional objective and masculine methodologies have ignored.

The research I have undertaken with mothers and daughters about their schooling and their employment/proposed employment uses an approach that listens to females and allows them to describe their own experiences. This allows for an

analysis of the education offered to females, as perceived by them, during the 1950s and 1960s (for mothers) and the 1980s and 1990s (for daughters).

However, it must be remembered that women's accounts of their own lives are based on their social and cultural upbringing and that these accounts are women's construction of the events that occurred along with their interpretation of them. But as Spender (1983) argued, although women have different life experiences and this gives rise to different interpretations, all of these are equally valid for those experiences.

5.3   Method

Method refers to the techniques and procedures that could be used for exploring social reality and producing evidence. These techniques and procedures could include such things as interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, observations, documentary analysis, ethnography, life histories, laboratory experiments or the analysis of texts, objects or images (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). It is possible to use a combination of techniques and my research used both questionnaires and interviews and thus was a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Questionnaires were used during the pilot interviews in order to identify the type of information that would be quantifiable and the information that would be ascertained from a qualitative methodology. During the interviews questionnaires were used at the outset in order to facilitate the collection of background data such as educational careers and current occupational positions. This quantitative research helped to direct the research process by highlighting the basic ideas that were to be explored

further by using qualitative techniques and also generated statistical data that could be compared and contrasted.

The use of semi-structured interviewing was viewed as the most desirable form of qualitative data-gathering technique as it allowed women to speak for themselves. Through 'telling their own story' women could be involved in the presentation and interpretation of the knowledge that they were contributing to and could communicate the complexity of their lives. The qualitative research technique adopted was sensitive to the structure and understanding of women's lives and allowed more focus on their experiences and the meanings and interpretations that they gave to these experiences.

Through both methods of conducting research it was possible to fully explore and investigate women's lives and to have a true and valid understanding of their experiences. Once the research had been conducted, the text was analysed and was presented in the form of tables.

5.4   Semi-Structured Interviews

It was decided to undertake face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to generate the required information. Interviews were undertaken with 60 mother-daughter pairings (120 interviews in total). Interviews with both mothers and daughters were vital in order to gain an understanding of the mother-daughter relationship with regard to education and thus to be able to ascertain whether mothers' educational experiences had affected daughters' educational experiences and career aspirations. Interviews allowed for an exploration of the important influences, attitude formation and the

sources of information used by mothers and daughters when constructing opinions and beliefs. Research using interviews with both mothers and daughters on the same subject is quite rare.

When interviewing people a researcher often wishes to find out about facts, behaviour, beliefs or attitudes. Robson (1993) claimed that facts are usually easy to obtain (although dependent on the respondent's memory) as is behaviour because the respondent can state what they have been doing recently or have done in the past. However, beliefs or attitudes can be difficult to obtain but it is through the utilisation of semi-structured interviews that researchers can gain a detailed picture of a respondent's beliefs and/or attitudes about a particular topic. Such interviews permit the researcher and respondent much more flexibility than the more conventional structured interview, questionnaire or survey.

A semi-structured interview is an interview where the researcher has devised a set of questions in advance, but is free to change the order of the questions and the wording of the questions during the interview. Due to the fluidity of the interview the respondent can dictate the direction it takes and she can introduce an issue that the researcher had not considered. Therefore, the interview is totally respondent oriented and the respondent is able to give a full, detailed account of her experiences. As Smith argued "the respondent can be perceived as the expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell her own story" (Smith, 1995, p.12). In addition, non-verbal cues that occur throughout the interview can help with the understanding of the respondent's verbal responses (Robson, op. cit).

The semi-structured interview is modelled on the conversation and, like the conversation, is a social event with, in this instance, two participants (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994). The interview is a conversation with a purpose, that is to obtain information that is relevant to the research and its objectives. It has the potential of providing rich and highly illuminating data (far more than would be obtained in written responses to questionnaires).

An important aspect of semi-structured interviews is that it offers researchers access to women's "ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher" (Reinharz, 1992, p.19). The ensuing non-standardised information allows researchers to make full use of differences among women and emerging themes can be analysed. However, it must be noted that this lack of standardisation can raise concerns about the reliability of the subsequent conclusions.

One of the main features of a semi-structured interview is that it allows for a rapport between researcher and respondent. This facilitates a non-exploitative relationship where the person being studied is not treated simply as a source of data. The interview is a technique that encourages the sharing of information and the showing of empathy and it is the personal involvement of the interviewer that is an important element in establishing the trust that allows for the subsequent collection of good quality information (Maynard, op. cit). A good researcher will need to have an excellent rapport with the respondent whilst at the same time keeping the research objectives in mind.

Feminists believe that open-ended interviewing is particularly suited to female researchers. Asking people what they think and feel is an activity females are socialised to perform and uses skills found in the traditional feminine role. A female researcher with a good rapport, and who is listening carefully, allows a female respondent to "develop ideas, construct meaning, and use words that say what she means" (Reinharz, op. cit, p.23).

The aim of qualitative research is to try to understand the content and complexity of the meanings, experiences and social world forwarded by respondents rather than just taking some measure of frequency. This is done by the researcher interpreting the transcripts of the interviews. However, it must be borne in mind that the researcher, herself, has particular values and own life experiences which are brought to the interview which can affect the outcome of interviews and/or the interpretation of the transcripts.

5.5 Snowball Sampling

Having decided upon semi-structured interviews as the main research technique, an appropriate sampling method was required for the research. It was decided to use, for convenience, snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling may simply be defined as: "A technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on" (Vogt, 1993, p.213). This is an especially

useful technique when the researcher wants to interview people with unusual characteristics who are likely to know one another.

Snowball sampling has a number of advantages for sampling populations that are hard to reach such as the criminal, the deprived, the socially stigmatised, the isolated and elites. Although they violate the principles of sampling, the use of snowball strategies provides a means of accessing vulnerable and the more impenetrable social groupings (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). Snowball sampling seeks to take advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts. This process is based on the assumption that a 'bond' or 'link' exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing a series of referrals to be made within a circle of peers. Snowball sampling can be an easy and 'informal' method to reach a target population. Trust in the researcher may be developed as referrals are made by acquaintances or peers rather than through other more formal methods of introduction. It is possible through snowball sampling to produce in-depth results quite quickly.

Obviously there are disadvantages in using a respondent driven sample. The generation of respondents through peer-recruitment is certainly not random and this means that the validity of the sample because of a selection bias is of primary concern. The forwarding of respondents from one initial respondent can lead to the sample having an unique characteristic and similarity within their social network not shared by the rest of the wider, target population. It can be argued that snowball sampling can be "afflicted by biases of unknown size and unknown direction, so any

inferences made based upon data from such a sample would be nothing more than mere 'subjective evaluation'" (Heckathorn, 2004).

5.6   My Research

As Ramazanoglu and Holland (op. cit) argued any research will incorporate the researcher's own values (whether explicitly or implicitly), her theory (assumptions about gender and power), her ontology (what she believes to be the nature of the aspects of gender/power that she has chosen to study) and her epistemology (what will count as authoritative knowledge of gender).

As Stanley and Wise (op. cit) argued feminist social researchers should start the research process from their personal standpoints so I began by considering my own personal background. I was keen to research the lives of girls and their mothers due to an interest in feminism stemming back from the early 1980s when I studied 'A' level sociology followed by my degree in sociology. Having acquired 'A' level history and a masters degree in history, I wished to continue with a historical slant which is why I wanted to study two generations from one family in order to be able to compare experiences, attitudes and beliefs over time with regards to one particular area (that of education). The interest in education is due to my current position in employment as a sixth form teacher/college lecturer. Due to this I am particularly involved in the career progressions of young people, helping them develop from GCSE level, when they begin their further education, via 'A' levels/AVCEs (formerly GNVQs), into higher education. In particular, I work closely with girls who will be first generation into higher education.

I wanted to conduct research amongst women (mothers and their daughters) because it was obvious to me, as a researcher, that I wished to study the group of which I am a member. Due to this it is important to understand the ways that I experience my own gender as well as the gender of my respondents. Both the completion and the writing up of fieldwork are intertwined with gender (as well as with other 'personal characteristics' such as age, class and ethnicity). As Warren and Hackney argued "a researcher cannot operate without gender, personality or historical location and objectively produce the same findings as any other person" (Warren and Hackney, 2000, p.ix).

The role of autobiography is very important in the research process and it is the private and the personal in my own autobiography that led to my desire to hear other women's voices about their personal experiences. As Miller argued "the researcher's autobiography can be discerned as a continuous and dynamic thread running through all stages of the research process in qualitative research" (Miller, 1998, p.60). It is the researcher's autobiography that will influence all the decisions that are taken throughout the various stages of the research process – from areas for exploration in interviews, the accessing and interviewing of respondents to the analysis and final write up of the research.

I am concerned with exploring aspects that occur within the domestic and 'private' lives of mothers and their daughters (the decision-making that occurs within the mother-daughter relationship with regard to education) and wish to listen to, record, understand and re/present my respondents' voices. I am committed to hearing the voices of mothers, about their own experiences and understandings and about their

lives with their daughters. I want these voices to be heard within the public domain but in order to do this I need to produce academic research that has moved away from "the theoretical, conceptual and formal traditions…which are…predominantly 'public' and 'malestream'" (Ribbens and Edwards, op. cit, p.1). I need to bear in mind that the concept of academic research as being "ordered, academic and rational" does not fit with the realities of private and/or personal experiences (Miller, op. cit. p.61). By remaining with 'masculine' ways of knowing I run the risk of silencing or shaping in particular ways the private and domestic knowledge, understanding and experiences being voiced by the women in my research.

My ontological view of the social world sees the essential ontological elements as being experiences, understandings, motivations, attitudes and beliefs. The ontological components such as attitudes are 'knowable' and it is possible to gather knowledge about and evidence for them. Epistemologies are theories of knowledge, therefore my epistemological position helps to "generate knowledge and explanations about the ontological components of the social world" (Mason, 2002, p.16). These properties are well matched to qualitative research methodology. Qualitative interviewing is an obvious choice because mothers' and daughters' knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which my research question is designed to explore. In addition, qualitative interviewing allows for a meaningful way to generate the data needed on these ontological properties e.g. by being able to talk interactively with mothers and daughters, to ask them questions and listen to their responses, to gain access to their accounts and experiences. To gain a full understanding of women's experiences interviews are the only way to re/construct

them (although it must be noted that interviews are heavily dependent upon individuals' capacities to remember events and to verbalise such events).

My ontological and epistemological positions will determine my data sources and how to generate the relevant data. Methods employed for data collection need to be appropriate to the ontological and epistemological approaches in use. Therefore, the choice of semi-structured interviews will provide mothers' and daughters' accounts of how they perform decision-making with regard to education and these accounts will be based upon their own experiences. Interviews providing accounts and experiences and judgements about those experiences will reveal ideas, norms and beliefs. They will also reveal how mothers and daughters came to negotiate their own decision-making experiences.

I adopted a feminist methodology during fieldwork and whilst collecting data I paid attention to ethics and sensitivity, reflexivity, my respondents' voices and my own voice. I considered recent sociological work on auto/biography and the life and oral history traditions in order to be able to develop a reflexive approach to locating myself in the research. This is because some of the main feminist writers who have influenced academic feminism and sociology have written about both their own personal and family experiences in order to be able to understand and theorise women's family lives (David, op. cit).

Therefore, the methods used in my research are primarily qualitative. Whilst the influences of theoretical preferences are strong the primary factors determining choice of method in this research were ultimately the demands of the topic and the

research question itself. I used the qualitative research method of semi-structured depth interviews and these were structured by women's experiences and their own accounts of these experiences. Qualitative research allows for an exploration of the experiences and understandings of respondents and of the way relationships work and the significance of the meanings that they generate (Mason, op. cit). It is the mother-daughter relationship that I am interested in because although mother-daughter relationships have been analysed in particular in psychology it is the influence of the mother on her daughter with regard to educational experiences and career aspirations that has not been studied. Analyses of the mother-daughter relationship tend to be the subject of psychology or autobiography (and focus on the individual) rather than sociological enquiry (concerning any social or cultural aspects of the relationship).

5.6.1 Pilot Interviews For The Research

The research for this study commenced with 10 pilot interviews. Before going into the field I wrote out a list of topics that I was interested in covering by depth interviewing. The pilot interviews revealed the basic ideas that were to be explored further in qualitative research.

After some material had been gathered I analysed my transcripts in order to see what I was learning from the data. Through the pilot interviews important new influences were discovered. The pilot interviews highlighted the importance of the mother-daughter relationship and it became clear that this was the area that needed researching in more depth. Interviews revealed the influence of the mother via a spoken/unspoken "message" about the value of education and the mother's opinion

about the role of women in society e.g. whether she acknowledged the existence of a "career woman" and if so whether she thought such a role was compatible with having a family. I started to make decisions concerning what data would become the major focus of the analysis. At this point I had to alter my research aims and revise my topic guide as my direct questioning needed to be more fluid and flexible. The pilot interviews revealed that my methodology was acceptable to those I wished to interview as no-one had objected to being tape-recorded. However, the interviews highlighted the fact that I needed to try and interview the daughter first. The daughter's comments about her mother's involvement in educational decision-making helped me to ensure that I asked the right follow-up questions of the mother. I found that the insights and the kind of questions to ask were developed throughout the actual process of investigation.

The pilot interviews also identified the type of information that would be quantifiable and the information that would be ascertained from a qualitative methodology. This initial research allowed for the construction of a questionnaire that helped to amass general information such as educational careers and current occupational positions. This quantitative research helped to reveal the basic patterns in attitude formation.

5.6.2 Snowball Sample For The Research

Snowball sampling is a widely recognised technique in qualitative research concerned with accessing stigmatised groups and is ideal for recruiting hard-to-reach groups in society such as the criminal. It is less often used as a method to access 'socially acceptable' and 'visible' groups but I have used it for this reason. The sample I required was not small relative to the general population. For convenience,

the sample selected came from 3 main geographical areas – my present location (Sheffield/Rotherham), my place of employment (Mansfield) and my home town (Northampton) – therefore this was location-based sampling.

I contacted prospective respondents initially by telephone and introduced myself and the research, then made an appointment to interview them in their homes at a pre-arranged time. I used a snowball sample (via kin and friendship networks) – my introduction was always via a friend of theirs, either through the mother or the daughter asking her mother on my behalf.

120 tape-recorded interviews were conducted: 60 with daughters (aged 14 to 23) and 60 with their mothers. All the daughters in the sample had made decisions about their schooling e.g. what subjects to study at GCSE or A level, which secondary school to attend. Interviews took place in four geographical locations – Mansfield, Northampton, Rotherham and Sheffield. In Mansfield daughters were primarily recruited first and most attended a mixed-sex, comprehensive school that had just been identified by the Government as a 'failing school' and placed in "Special Measures". At the time of the interviews the school was at the bottom of the school league tables for the Mansfield area. In Northampton mothers were recruited first and their daughters attended one of three types of school: a private all-girls' school; a small, mixed-sex, village school on the outskirts of Northampton or a large, mixed-sex, inner-town comprehensive. In Rotherham the daughters were recruited first and tended to be nursery nurses employed at my son's nursery or students studying at the colleges where I taught. In Sheffield the mothers were recruited first and this was

mainly via a contact within a High Street bank. Of the 60 daughters in the sample two were unmarried mothers and several no longer lived at home with their parents.

All of the mothers in the sample had been educated in the United Kingdom but, due to their father's/husband's employment relocation, it tended not to have been Mansfield, Northampton, Rotherham or Sheffield like their daughters. Some of the mothers had been educated in places such as Wales, Scotland and in North-East mining communities.

All of the daughter-mother pairings were white. Although black and Asian daughters were approached at the Mansfield school and Rotherham colleges it was ascertained that the mothers had been educated abroad. In order to be able to make comparisons between the generations all those interviewed needed to have been educated in the United Kingdom.

Although a critique of snowball sampling has been written above, it is important to point out that all of my respondents were volunteers and therefore had an interest in the subject. This meant that they were happy to discuss their schooling and acknowledge any successes and/or failures they had experienced in their education.

5.6.3 Interviews For The Research

For the majority of mothers the interview was the first occasion on which we met. I knew several of the daughters from teaching at the educational institution they attended. The majority of interviews took place in the family home, therefore in a setting familiar to both daughter and mother. In the minority of cases the interviews

took place at an educational institution, daughters and mothers being interviewed at the end of the school/college day. I dressed casually so as not to discomfort the daughters.

An interview with a daughter took approximately 45 minutes and the interview with her mother took up to one and a half hours. This helped to build up a picture of each respondent's feelings towards the education that they had received – to include their likes, their dislikes, regrets and desires.

In-depth interviews were used since they allow for more open and honest conversation than does a standardised question-and-answer format. The interviews were of a semi-structured nature and all respondents were asked the same questions but the order of the questions was determined by the flow of the interview and the points raised by each respondent. The questions were worded in a way that reflected the society the mothers and daughters were living in. For example, questions were asked about 'career women' which was a term being used in the media at the time due to the newsworthy antics of women such as Nicola Horlick. Daughters were asked about the current icons of the moment such as The Spice Girls. Questions were phrased in the appropriate terminology of the time in order to elicit answers.

I started the interviews with factual questions to gain demographic information e.g. types of schools attended (comprehensive, grammar, single-sex), ages when attending (5-11, 11-16), number and sex of siblings, village/town of schools attended, subjects chosen at the age of 14, examinations taken, age upon leaving

education. This first phase of the interview was important both for the data collected and for its function as an 'ice-breaker', enabling mothers and daughters to relax and talk about themselves.

Further areas that were investigated included parental influences over academic decisions (choice of school, subjects taken, age of completing education), wider society's influences over the years, comparison of siblings' education (in particular where a respondent had a brother), influences of teachers (both male and female), family circumstances and decisions regarding future occupational careers.

Occasionally a daughter, especially one aged 14-16, was rather timid about being interviewed and wanted her mother to be present. If at all possible the daughter was still interviewed first and this was then followed by the mother's interview. If a dual interview had to take place I would put a small series of questions to the daughter and then ask the same relevant questions of the mother. I found that both daughter and mother were still very open and honest in this situation, for example, daughters did admit to truanting from school even though their mothers had been unaware of this previously. Daughters tended to seek clarification from their mothers on details such as age of entry into particular schools. A mother might add more detail to her daughter's narrative e.g. family history relating to why they lived in a particular location or family circumstances surrounding choices, but it was never felt that a mother took over her daughter's interview at any time.

The semi-structured approach of the interviews allowed the respondents to be very open about their childhood memories and experiences in life. Mothers, in particular,

were very enthusiastic about talking about their schooling, even if they did have some initial anxieties about the purpose of the research or their own 'performance' in the interview situation. They were quite happy to talk about divorce and how it had affected their thoughts about their children's education. Some were quite critical about themselves and their childrearing practices and would offer examples of when they felt they had 'made mistakes'. As Ribbens discovered in her research, "negative feelings towards their own children might be particularly difficult to speak. Nevertheless, in many respects, my impression was that women were being fairly open about their own failings and anxieties" (Ribbens, 1994, p.42).

During the interviews I respected privacy about women's personal experiences and their confidentiality. Where mothers and daughters were interviewed separately I did not divulge to the mothers what their daughters had said or revealed.

5.6.4 Coding And Analysis Of Interviews

The primary data collection techniques I used were techniques I favoured from my previous career as a market research manager. Having constructed numerous questionnaires and been involved in the coding, analysing and interpreting of vast amounts of data, I felt comfortable with questionnaire design and the subsequent analysis of the data. I had used regularly software packages for statistical analysis. I also used to conduct qualitative research in the form of one-to-one interviews and focus groups. It seemed prudent to use skills already developed.

As indicated earlier I sought respondents' agreement to tape-recording interviews and explained that quotes would be anonymous. The interviews were transcribed

and word-processed. They were then input into QSR N6 software for qualitative data analysis. QSR N6 was formerly known as NUD*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing).

Analysis of the transcriptions drew on the research questions that had also formed the basis for the 'prompts' used during the interviews. The transcriptions were coded thematically as this was identified as offering potential for flexibility and also provided the opportunity to become fully conversant with the content. However, due to the considerable quantity of data some themes and aspects were not included in the final text.

The analysis and writing up of the data was entirely my responsibility and the final text is my interpretation of the accounts given by my respondents. I have endeavoured to hear and to re/present faithfully the voices of the mothers and daughters who participated in my research. However, I acknowledge that the data analysis is based upon my prior assumptions, politics and expectations and that I am solely responsible for controlling the data, identifying trends, and making sense of what I collected.

Nevertheless, I have attempted to bring the women's authentic voices from the private sphere into the public domain of academic research and knowledge. I have attempted to produce research for an academic audience whilst remaining true to the knowledge that has been gained in a domestic and personal setting. Whilst doing this I have constantly reflected upon my own experiences, how these have affected the research and how to view the knowledge that I have produced. Reflexivity is

crucial as I re/construct my respondents' voices during the data analysis and writing up as it is here that I make sense of, understand, select and re/present their experiences and accounts. I am also aware that being reflexive can lead to criticisms of failing to be objective.

The above aspects are important because as Ribbens and Edwards (op. cit) argued discussions of epistemology and methodology do not always consider the issues raised by researching the private and personal and seeking to voice it in the public. They claimed that "in listening to and representing such subjugated and obscured 'voices' there are issues around data collection methods and techniques of analysis" (Ribbens and Edwards, ibid, p.15). They believe that there is a significant body of feminist literature devoted to issues of gaining access to research respondents and of reflexivity within the data process but that there has been far less feminist attention paid to the processes underlying the retention of research respondents' voices in the phases of data analysis and writing up.

It must be acknowledged that the interpretation of the data is heavily constrained. As Ramazanoglu and Holland (op. cit) argue any conclusions will be framed by my general approach to the investigation (my theory, ontology and epistemology), by how I conceive gender, by my own location in the process of data production, by my personal interest in my research question and by the ethics of my research practice.

Whilst writing about the transition from 'personal' lived experiences to 'public' academic output (for this doctoral research project) I have given great consideration to my respondents' voices whilst analysing my data and writing the final account. I

have become more aware of the concepts of 'public' and 'private' by considering the issue of how mothers construct and deal with the public and private boundaries in their own daughters' lives with regard to their education.

5.6.5 Evaluation Of Research Methodology

There will be advantages and disadvantages from one person having conducted the research and it is important to consider the methodological restrictions of a semi-structured interview as an instrument of fieldwork.

The main advantage of the research has been that the interviews followed the same structure and were consistent. Although the sample in terms of numbers was a small one, the answers in the interviews were revealing and appeared to be typical. Wherever possible the daughters and mothers speak for themselves. The quotations from them are not reconstructions from memory but the actual words spoken as transcribed. It was felt that the presence of the tape recorder did not cause participants to distort their expressed attitudes and opinions and seemed to have little effect on the content or progress of the interview. Mothers and daughters remain anonymous throughout the research – the names supplied in the study are pseudonyms to keep true identities concealed. [See Appendix A for a list of the mother-daughter pseudonym pairings.]

Another benefit was being a female interviewing females. It allowed for familiarity and gaining confidences e.g. comments about very private material such as divorce, attitudes towards ex-husbands and the death of children. I felt that being a woman gave me greater access to respondents and made it easier for me to elicit material

from other women. As Oakley argued "the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest … her own personal identity in the relationship" (Oakley, 1981, p.41). There were occasions where respondents expected me to understand what they meant simply because I was another female. I felt that a lot of what was elicited was due to my identity as a woman. Some mothers asked what I did for a living, and whether I had children. Some, when talking about their children going to university, wanted to know which universities I had gone to. I was occasionally pointed out to daughters as someone who was 'having it all' – had a career, had a child and was doing academic research. If mothers knew I was a teacher/lecturer they would make comments about what went on in school saying things such as "you'll know all about discipline now".

However, one disadvantage of in-depth interviews is that only a small part of the data is standardised and therefore quantifiable. In addition, the sample size is small with only 60 mother-daughter relationships studied in depth which means the sample is not large enough for sophisticated numerical analysis. This leads to a focus on the qualitative analysis of the material and the interpretation of the interviews is down to my perspective and the judgement I bring towards the data. Also respondents, especially mothers, were drawing heavily on memory which can be highly selective. As I am discussing relative tendencies only I cannot make valid generalisations. Most observations remain on a descriptive level and only tentative conclusions may be drawn.

As Davies (1985) argued it may be that a female researcher misses important things because being a female I took them for granted whereas a male researcher would have questioned them. It is important to remember the influence of one's own gender when interpreting and presenting data.

My age may have been a constraint as I was aged in the middle – younger than the mothers and older than the daughters. I just missed having to do the 11+ and was caught up in the move to lower, middle and upper schools where one started secondary education at 13 rather than 11. However, like the mothers in my sample, only girls did domestic science and needlework whilst all the boys did woodwork and metalwork. The boys also did technical drawing – no girls were permitted into this lesson. Unlike the daughters I missed out on studying combined science (instead studying the separate subjects of chemistry, physics and biology), and the compulsory technology subjects where daughters have to study one of the following: food technology; textiles; graphics; resistant materials or craft, design and technology (or something similarly titled). It is possible that my age alienated me from both the mothers and daughters who felt that I did not have shared experiences of their schooling.

As well as considering a semi-structured interview as an instrument of fieldwork it is important to evaluate the sampling framework. In analysing the sample used within my research I believe that sixty mother-daughter pairings was a healthy number and offered a substantial amount of rich insightful data. However, the use of snowball sampling was obviously very constraining. My research was conducted in three main geographical areas: Sheffield/Rotherham, Mansfield and Northampton. It is possible

that my research findings display unique characteristics and traits linked to the educational experiences of girls having been educated within these three areas and should my research be replicated in another three geographical areas then the new research findings could be very different. In addition, a combination of snowball sampling and convenience sampling meant a slightly biased sample. By interviewing daughters who worked as nursery nurses at my son's nursery I was already selecting girls who had made a decision to pursue work in a traditional female industry. If further research could be conducted with a random sample of sixty mother-daughter pairings then, again, research findings may be very different.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS - MOTHERS

6.1   The Purpose Of School And Education

Whilst at school children would have learnt the basic fundamental skills of numeracy and literacy and the types of skills that were necessary for vocational jobs in an industrial society. They would acquire vast amounts of knowledge and this could give them power when they became part of the workforce. Their learning and knowledge would equip them with qualifications that could lead to further education or employment in good jobs (see Cullingford, 1990, in section 2.3).

Cullingford (2002, as discussed in section 2.3) argued that pupils perceived that the underlying purpose of school was to gain qualifications and skills as a preparation for the next stage in life, whether that be further education or the labour market.

The mothers in the sample were asked about the institution of school. The following table shows the responses given by mothers when asked 'what is the purpose of school?'.

Table 5 – Mothers – The Purpose Of School

	MOTHERS	
Formal Education And Qualifications		
General education	22	
To learn and gain knowledge (including learning about themselves)	16	
To learn to read and write	8	
To gain qualifications	3	
TOTAL		49
Social Education		
To be socially capable – mix with their peers	16	
To integrate and communicate with all people (races and religions etc)	11	
To learn how to become adults	3	
TOTAL		30
Skills Required For Later Employment		
To learn the skills needed for later life – preparation for the future	14	
Preparation for gaining employment	9	
TOTAL		23
For Better Opportunities In Later Life		
To be able to have a better life later on	6	
To have choice in later life	1	
TOTAL		7
To Benefit Society		
To be able to conform to society	4	
Learn right from wrong and moral responsibilities	3	
TOTAL		7

The most popular category was 'formal education and qualifications'. The purpose of school was seen to be to gain: a general education; knowledge; qualifications and the ability to read and write.

However, going to school for a formal education was not something that was carried out in isolation – mothers believed that schools taught far more as the next most popular category was the acquisition of a 'social education'. Teaching children how to be socially capable by allowing them to mix with their peers and allowing them to

learn how to integrate with other people and communicate was considered an important aspect of school.

"*So they can mix with people of their own age group.*" (Val, mother)

Learning such social skills and being able to mix with classmates was seen as very important and an essential part of learning.

Schools were also seen to teach specific skills (social and practical ones) that would be required in later life – these skills were learnt at school in preparation for the future. One of the main purposes of school was to prepare its pupils for employment by providing the necessary qualifications and skills.

"*It's there to give them the skills for future life.*" (Colleen, mother)

These life skills and social skills that were learnt at school would make for fully rounded individuals that could fit into society.

"*Learning the skills of reading and writing, mathematics and all the curriculum areas, learning all those academic skills and all the other things, living in a community. So it's those two areas and they have to marry together to make it a good experience. You know, the one without the other is bad. You know, just having a nice social environment without the academic development is not good and just having the academic development without all the other areas being catered for is not good either. You know it's an academic and a social thing.*" (Barbara, mother)

And importantly, mothers felt that the education provided by schools would lead to greater chances and better opportunities in later life for their daughters. Mothers had ambitions for their daughters and wanted them to have better lives than they had

had. They wanted their daughters to do well and believed that education was the route to success.

> "*I want my children to have the best chance that they can in life because that's what education's for, isn't it*?" (Dorothy, mother)

> "*To learn as much as you possibly can. So you can have a better life.*" (Karen, mother)

Having 'more chances in life' was important for the mothers because they wished for their daughters more than they themselves had received or achieved.

> "*You want your children to have a bit more than you, don't you, not to have to work as hard as you.*" (Jo, mother)

Overwhelmingly mothers believed that the formal institution of a school was the best place for a child to gain an education and to learn all the skills that were required of an industrialised society.

6.1.1 Parental Encouragement And Support

As discussed in section 2.3.1, one of the greatest influences upon children's education and their level of achievement was the impact that their parents had. Cullingford (1985, as discussed in section 2.3.1) argued that it was the parents in the family home who influenced children's attitudes towards learning. And it was parental aspirations and expectations that would affect children throughout their educational careers. The support and encouragement that parents could offer included choosing the schools that their child attended, help with homework and coursework, help when choosing subject options and advice on further and higher education.

Fogelman (1976, as discussed in section 2.3.1) found in his survey that 24% of parents were 'very anxious' that their child did well at school and another 15% were 'fairly anxious'. My research had similar findings: the majority of mothers claimed that their parents were not anxious for them to do well at school as long as they 'tried their best' and were 'happy' at school.

> "*No my parents, as long as we were happy, that was their main concern. That we were happy at school.*" (Ruth, mother)

However, nearly half of the sample felt that their parents were 'very anxious' or 'fairly anxious' that they did do well at school (even if the majority of these mothers were going to leave school at the earliest opportunity).

> "*Yes they were anxious, for all of us to do well at school. Yes they were. With a career in mind.*" (Yvonne, mother)

> "*A lot of pressure was on me by my parents. Because, if you like, of the three [children] I was the one that was most likely to succeed and go on to higher education. And my parents had friends with sons and daughters who were going on to university, so I think they were anxious.*" (Shirley, mother)

When the mothers in my sample had been at school during the 1960s there was low unemployment and jobs for school leavers were widely available and relatively easy to obtain. At this time the prevalent attitude in society was that a young woman would marry, terminate any employment she might have been in and then remain at home to raise children whilst the husband would go 'out to work'. Due to the buoyant labour market and the belief that women would ultimately be 'housewives and mothers', many mothers in the sample found that their parents, especially their fathers, did not hold education in high esteem and wanted them to leave school at the earliest opportunity.

"My parents thought education was a waste, you know, what's the point. To them, what was the point of me having an education. 'Bloody ridiculous' my father said, 'bloody ridiculous all this staying up till midnight to do exams and learn stuff. It's pointless. You're only going to get married and have a baby. What's the use of it all? We can't afford to send you to college. We can't afford it. You'll have to get out there and earn some money'." (Beryl, mother)

"My father would never let me read because he considered reading a book a waste of time. I used to enjoy reading…I used to have to do it in secret somewhere." (Mabel, mother)

"I don't really remember being encouraged as such." (Sharon, mother)

However, not all parents were dismissive of education, resulting in no support being given. Some of the mothers in the sample did receive encouragement, to do well at school, especially from their own mothers (even if they were going to leave at the earliest opportunity). Encouragement and support from mothers tended to take the form of two possibilities – a practical form of support (helping with homework or proofreading work) or an emotional form of support (always being 'physically' around).

"I can remember my mother reading to me a lot." (Constance, mother)

"She'd always got time for you. She was always there and was a great support." (Nancy, mother)

"Mum was always at home because she didn't work. She was always there." (Shirley, mother)

The support that fathers gave tended to be verbal support (rather than practical support such as helping with homework):

"He used to go on and on and on about how important it was to get your qualifications because if you didn't, you know, you wouldn't be able to do this, that and the other." (Ellen, mother)

or just showing a general interest on a day-to-day basis:

"*He just showed interest in what sort of had gone off in the day. If anything interesting had gone off. That was about it really.*" (Fern, mother)

Although there were mothers in the sample who had a father who was interested in their education and schooling and gave some form of support, the mothers were acutely aware that the responsibility for their education fell to their own mother. Schooling was the domain of the woman.

"*Our education, and bringing four girls up was my mother's side, she done all that* (laughs). *My father just provided the money.*" (Dee, mother)

Mothers in the sample mentioned that their own experience of parental support, or non-parental support, had influenced their attitudes with their own daughters. For example, Barbara felt that a lack of parental support had influenced how her own education had proceeded and had affected her own achievement levels. She was aware of this when raising her own daughter.

"*I didn't have that parental support and I think that was a big factor for me personally.*" (Barbara, mother)

If a mother in the sample had had a 'pushy' mother herself, whilst aware of the pressures she herself had experienced, she still placed the same kind of pressures and anxieties upon her own daughter.

"*The day that I was taking the exam for the Technical College I never told my mother. She didn't know until after I'd had the interview and been accepted, because I knew if I didn't pass I'd really get it in the neck. And I think probably some of this is why I'm a little bit like it [pushing daughter to achieve]. Like I've probably expected more from Courtney than what she's capable of doing.*

Because my mum...okay parents want the best for their children but my mother just pushed me over the top completely." (Mabel, mother)

The mothers in the sample acknowledged how their own experiences of parental support and/or parental anxieties with regard to education and schooling had affected their own relationships with their daughters. If they had been deprived of parental support themselves they were anxious that support, advice and encouragement was given to their own daughters. They were prepared to encourage, support and push their daughters to achieve academic success. In the same way that Walkerdine et al (2001, see section 2.3.1) in their research had found a great emphasis on the "value of education in fulfilling potential, extending choices and providing possibilities for the future" so, too, did I with my sample of mothers. Education was something that was now discussed and its role in people's future successful lives was acknowledged and valued.

"*I know it sounds silly but like now in this day and age you talk about education and you talk about things like that. As far as education was concerned in my day and age you went to school at 5, you went to junior school, you went to secondary modern if you went there, which I did, and basically you finished, got a job and that was it. It [education] was never discussed, not ever talked about at all, not how it is now. Well it never was at all in our house.*" (Bonnie, mother)

"*I don't think the pressures were as great as they are today. Jobs were more plentiful and you had more choice whereas today they've got to work hard because jobs are not so easy to come by.*" (Ingrid, mother)

Mothers believed that schools and a formal education would help their daughters with their subsequent careers by helping them to gain qualifications and all the accompanying skills (practical and social) that would give them a better chance within the labour market. Mothers felt this would help their daughters, eventually, to have a better life than their own.

6.2   Decision-Making - Choice Of Subjects At Age 14

Decision-making with regard to subject choice took place at age 14 for the mothers in my sample. For them the formal qualifications to be taken were either 'O' levels or CSEs. However, subject choice (and the opportunity to take formal qualifications) was sometimes determined by the type of school attended i.e. grammar or secondary modern.

I found that most mothers had followed a set curriculum and therefore choice had been quite limited. Those mothers in the top academic streams sometimes had a choice between the sciences and the arts and, occasionally, the opportunity to study Latin alongside other languages. As their schooling had taken place before the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and equal opportunities legislation it was discovered that they had all studied home economics and needlework but had been denied the opportunity to experience woodwork or metalwork.

For the context of my research the mothers' educational experiences occurred in the past and I was now studying the present – the educational experiences of their daughters. I was interested in the subjects presented to the daughters as they were undertaking their education after the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. I also studied the mothers' influence upon the decision-making of their daughters with regard to subject choice.

**6.3	Decision-Making – Leaving School At The Earliest Opportunity And The Influence Of Marriage And Motherhood**

The area of decision-making with regard to leaving school at the earliest opportunity was an important area to investigate. For all pupils, girls and boys, a very serious decision to be made when compulsory schooling ended was whether to stay on in the education system (at school or go to college) or leave to get employment or begin training for future employment. Staying on in the education system could lead to the acquisition of qualifications and these could determine possible career pathways and opportunities. Alternatively, employment offered the prospect of a salary and independence.

**6.3.1	Parental Involvement In The Decision-Making Process**

Sharpe (1976, see section 3.2.1) discovered an immense influence on decision-making by parents. She found that many working-class parents did not value the usefulness of a long academic training. They were content for their daughters to seek employment although they themselves had a limited knowledge of what was actually available in the local labour market and were not often able to give valuable advice and support.

An analysis of my research data revealed that just over one-half (34) of the mothers in the sample had left school, and finished their education, at the earliest opportunity. For some this was at the age of 14, for some 15 and for some 16.

7 of these mothers had to leave school because there was not any sixth form provision and they decided upon employment rather than seeking alternatives for

education such as college. The need for a job sometimes meant unsuitable choices were made.

> "*Well you couldn't stay on. That was it. If you wanted to do further education you went to technical college and I didn't. I left. I went into a factory and hated every minute of it.*" (Karen, mother)

24 mothers made the decision to leave without any consultation with their parents.

> "*You know, it were up to me, type of thing…so I left at Easter, I left early.*" (Gwen, mother)

The remaining 3 mothers did consult their parents and it was a joint decision that schooling should cease. The reasons for leaving included parental expectation, financial viability and employment gained.

> "*I assumed that I'd leave school at sixteen to start work. You see [my parents] left school at the earliest opportunity, they were fourteen when they left school and they expected me to do the same.*" (Janice, mother)

> "*I didn't stay on. I mean, I was the eldest of four, so it was just natural that I left and went off to work…It was a mutual thing. I mean it would have been a lot of hard work to stay on and financially they couldn't really afford it.*" (Ruth, mother)

> "*They were quite happy because I'd actually secured a good job.*" (Steph, mother)

Although in most cases parents were not involved in the decision-making process, it can be seen in the next section that parents' attitudes and individual family circumstances did place pressure on girls when decisions were being made. As shown above, Janice left because her parents expected her to and Ruth left because her parents could not afford for her to remain at school.

6.3.2 Reasons For Leaving School At The Earliest Opportunity

Rauta and Hunt (1975, as discussed in section 3.2.1) in their study of fifth form (now Year 11) girls in London and Oxfordshire found that the most common reasons for wanting to leave school were: to start work and earn money; to continue their education elsewhere or because they were tired of school work and examinations.

Joan Maizels (1970, as discussed in section 3.2.1) found that reasons why pupils wanted to finish their education at the earliest opportunity were:

- due to the school (dislike of school, belief that they were not learning anything, perception that they lacked academic ability so it would not be appropriate to continue)

- for the benefits gained by being in employment (independence, wages)

- due to the ease of gaining employment

- because of friendship groups (if friends were leaving school then they did not want to remain alone)

- due to pressure from the family

Using the above as a general basis I analysed my research data and found that the significant reasons for leaving school at the earliest opportunity tended to fall into 1 of 5 main areas:

1. No sixth form provision

2. Experience of school

3. Pull of the local labour market

4. Family circumstances

5. Interim measure prior to training for employment

I then placed the reasons given by the mothers into one of the five categories.

The following table shows in detail the mothers' reasons for leaving school at the earliest opportunity. I used this table as the basis for my analysis amongst the daughters in my sample to see whether the reasons for leaving school early had remained the same or changed. It was used for comparison purposes.

Table 6 – Mothers' Reasons For Leaving School At The Earliest Opportunity

MOTHERS' REASONS FOR LEAVING SCHOOL AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY
1. No Sixth Form Provision:
• Limited knowledge of alternatives such as colleges so employment was sought
2. Experience Of School:
• The perception by the mother that she was not performing well academically and that there would not be any point in trying to continue with any form of education • Expectation by the school that the mother would leave • Unhappiness at school so a desire to leave • Tired of school (frustration) – seeking something new and different
3. Pull Of The Local Labour Market:
• Employment was easy to secure and there were plenty of jobs that did not require formal qualifications • Convenience e.g. a part-time position held whilst at school became a full-time position once school had finished (or was the reason for finishing school early) • Unexpected offer of employment for preferred career – would have continued with education if such an offer had not been available • To earn a wage • To become independent by being in employment • No longer being a schoolgirl (but an adult in employment)
4. Family Circumstances:
• To provide financial support for the family • Expectation by the family that she would leave as soon as possible
5. Interim Measure Prior To Training For Employment:
• As a stop gap until training could commence e.g. nursing (had to take employment for a year until old enough to begin training)

The two factors that appeared to make the biggest contribution to early school leaving were the previous experiences of education and the pull of the local labour market.

With regard to 'experience of earlier schooling' firstly there was a perception by the mother that she was not academically capable of staying on. In these cases the mother had been thinking about leaving school, getting a job and earning money for quite a while. This reason was clearly linked to the expectation of the school. If mothers were at secondary modern schools or in the lower 'streams' at grammar schools then often the school made it clear, sometimes explicitly, that she was neither considered bright enough nor performing well enough to further her education at school.

> "…well everybody finished then…at secondary [modern] school you didn't go on for anything else. At 15...your school life was finished if you were in secondary [modern] school. At 15 that was the end of your time (laughs)." (Bonnie, mother)

If a mother believed she has been defined and labelled as 'not intelligent' she could internalise this belief and it would reflect in her desire to leave school. This became, almost, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

> "My grades wasn't really brilliant so it wasn't really a case of going on to nightschool or college. I hadn't got good enough grades for that….We did have a 6th form but no my grades wasn't good enough. You'd got to get certain grades to actually go into the 6th form…I could have probably gone into college if I'd have tried but at the time I wasn't too sure exactly what I wanted to do anyway. So I couldn't see point in going to college when I'd no idea what to go for (laughs)." (Selina, mother)

Although schools quite often showed little or no interest in what the mothers intended to do once they had left (especially those that did not offer sixth form provision because they knew that every pupil had to leave) some schools were helpful and jobs were secured through the school's careers service.

Other reasons linked to experiences of school included being unhappy at school and wishing to leave or being 'bored' and 'frustrated' and wanting something new instead.

"*I'd had enough.*" (Sandy, mother)

"*I was supposed to be going back to take a secretarial course but I was absolutely fed up with school. I'd not done well in my 'O' levels at all. Just frustration. I just wanted to get out and that was it.*" (Diane, mother)

Considering the 'pull of the local labour market' several reasons became apparent. Firstly, the economic conditions at the time were a prevalent reason for leaving school to gain employment. There was an abundance of jobs in society at that time, and for many of these jobs potential employees did not even need to be interviewed, the completion of an application form would be enough to secure employment. Three of the mothers commented that they had left school on a Friday afternoon and started employment the following Monday morning.

Secondly, some mothers entered employment because of the convenience of the situation and the ease with which they could get a job. Several mothers had held part-time jobs in shops whilst at school and these jobs became full-time positions once school had finished (or was the reason for finishing school early because the job was waiting for them).

"I used to have a little Saturday job and I just carried on with that full-time." (Phyllis, mother)

In addition, three mothers secured employment with their own mother at her place of work. Often jobs were secured through family or friends.

Thirdly, and linked to the reason above, was the situation where mothers were unexpectedly offered a job that was related to their desired career. They would have continued with their education if such an offer had not been made but they felt that this was a chance not to be missed.

"I was offered a job in a hairdressers so I left and did that." (Dorothy, mother)

One mother was seeking a career with horses and because this was such an unusual career her school was unable to assist her with any careers guidance or advice. When she was offered a job to work with horses, just before taking her final examinations, the school recommended that she take the job and forego the rest of her education because it was felt that such an opportunity was unlikely to reoccur.

Finally, employment was seen by mothers as a way to become independent, to be recognised as an adult and, very importantly, to earn a wage.

"There was a sixth form but I didn't take my GCEs. I left before then…I wanted to go out to work, and bring in a wage, to have the things that other people had that we couldn't have. And I didn't tell my mother because I didn't want to hurt her, and I didn't tell the school, but that was the major part of why I left." (Ginny, mother)

"I was just considering the most money. I wanted money. So the factories were my consideration, that's all I wanted to do, go into the factories cos that's where all the money was at the time." (Constance, mother)

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Education was sometimes seen as a 'means to an end'. School was the preparation required to secure full-time employment. For Pauline, who left school at the earliest opportunity in order to start work at a cutlery factory, school had taught her basic skills and once she had acquired these skills she did not need anything else. School then became redundant and she had a disregard for any further education. Primarily, school did not provide a wage.

> "*I were only fifteen and I thought 'well it's a job, I'm earning some money', you know what I mean. I mean I didn't use to think about careers, you know, like a journalist or a secretary or whatever, no...never bothered me owt like that. I weren't bothered as long as I'd got a job and I were earning some money. I thought 'well I've gone to school, I know how to write me name and I know how to spell, and add up and things like this, I'm alright'.* " (Pauline, mother)

A minor category providing reasons for leaving school at the earliest opportunity was 'family circumstances'. Only a few mothers mentioned that they had been expected to leave in order to help provide funds for the family and to help to financially support younger siblings. 5 mothers stated that it was just accepted by everybody (family and friends) that they would leave at the first opportunity (usually this followed the footsteps of older siblings who had also left when it became possible to). In these situations the mothers had searched for and secured employment whilst still at school in preparation for when they left.

Another reason in this category was that parents did not value education and they expected their daughter to leave as soon as possible. This was not always the choice of the daughter.

> "*…my parental expectation was that I would leave. My family, my parents, don't expect children to be educated beyond a certain age and that age now would be sixteen because that's when you can leave school….Yes I think pressure*

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would have been put upon me to leave. I don't think...they just couldn't have understood why I would have wanted to stay on any longer and as they had no contact with the school, the school was in no position to influence them."
(Dorothy, mother)

When analysing the data it was interesting to note that not one mother mentioned that she wanted to leave school in preparation for married life or motherhood and that therefore she thought her education was not important. Although a few mothers mentioned earning a wage to be able to help the family financially not one claimed that they had domestic duties or responsibilities that made continuing with their education unfeasible. Due to the prevailing attitude in society at that time that a woman's role was to remain within the marital home I decided to investigate this area further and asked the mothers whether they had been aware of this attitude.

6.3.3 Attitudes Towards Marriage And Motherhood

As discussed in section 3.2.1, research from the 1970s showed that girls were brought up to marry, have children and care for their homes, husbands and families. During the 1960s and 1970s many girls held low occupational aspirations because they accepted that they would leave employment early in order to become wives and mothers and therefore did not attach much significance to their proposed careers. Sue Sharpe's research from this time revealed that girls perceived themselves as being at home for most of their married lives, that they accepted that their future would consist of marriage and motherhood and that any job held prior to marriage was only a stopgap.

Some of the mothers mentioned that their schools had talked explicitly about their future roles as wives and mothers.

"Some of us was cut out to be housewives. Some of us would never have careers…Men teachers, they thought that the boys had the career, the women had the little part-time jobs and stayed at home with children." (Selina, mother)

"The teachers did used to say 'oh it don't matter, you'll be married and probably have some kids and this, that and the other'." (Cherry, mother)

Other mothers realised what their primary role in life was going to be due to the subjects that they had to undertake e.g. domestic science and the content of such subjects.

"I think sort of subjects such as housecraft because it was drummed into you. They taught you how to iron and how to do this and that. The books I can remember…were how to do the washing and use the washing machine and all things like that, so when you get married you, you know, you'll follow this all through." (Fern, mother)

"In cookery lessons we were learning how to make a tray look nice (laughs). You know, to take them a cup of hot chocolate in bed. You know, you had to have a tray cloth and a vase with a flower in it and stuff like that. And, you know, in many respects they were grilling you to be good wives…and we had hygiene classes and things like that, how to wash the table and how (laughs) to have a shower and things like that." (Dorothy, mother)

In some schools the message about future roles was implicit with only a suggestion being made. However, mothers were well aware of what they were expected to do once they had left school.

"I think it was an unspoken thing. Very insidious...I think that's the way it went. If you look back on it now I think the whole thing was geared to that implication that girls would only work, be in the workforce until they found themselves a husband and got married and had children. And then once that was over then any old menial job would do just to earn them pin money." (Alex, mother)

However, it must be remembered that not all schools held these views. Grammar schools in particular wanted their female pupils to embark upon a career.

"*You were always educated to have a career. It was explained to you that you needed your qualifications to be able to get a job. And the better the qualifications you could get obviously the better impressed employers would be.*" (Bev, mother)

Nevertheless, the widely held belief in society at this time was that girls would marry early, have children and care for their homes, husbands and families. This led to some mothers holding limited views regarding careers, believing instead that marriage and motherhood were inevitable.

"*If you weren't married by the time you were 18 you were on the shelf!* (laughs). *You went to school, you went to work, you got married, you had children. And that was how it went.*" (Dee, mother)

In addition to the attitudes held by schools and teaching staff, and society in general, mothers were also aware of their parents' views on the value of education and women's place within the work force.

"*At that stage it was 'well what's the point in going to college, you're going to get married and have children'. That was the attitude unfortunately. And I do resent that now.*" (Beryl, mother)

"*I think it was expected that I would get married and have children.*" (Fern, mother)

Friends had an immense influence as well.

"*I think my contemporaries, who are very important to you at that age, gave me that opinion [that I would marry]. And I think from a very early age it was what I wanted. I never saw work, I never saw my career as being uppermost in my life. I really did think that having a family was going to be what I wanted.*" (Yvonne, mother)

Some mothers who grew up in traditional families were expected to undertake domestic duties and tasks in order to help the family. However, they knew that any male siblings were not expected to perform such domestic responsibilities. Although

they may have resented such a situation the mothers realised that this was how families operated at that time.

> "*I was the girl in the family, and my brother didn't have to do a lot of the things that I had to do. I had to do all the sort of traditional things at home that my brother didn't do. That was what was expected. But I don't think she [Ginny's own mother] was unique in her outlook with that, you know, it was very general at that time.*" (Ginny, mother)

Again, it needs to be noted that within some families parents did not necessarily favour male offspring but desired equal opportunities for their children. They wanted their daughters to succeed within the workplace.

> "*My mother was very, very anti that [girls not having opportunities at work because of impending marriage] (laughs). Girls had to have the same opportunities as boys.*" (Tina, mother)

Overall, mothers were aware that society expected them to marry, usually at quite a young age, and become mothers. Jobs were to have a secondary role in their lives. Men were expected to be the main income earners and women were expected to remain at home in order to undertake childcare duties and responsibilities. Although mothers were aware of this situation it can be seen above that this was not reason enough for them to leave school early.

6.4   Decision-Making – Education After Compulsory Schooling

An analysis was completed with regard to any education undertaken by the mothers once their formal schooling had ended.

6.4.1 Progression To Further Education

Prior to the mid-1980s the majority of pupils, when reaching the age upon which they could leave school, chose to leave education and enter the labour market. Over one-half of the mothers in my sample had left school at the earliest opportunity to seek employment.

6.4.1.1   Influences On Decision-Making

For the majority of mothers who progressed with their education the decision was discussed with parents. However, sometimes mothers did carry out this decision-making process in isolation because their parents were unable to give any advice or support.

> "*That generation felt that if you'd passed your 11+ life was made for you and I was at the High School, it was all going to happen for me, and they thought that I was mature enough and that I would make the right choices.*" (Yvonne, mother)

There were occasions when mothers progressed with vocational courses such as secretarial ones, because their parents did not place a value upon an 'academic' education, therefore the choice became a secretarial course or straight into the labour market.

Although two mothers opted to do 'A' levels in order to be able to pursue a particular career that demanded specific qualifications, it was found that one-third of the mothers who had progressed to further education claimed that it had not really been a conscious decision – they were just expected, by both the school and their parents, to progress into the sixth form. This was especially the case for mothers who had

attended a grammar school. The ethos of the school was that if they had passed the 11+ and were in the top streams then they were expected to continue with their education. It was as if they were on a predetermined route.

> "*There weren't a lot of options really. It was an expectation that if you went to grammar school you would stay into the sixth form. There didn't seem to be a viable option for me, at that time, to leave. I think there was just the assumption that you would go on until the end…It was all part of a feeling that it was a predetermined pattern and I think it all stems from that 11+. You know that once you've taken that exam you are on a particular track.*" (Violet, mother)

Sharpe found in her research (1976, as discussed in section 3.3.1) that the main reasons given by girls for remaining at school (as opposed to seeking employment) were:

1. to gain qualifications
2. to remain with friends
3. the enjoyment of being at school
4. the fear of leaving the familiarity and protection of school life
5. the fear of being unable to cope with independence

Reasons for progression to further education of the mothers in my sample were analysed against Sharpe's five categories. Whilst Sharpe only mentioned 'school' I included 'school' and 'college'.

Gaining qualifications was a consideration, not only for those at grammar school and proceeding with 'A' levels but for those mothers who had attended a secondary modern school and wished to gain secretarial qualifications. It was viewed that such qualifications would lead to the securement of better employment. However, a lot of

mothers did state that the decision to continue with their education was just expected, by both the school and their parents, and that they could not give real reasons as to why this decision was made.

"*It's almost as if the decision was made for me.*" (Shirley, mother)

None of the mothers in the sample gave remaining with friendship groups as a reason to progress to further education. In fact, more mothers stated that their friends had left at the earliest opportunity and they were the only one that remained in the sixth form or moved to technical college.

The enjoyment of being at school was not cited as a reason. In contrast more mothers felt that it was the following two reasons that were more important: the fear of leaving the familiarity and protection of school life and the fear of being unable to cope with independence (of not feeling mature enough to enter the labour market). They found it safer to remain in a familiar environment with known teachers.

"*School was what you knew and it was safe and I think the actual thought of going for interviews and things like that, I really wasn't mature enough for, so that's probably why I stayed.*" (Yvonne, mother)

It appeared that for mothers who had attended grammar school and were performing well academically, the expectation was that they would continue with their education. There appeared to have been no real conscious decision-making behind the progression from compulsory education to further education. For other mothers it was for the opportunity to acquire specific qualifications that led to employment.

6.4.1.2   Choice Of Course/Subjects Studied

26 mothers in my sample continued with their education past the school leaving age: 12 took 'A' levels (the majority of these staying on at school in the sixth form), 9 proceeded to go to college in order to take a secretarial course to learn office skills, 2 pursued a nursery nursing course, 1 a home economics course (to become a demonstrator for the gas or electricity board) and 2 took 'O' levels.

Table 7 – Mothers – Further Education Pursued

'A' Levels	12
Secretarial Course	9
Nursery Nursing	2
'O' Levels	2
Home Economics	1

When deciding upon an appropriate course of study the mothers would occasionally discuss it with their parents. However, often the decision-making process was carried out in isolation because parents were unable to give advice or support. It was not unusual for decisions about subjects and/or courses to be left entirely to the mothers.

> "*I mean they didn't know what 'A' levels were. I remember when I got my 'A' level results, trying to explain to them all that. It wasn't that they were dumb or anything, it was just that it was completely outside their experience. I remember trying to explain to my mother but she never grasped it really.*" (Chrissie, mother)

It was found that 12 mothers studied for secretarial, nursery nursing and home economics qualifications. These vocational courses were highly gendered and led to traditional feminine careers. I discovered that mothers who had attended secondary

modern schools found that they were expected to leave at the earliest opportunity whether they wished to or not.

> "*I did actually want to stop on at school and do 'O' levels but basically they said I wasn't clever enough.*" (Bev, mother)

In these situations a technical college provided an alternative to employment and many girls went there to embark upon secretarial courses. Due to the large number undertaking secretarial courses (this was 35% of those progressing into further education and overall almost one-sixth of the whole sample of mothers) I analysed the reasons why this had been such a popular choice.

I found that most of these mothers had attended a secondary school that did not have a sixth form so the options were to study at technical college or seek employment. A secretarial course was selected because: it had been suggested by the school or parents; because any alternative options were not considered suitable or desirable, or because any preferred alternatives were not available because of the lack of required qualifications. Bev who was prevented from taking 'O' levels because she was not considered academic enough found that the two careers she aspired to follow were unreachable.

> "*I wanted to go into confectionery, making buns and cakes to sell in shops. Cos that's what my mum did and that's what I enjoyed doing. And then my second choice was to go into the police force. I couldn't go into confectionery cos you needed 'O' levels and I couldn't go in the police force cos I wasn't tall enough. So then it was down the road to do shorthand and typing.*" (Bev, mother)

It became clear that the mothers in my sample had strong beliefs about what society envisaged were appropriate career paths for girls should they leave school at the

earliest opportunity. If girls did not wish to commence employment immediately then highly gendered vocational courses such as secretarial or nursery nursing were sought. However, such career paths were not always favoured.

> "*If you left when you were sixteen you did cooking or secretarial and there was no way I was going to do that so the other thing seemed to be to stay on at school…My dad was dead set against it because he wanted me to do secretarial or cooking because that's what girls did and because, you know, when you were 16 you left school and you got a job. 'What did you want to mess about doing more education for?' I'd get a job in Woolworths, so you know, use up as little of their money as possible.*" (Chrissie, mother)

Chrissie did pursue further education ('A' levels) albeit in the face of such strong opposition. For other mothers the progression happened effortlessly. Subjects were selected, sometimes by the teachers involved, and a facile progression occurred.

> "*I have to say a lot of those decisions were just drift. I was quite happy to just drift along and do these things.*" (Bernadette, mother)

It was found that the mothers who selected a vocational course opted for a course that was highly gendered and that led to a traditionally feminine job.

6.4.2 Progression To Higher Education

Only 8 mothers from the sample of 60 progressed on to Higher Education. The following table shows the subject taken.

Table 8 – Mothers – Higher Education Pursued

SUBJECT	
• Teacher Training (general)	4
• Nursing	1
• Architecture	1
• Economics*	1
• Latin & Greek	1

* progressed to a Masters degree immediately upon completion of degree

In the 1950s and 1960s there was a feeling that 'A' levels only led to 2 routes: university or, more commonly for girls, teacher training college. From my sample it was found that 4 out of the 8 mothers progressed to teacher training college, 1 mother studied nursing whilst the remaining 3 mothers studied for a degree at university. At this time twice as many young women studied at teacher training colleges than studied at university. Teacher training was perceived to be of lower status than a university degree and had lower entrance requirements.

> "*I think it was very much university or teaching or physiotherapy, for girls in particular. There was banking but maths wasn't my particular talent. So that was the sort of route I was on and I didn't really waiver from it.*" (Shirley, mother)

> "*It was assumed, I suppose, that if you didn't get into university then you would go and do some other form of education and teaching seemed a good idea at the time. There weren't a lot of options really, there wasn't such a wide range of further education possibilities when I was at school.*" (Violet, mother)

The 4 mothers who had pursued teacher training had done so because, even with 'A' levels, they felt that opportunities were limited and that teaching was really the only viable option if they were not considered academic enough to attend university. There was not much knowledge in society at the time about the range of jobs available for women who had achieved a degree or similar. Added to the fact that many people in society still held the view that education for a woman was not really important it was unsurprising that teaching was seen as the most suitable option for a girl who had 'A' levels but did not wish to, or was unable to, attend university.

The 4 mothers who had attended university had done so for a variety of reasons. The mother who had studied Latin and Greek had done so because her father had

been her Latin and Greek teacher at secondary school and it had been his wish that she continued. The decision to study at university and to study these subjects had almost been taken for her:

"*Looking back now I regret not having done modern languages, at least one other modern language, and I regret that I didn't enjoy university. I don't think I really got as much out of it as I ought to have done. Looking back I was very immature at 17. I was very young at 17 and really didn't know what to do.*" (Bernadette, mother)

The mother who had studied architecture had done so because her art teacher at secondary school had advised her that she was not good enough to pursue pure art and that she would have to rely upon teaching art for a living. As the mother did not desire teaching as a career she had pursued architecture instead.

The mother who had studied nursing had done so because it was seen as an 'appropriate job' by her parents and the one who had studied economics had done so at the suggestion of her favourite teacher at secondary school.

Therefore, for the mothers who had studied at university the decision-making had virtually been done for them. Although they, originally, had been happy to go along with these suggested courses/subjects they had never really made the decisions themselves.

In summary, I found that just under one-half of the mothers in the sample had progressed to further education and the relevant decision-making had taken place with parental support. For the mothers decisions about further education were being made at a time of high employment and therefore local labour markets had a strong

impact upon the decision-making processes. Mothers who were high performers at grammar schools were expected to carry on by all parties concerned (and therefore no real, conscious decision-making took place) whilst mothers at secondary modern schools were expected to go to a technical college to pursue vocational courses or to leave school and seek employment. They also believed that society determined the jobs that were considered appropriate for a girl e.g. teaching, nursing, secretarial work.

For the 8 mothers who progressed to higher education the relevant decision-making was made for them and they pursued courses mainly at the recommendation of secondary school teachers. Teacher training was proffered to mothers as being an 'appropriate career' for women in society at that time.

6.5   Choice Of Career

An analysis was undertaken to determine the careers that the mothers had pursued.

6.5.1 Careers Advice

One-half of the sample of mothers had not received any form of careers guidance whilst at school. It was expected of them to start looking for a job. This may have been due to the economic climate of the day – jobs were easy to find and secure as there was high employment.

Of the remaining mothers in the sample careers guidance tended to take the form of:

- A careers officer visiting the school

- A careers teacher at school (usually a subject specific teacher who undertook careers as one of their duties and who would have had limited knowledge of the opportunities available)

'Careers' was an area of education that was left very late – usually occurring during the last six months of schooling.

> "*Six months before we left, we had a lady come in to talk to us all about different careers and what was on offer at the time when we was leaving.*" (Selina, mother)

> "*We saw the careers teacher in the last year about three months before we were due to leave and that was it.*" (Beryl, mother)

The help given to the mothers tended to be to secure employment rather than to offer vocational guidance and involved such practical activities as supplying application forms for completion, arranging visits to the Labour Exchange and arranging interviews with firms.

> "*We just saw the careers officer when we were ready for leaving. And he just sort of asked you what sort of thing you wanted to do and if it was possible he'd fix you up with an interview. You know if he'd got anybody asking for your skills.*" (Delia, mother)

> "*Sometimes it was one-to-one with a careers officer, sometimes it was just a lesson just sitting there going through the papers or writing letters.*" (Dee, mother)

However, the mothers found that the careers advice provided was very limited due to the nature of their gender – it was clear that such advice reinforced the perception that they should only apply for a small variety of certain jobs. The mothers found that they were regarded as factory workers or shop workers – jobs that were 'suitably female', and that careers teachers directed them into traditionally female work.

"*You just came into an office and spoke to someone and they sort of gave you the choice of going into a factory, that was the biggest choice, shopwork, and really that was it. Everybody was shop girls or factory girls you know. Nobody ever cared that you wanted to go any further than that. They didn't really advise you on anything. It was up to you to look for a job, to start looking for a job, because you were leaving at Easter, so start looking.*" (Karen, mother)

"*A careers officer came round to see if you had a job or not. I just knew it was either you go in a factory or shop or something like that. So really he just went 'well this place needs somebody and they'll take you on'. And it was more or less like that, a career didn't come into it really.*" (Marlene, mother)

Careers advice for the mothers (if they even received any at their school) was terribly limited in nature and also short-sighted. Girls were viewed as being appropriate employees for factory work or shop work, mainly due to the assumption that such jobs were only temporary until they married and embarked on motherhood. A 'career' for a girl at that time in society was not really considered unless she was going to go to university or teacher training college.

6.5.2 Desired Careers Whilst Growing Up At School

In the 1970s research revealed that the most popular choices for careers by girls were jobs that continued in the vein of 'women's work' that their mothers had previously done. As discussed in section 4.1 jobs that were favoured included teaching, nursing, shop work, clerical work, secretarial work, factory work and jobs of a caring or personal service type. Girls tended to keep their job aspirations low and

looked for employment in the local labour market and for jobs that were stereotypically feminine and non-professional which had low pay and no career opportunities for promotion (see Francis, 2002, in section 4.1). Sometimes girls would desire jobs considered glamorous such as being a hairdresser or air hostess but again, these jobs were an extension of a feminine role.

The following table shows the careers that were desired by the mothers whilst they were growing up and the careers that were suggested to them by their own parents.

Table 9 – Mothers – Careers Desired Whilst Growing Up And The Careers Suggested To Them By Their Parents

CAREERS DESIRED BY MOTHERS WHILST GROWING UP	CAREERS SUGGESTED TO THE MOTHERS (by their parents)
Nurse (13)	Bank worker (2)
Teacher (6)	Nurse (2)
Office work (5)	Secretary/office work (2)
Air hostess (4)	Catering (1)
P.E. Teacher (3)	Civil servant (1)
Ballet dancer (2)	Gas/Electricity Board Demonstrator (1)
Child care (2)	Hairdresser (1)
Cookery Teacher (2)	Hotel work (1)
Librarian (2)	Sports teacher (1)
Nursery nurse (2)	
Retail (2)	
Actress (1)	
Architect (1)	
Bank clerk (1)	
Catering (1)	
Chemist/dispenser (1)	
Dental receptionist (1)	
Doctor (1)	
Drawing office (1)	
Dress designer (1)	
Factory work (1)	
Hairdresser (1)	
Horticulture (1)	
Laboratory worker (1)	
Make up artist (1)	
Nun (1)	
Occupational therapist (1)	
Shepherdess (1)	
Solicitor (1)	
Veterinary nurse (1)	
Working with horses (1)	

Although a wide range of jobs had been listed it was found that the jobs were primarily perceived as 'traditionally feminine' favouring nursing, teaching, office work and childcare. The majority of these jobs were of low aspiration and would have been very localised. Glamorous jobs such as actress, dress designer, ballet dancer,

hairdresser and air hostess were mentioned. Only 3 professional occupations were mentioned – architect, doctor and solicitor.

Table 9 shows that very few jobs were suggested to the mothers by their own parents. However, in other instances mothers did try hard to help their daughters consider something matching their interests.

> "*And I can remember my mother going to the library and picking out a careers encyclopaedia, we went through it A to Z (laughs) to try and work out what I might be interested in and I was either interested in everything or nothing.* " (Lilian, mother)

As discussed in section 6.3.2 it was found that most mothers did gain a job of their choosing although this choice was restricted by what was available in the local labour market. Jobs chosen were usually determined by convenience e.g. a part-time job in a shop became a full-time job or a relative was able to secure a job at their place of employment. Sometimes, however, there was no real choice. Florence had grown up on a farm and wanted to be a shepherdess. However, her parents selected her career, nursing, and also the careers of her five siblings.

> "*I always wanted to be a shepherdess and go to New Zealand. In fact I applied to go to New Zealand to be a shepherdess over there. My father said 'look, it'll be a hard life being a shepherdess, very little money, a hard, cruel life, you'd be far better doing something with your life'…We had to follow what they [parents] had chosen for us. My sister took secretarial work and my younger sister teaching. In farming families the sons were always expected to stay on the farm but all my brothers wanted totally different careers. My older brother wanted to be a vet, my second brother he wanted to be an engineer and my other brother wanted to be a teacher but they all had to stay on the farm.*" (Florence, mother)

For the mothers in the sample there was a limited choice of careers available due to restrictions within the local labour market and also the expectations of society that girls would perform 'traditional women's work' in a narrow range of jobs. As in earlier

research findings it was found that the mothers desired jobs that were stereotypically feminine and non-professional.

6.6   Women In The Workplace

An analysis was undertaken to determine the mothers' views about career women, role models and whether they perceived gender discrimination to be rife within the workplace.

6.6.1 Perception Of Career Women

As argued by Apter (1985, as discussed in section 4.3.3) there had been a significant increase in the number of women who had managed to achieve professional success whilst raising children.

For mothers an important issue when discussing working women was the addition of a family. Mothers thought it very difficult for a woman to have a demanding career and to be able to reconcile this with bringing up children. They used phrases such as 'having to juggle' and 'finding a balance'.

> "*Not a lot of us can juggle sort of a couple of babies, a home, you know, couple of dogs, cats and goldfish, and husband. It's difficult to do that without sort of help*." (Irene, mother)

> "*A successful person, somebody that's done very well for themselves, hard-working because I think women, successful career women, have to work hard because they have got to have a family and try to juggle a family and a job*." (Val, mother)

> "*My idea of a career woman is somebody that's trying generally to juggle an awful lot of everything…I think it's society that has now decided that women should be as equally valued as men and women are trying to push their way*

up. I don't know whether those who have children and are juggling children, whether those children are being juggled successfully." (Shirley, mother)

Mothers also suggested that they felt guilty themselves if they tried to pursue a career and raise a family. They believed that childcare duties, rightly or wrongly, were the responsibility of the woman in a marriage/partnership and that the man would not take on a share of these duties and responsibilities. Therefore, a woman had to tackle the dual spheres of family life and working life.

"*I think of a woman that's probably tearing herself in half trying to have a happy family and trying to have a successful career.*" (Yvonne, mother)

To be a successful working woman family life would have to be sacrificed. The two roles were incompatible.

"*They're probably not interested in families, or anything like that...I just feel that they're interested in what they want to do. You usually find that those who are career women they go for a goal, they have an aim that they go for and not many things will get in their way.*" (Steph, mother)

For mothers a career woman could be a woman embarking on any type of job. It did not have to be 'high powered' – it just had to be a job that she undertook.

"*Someone who's focused on doing, like reaching the top of their particular chosen career, whether it be manager of a fast-food shop or manager of a hi-tech company or whatever. Someone who's determined that they're going to get to the top.*" (Grace, mother)

Mothers were well aware of the difficulties of these dual responsibilities and knew that in all probability their own daughters would have to be employed as a necessity all their working lives. Women were full of admiration for those who tried to do both roles successfully.

"I think it must be very, very hard work. I don't know how they do it. I think it must be really hard work to have a full-time job and bring a family up as well." (Delia, mother)

"To be honest I think you've got it very hard today, women. Like Courtney says she can't ever imagine not working all her life. And I said 'well try to run a home, bring up children and work'. I think women have got it really hard now." (Mabel, mother)

Mothers were dismissive of the media term 'career woman' believing it to be derogatory and stereotypical. The phrase 'career man' was never applied to a man embarking upon a job or career so mothers felt it was demeaning to label a woman who wished to work.

"I don't think there's such a thing. I think that's a bullshit expression, sorry. I mean what's the difference between a career man, silly isn't it, to say that." (Beryl, mother)

"Well it's not a very nice term, is it? It doesn't come over as a nice term. You think of these women who are running around in Laura Ashley who are hard as nails. But that's a word that describes one of these dynamic people that are a bit larger than life. The Shirley Conran, writing a book in one hand and designing something in the other, probably. Superwoman. It isn't a particularly pleasant description is it?" (Fiona, mother)

"I think it's quite a derogatory term actually because it sounds as if that woman, in my mind, that if she has a family is neglecting her family to pursue her career. And I think women are just more adept at juggling two or more things in their hands, more than men are. I think women are far more resourceful than men are so I do find that quite a derogatory term." (Tina, mother)

"And generally the media seems to have created an impression of a career woman as hard nosed and male-ish (laughs)." (Lesley, mother)

When discussing the concept of 'career women' it was interesting to note that mothers readily acknowledged their colleagues as, and also claimed that they themselves were, career women. However, when discussing this area the mothers continued to talk about the dual responsibilities of work and home.

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"It's a woman that's got a career, she goes out to work and she goes home and works (laughs). I mean in my establishment there's career women with families." (Marilyn, mother)

"I've got a family and I class myself as a career woman. My family always comes first but my job's very important to me." (Constance, mother)

"If she chooses to have a family then she goes back to her career because it's something that she's worked hard at and wants to continue at. I actually went back to work when I had my family." (Bev, mother)

When discussing working women and the media term 'career women' the mothers did not use any negative words or phrases such as 'ruthless', 'backstabber', 'pushy' 'aggressive' or 'bitch'. Career women were seen as 'focused', 'successful', or 'ambitious'. However, they were viewed as women 'juggling' the dual roles of work and home life and of performing the 'double shift'. They were considered to be a kind of 'superwoman' and one mother did talk about Nicola Horlick's achievements. Negativity towards working women, and ambitious career women, was only expressed when discussing children. It was strongly felt by the mothers that a woman should stay at home with young children and then continue her career once the children had started school.

Whilst conducting this research several mothers asked me about my personal situation and I had responded that I was a full-time teacher/lecturer and was doing my thesis in my spare-time. I also had a son in full-time nursery. Several mothers told me directly that I was a "bad mother" for working full-time when I had an infant and that it was my "place" to be at home with him. They felt that my personal desire to be a full-time worker in the process of undertaking research to gain qualifications should be superseded by my duty to my child. They did not consider it acceptable for a mother to work full-time if her children were pre-school age.

6.6.2 Perception Of Gender Discrimination

The mothers in the sample had all witnessed, during the 1970s, the introduction of equal pay and sex discrimination legislation. Such legislation was meant to give women equality at work. 44 of the 60 mothers (73%) forwarded comments about their perception of sex discrimination within the workplace.

28 mothers claimed that there was a gender bias within society and that men were favoured above women. These mothers also believed that despite sex discrimination legislation and equal opportunities policies within organisations gender discrimination still occurred leading to men securing employment in the top positions.

> "*Well you know, you look at where you work, where I work, and who are at the top? It ain't the women, is it? (laughs). If you look at any organisational structure the men are at the top.*" (Chrissie, mother)

> "*I do think that as far as management is concerned it is certainly male dominated. I think it's a struggle for a woman to get to the same level as a man. You have to prove yourself.*" (Trish, mother)

Alex worked for a large organisation employing over 3,000 workers. The majority of these workers were females employed in part-time positions. Alex was very aware however that the managerial positions in the organisation were held by men.

> "*That place is absolutely stuffed full of women so why are all the managers or ninety-five per cent of them men? Nobody, I don't care who they are, can say to me that all those women in there are thick. I've watched the men toddle on, and up and off they go, so why aren't the women? There's very little encouragement.*" (Alex, mother)

Alex compared this organisation to the one she worked at previously where women were outnumbered by men. Here she found that women were encouraged in their careers.

> "*The women were outnumbered by the men and there I didn't feel it hampered you, the fact that you were a woman. Because you were more of a rarity if you were reasonably good you stood out and they were prepared to encourage you. Whereas I think in places where you have large volumes of women, the tendency is to have and make men management.*" (Alex, mother)

Mothers believed that one of the reasons that gender discrimination still occurred was because it was men in managerial positions who still held the view that women would interrupt or leave their job completely in order to have a family.

> "*I think they [men]]think women are going to go off and have babies so what's the point of investing a lot of resources, they're not going to be there.*" (Eileen, mother)

It was acknowledged that in some cases staying at home with children meant promotion or careers in general had to be sacrificed. If a woman decided to place her child in full-time nursery so that she could continue with her career it was felt she was missing out on her child's early development. Dorothy was typical of the mothers in that she felt that women could compete on equal terms with men within the workplace but that a woman should stay at home with her children until they reached school age. However, she realised that, for some women, if a career was to be continued with success it could not withstand a five-year interruption.

> "*Maybe they feel that they have to…to keep in there so they don't miss out, miss their place because of some aggressive bloke coming in there trying to elbow them out or something. I do think that women do have to struggle a bit, not to keep up but to...I feel that there's absolutely no question that women can compete with men but I do think they have to overcome bias in the workplace.*" (Dorothy, mother)

As well as women being discriminated against with regard to the appointment of senior managerial positions, the mothers also believed that women faced gender discrimination should they wish to pursue a career traditionally considered to be a "man's job".

> "*If a girl says she wants to be a chartered surveyor or a structural engineer I still do honestly think that they've got much more of an uphill battle.*" (Joan, mother)

11of the mothers believed that sex discrimination legislation was working and that there were far more opportunities for women within the workplace. They thought that things had improved and that the workplace was 'becoming evenly balanced'.

> "*I think a few years ago society favoured boys rather than girls. But I think nowadays, you know, there's probably not very much in it.*" (Tracy, mother)

> "*I think things are much more balanced now. I mean if you'd asked me ten years ago or twenty years ago I'd have said there was a definite bias but now I think...the "girl power" has worked. I do.*" (Yvonne, mother)

Whereas in the past it was greatly believed that it was more important for a man to gain employment because he would be the family's breadwinner whilst a woman would be at home raising the children, now it was acknowledged that women had to work and therefore they needed greater access to the jobs that were previously a man's prerogative – jobs that offered a high income, promotion prospects and that led to a good standard of living. However, the mothers felt that although women could perform jobs on an equal par with men they had to work harder 'to prove themselves'.

> "*But I think women have to work really hard…I mean if a man and a woman are doing the same job I think a woman has to work a lot harder at it and I think more is expected of her.*" (Ellen, mother)

Comments made by the majority of the mothers in the sample reflected Shaw's findings (1995b, as discussed in section 4.3.2) that employees remain "stratified by gender", that there were variations in pay rates, work conditions and promotion prospects and that discrimination did continue.

Only 5 of the mothers believed that there was not a gender split in society with one sex being favoured over the other. If anything they felt that positive discrimination had led to women gaining employment positions at the expense of men.

It can be seen from the above findings that mothers believed that women could compete favourably alongside men within the workplace. They disliked the term 'career women', finding it derogatory and demeaning, but felt that women, including themselves, were ambitious, focused, determined and, more importantly, capable of 'doing a good job'. However, they felt that women were hampered in the workplace by gender discrimination and several mothers were able to forward actual incidents of this happening within their own working environment. The main concern for mothers, though, was the fact that women had to undertake the 'double shift' – performing the dual roles and responsibilities contained within working life and home life. They thought by having primary responsibility for childcare and household duties, and having to leave careers to have children, that this made it very difficult for women to succeed within the workplace. They also thought that this situation would remain unaltered for their own daughters. They believed that their own daughters would have to work as a necessity in life and it would fall to them rather than a husband/partner to 'put a career on hold' to take care of pre-school children.

However, they did believe this was a priority, with several holding very strong views that a mother should remain at home with her children until they were of school age.

6.7 The Ways Mothers' Educational Experiences Affect Their Daughters' Educational Experiences

Throughout their schooling the mothers in the sample had to make choices and be involved in decision-making and these decisions became more important as they progressed further through their education. With hindsight mothers could regret the mistakes they made and realise that poor decision-making occurred during schooling. They could realise that: different choices should have been made; they could have taken up more opportunities; they could have worked harder and gained more qualifications; they could have achieved more and that they could have had more meaningful relationships with their classmates and teachers during their time at school.

Cullingford discovered that the major regret shared by respondents in his study was "the fact that they could have done better, by working harder" (Cullingford, 2002, p.65) and he found that they acknowledged their personal failure to become deeply engaged with school life. They expressed a personal sense of disappointment that they had not fulfilled their potential.

Although it could be argued that it was easy to have regrets with hindsight pupils were aware of missed and wasted opportunities – even at the time of schooling they might be aware of the presence of inequalities and a denial of opportunity to study certain subjects and at certain levels – and how these could affect their future lives.

They did realise the "difference between what happened and what might have been" (Cullingford, ibid, p.74).

It was ascertained that a mother's experiences of school and the encouragement and support she received from her own parents could influence greatly the support and advice she gave her own daughter (see section 6.1.1). In addition, it was important to determine whether the mothers in the sample had any regrets about their own schooling that could colour their views on how they perceived what their daughter's education and experiences should be.

42 of the mothers in the sample were asked of any regrets about their education. 12 claimed to have no regrets but 30 mothers did mention some form of regret.

Table 10 – Mothers – Regrets About Their Education

Wish I had worked harder and done better (gained more qualifications)	14
Wish I had continued with my education instead of leaving at the earliest opportunity	10
Did not take the career I really wanted to do	4
Chose the wrong secondary school and was unhappy	4
Took the wrong course e.g. 'O'' levels instead of CSEs, vocational courses instead of 'A' levels	4
Not being able to do a degree	2
Lack of good careers advice	1
Not asking for help from teachers	1
No-one pushed me	1
Being prevented from taking 'O' levels	1
Not liking school	1

[can give more than 1 response]

The major regret was not having worked harder and therefore not gaining as many qualifications as they believed they had been capable of achieving.

> "*I wish I had applied myself a bit more...I wish I'd had've done better now, looking back on it, I wish I had. But I mean I was a typical teenager, I wanted to be out every night* (laughs)*. You don't realise until it's all over what a mistake you've made* (laughs)." (Delia, mother)

The mothers felt that they had not fulfilled their potential and that it was an opportunity that they had wasted. The sense of regret was about the gap between what they could have achieved and what they did.

Sometimes the regret about not having worked hard enough was due to the fact that a career had been pursued that was not the desired one because lack of qualifications prevented the mother from achieving her desired job, as in the case of Karen who became a hairdresser rather than a nurse as she had dreamed of.

> "*I think I wish I'd worked harder at school and not messed about. Sometimes I think I could have been a good nurse but then it wasn't meant to be, was it? So I suppose I do regret not having gone into nursing.*" (Karen, mother)

The second main regret for the mothers was leaving school at the earliest opportunity rather than continuing with their education.

> "*My biggest regret is not going on to college I think. Now I can see the benefits of it but at the time I couldn't. That was it, I just wanted to leave.*" (Grace, mother)

For a lot of mothers the results of their 11+ examination had determined which secondary school had been attended e.g. a grammar school as opposed to a secondary modern school, and this was found to be the cause of unhappiness for

several mothers. They felt that if they had attended a different type of secondary school they would have been happier and therefore would have achieved more from their schooling.

Another regret mentioned by 4 mothers was the way that their schools had been structured and they had been streamed into what they felt were inappropriate courses at inappropriate levels e.g. being placed into 'O' level classes rather than being placed into CSE classes, struggling and therefore failing to achieve the qualifications.

> "*Yeah. Yeah. I do. I wish I hadn't gone...I went higher up than I should've done for me. I went on 'O' level courses and I wish I'd gone on CSE courses.*" (Gwen, mother)

Mothers were aware of how their education and the decisions made throughout their schooling had affected their careers, or lack of careers, which had led them down vocational routes they had not wanted but for which no viable alternatives were available. Bev (see section 6.4.1.2) was very bitter that such important decision-making was made by only one teacher and the subsequent results affected the choice of jobs available to her, whilst Chrissie bemoaned the poor careers guidance on offer.

> "*My careers teacher was my English teacher, and English was one of my poorer subjects. He was the one that made the decision that I wasn't clever enough to stop on to do my 'O' levels. That would probably have been my biggest regret, that one person could make that difference in your life. You know, that man, could just sit there and say you wouldn't get them. I feel you should be given the opportunity.*" (Bev, mother)

"I wish, I wish I'd had some good careers advice because then I think I could…I wouldn't have (whispers) ended up in teaching. I think it is probably because of lack of guidance. I just drifted into teaching because there wasn't anything else to do." (Chrissie, mother)

In addition to realising how their educational experiences had affected their careers mothers were also aware that decisions about leaving school at the earliest opportunity with no, or few, qualifications could also affect their family circumstances. This awareness affected the message they would then give to their own daughters. Beryl, who left school at the earliest opportunity, found a job, married immediately and had a baby. She then started to regret her lack of qualifications and the fact that this prevented her from pursuing her desired career and wanted to go back into education in her twenties. Her decision to do so led to her divorce.

"By the time I got to twenty-five I started thinking 'I want to do something for me'. So probably years before, if I'd been able to do what I really wanted to do, I wouldn't have broken the marriage up." (Beryl, mother)

Mothers did have regrets about their education and the way that it had affected the choice of jobs available to them and, in some cases, their family circumstances. It was this sense of regret that formed part of the basis for the message that they then passed on to their daughters.

6.7.1 The Message To Daughters

Mothers had a great influence on their daughters and had been involved, explicitly or implicitly, in the educational decision-making processes that had taken place throughout their daughters' lives. As the mother-daughter relationship was so

important (see section 2.1) it was necessary to ascertain whether the mothers had any form of educational 'message' that they had tried to convey to their daughters.

In their research Walkerdine et al discovered that working-class parents often talked about how they had tried to give their daughters the message that "life was a struggle and something that must be survived" (Walkerdine et al, 2001, p.151). In comparison middle-class parents conveyed the message to their daughters that they were able and clever and that they were destined to go to university and acquire professional jobs. For them 'working hard' at school was constantly stressed because it would lead to ultimate success and was necessary "to ensure the continuity of privilege in times of economic uncertainty and when men and marriage could not be relied upon to maintain class status and lifestyle in the new and uncertain labour market" (Walkerdine et al, ibid, p.182).

My findings did not reveal that mothers thought that life 'was a struggle' but, certainly, mothers had high expectations for their daughters, expecting them to go on to further education and, in some instances, higher education. This may have been a reaction to the mothers' own education where they were expected to leave at the earliest opportunity or, if they did proceed to higher education, then the ultimate goal would be to become a teacher.

> [school did not encourage further education] "*They didn't say anything. That's why personally I've encouraged my children from being very young, or brought the idea of the fact that if they're bright enough then we want them to go to university*." (Alex, mother)

I found that the main message that mothers wished to impart was that education led to qualifications and these would help to secure a desired job or permit the pursuit of

a career. This would allow the daughters to have financial security and be able to acquire material possessions in later life.

> "*Yes I suppose really I did sort of say if you don't get a good education you're not going to be able to get on as well as those that do have a degree or whatever.*" (Steph, mother)

> "*Just to get there and to do it. To get as much as you can. To learn as much as you can. I've just really tried to encourage her to do well.*" (Val, mother)

> "*We have talked in vague terms about careers. I tend to say 'what sort of lifestyle do you see yourself as having in 10 years' time?' and she says 'nice house, nice car, holidays two or three times a year'. I say 'okay you need to choose a career that makes a lot of money, don't go into teaching or nursing, or any of the caring professions cos they don't pay well. Be a lawyer, be an accountant'.*" (Bernadette, mother)

Mothers were encouraging and supporting their daughters to acquire the skills needed to succeed in the labour market, to achieve as much as possible at school and to ascend the educational hierarchy as far as they wished. They wanted their daughters to fulfil their potential and to be happy. They were also encouraging their daughters to challenge and resist sexism and were positively encouraging non-traditional interests.

> "*I wanted to get across to her that she must develop the skills to fulfil what she's got.*" (Yvonne, mother)

Mothers believed that more opportunities were available to their daughters at school than they had experienced. And therefore they did not want their daughters to miss out or waste any of these valuable opportunities.

> "*Cos in our day we sort of had the 11+, if you didn't pass the 11+ you were more or less written off. So you went to secondary [modern] school and then if you wanted to get anywhere you'd got to go to night school and do it. And I used to say to Courtney 'look you think day school's hard but you try going to night school three nights a week for three or four years'. But they were the only opportunities we had.*" (Mabel, mother)

Mothers wanted their daughters to be able to achieve more in life than they had experienced and this was very important to them.

> "*To work as hard as you can, to get as much education behind you as you can. I'm saying to her 'go get yourself a career, a good job, a good career'. I don't want her stacking shelves at 15. That was my decision but I don't want her to be doing that.*" (Phyllis, mother)

Occasionally mothers were aware that their own educational experiences had affected greatly their behaviour with their own daughters. Val had struggled with the pressure of taking 'O' levels yet had placed her own daughter under the same kind of pressure at the time of her GCSEs.

> [pressure when taking 'O' levels] "*Yes, I couldn't cope with it. I feel really sorry now that I gave this pressure to Jenna cos I couldn't cope with it. I think I put her under a lot of pressure but I just wanted her to achieve. I suppose because I didn't have the opportunity to achieve what they have today.*" (Val, mother)

A very important area for mothers was the concept of 'choice'. Being educated and qualified meant that daughters would be able to choose the career that they desired and not be forced into something unacceptable and inappropriate. Daughters would be able to make choices throughout life with regard to marriage and motherhood and the return to work. Mothers were encouraging their daughters to believe that they had a 'choice' in life and that they did not need to feel that they could not achieve a whole range of jobs just by virtue of being female.

> "*Don't leave yourself without any choices if you can help it. Give yourself the best start that you can and then the options are there*". (Alex, mother)

> "*If you have some education and you have qualifications and you have a career you have freedom of choice.*" (Dorothy, mother)

> "*What I've tried to point out to her that if she gets an education behind her it doesn't matter what she then chooses to do but it's being able to have that choice. Without a good education you haven't got that choice. I came out of school with no qualifications and without those qualifications you haven't got a choice.*" (Pru, mother)

For some mothers the message to be conveyed to their daughters was a simple one – 'try your best'. They claimed to ask of nothing more from their daughters. However, as can be seen in section 7.4.1.1, mothers wanted their daughters to proceed to further education whether it be to acquire academic or vocational qualifications. So the claim that they only wanted their daughters to try hard was only partly the message – they did not wish their daughters to 'try hard' and then leave at the earliest opportunity. They did want more from their daughters.

> "*I've said 'as long as you've done your best, what more can you ask for?'*" (Grace, mother)

> "*I've always said to her just do the best you can do. If you give it your all then that's all I can ask for.*" (Trish, mother)

As well as the mothers' educational experiences affecting their attitudes and behaviour towards their daughters' education, it was found that personal family circumstances greatly affected the message that was passed on. For example, a mother heading a lone parent family had a strong message about not relying upon a man (husband) for financial and personal security. Mothers were aware that their daughters may face life alone due to divorce, death or desertion and it was considered important for the daughter to have a good education and qualifications in case she could be heading her own lone parent family in the future. As well as using the word 'choice' mothers used the word 'independent' and thought this was an important feature to result from their daughters' education.

"There aren't the alternative routes there were 20 or 30 years ago, so it's important to get qualifications. It's important to be independent and to have your own career. She ought not, I hope, expect to be maintained in a state of comfort by some man or other. I'm trying to teach her not that but that's wider than just education. It's definitely seeing education as a way of avoiding that, being independent." (Bernadette, mother)

"And I knew that when my husband died and I'd got to bring them up on my own...and then I thought I don't want them to be getting married young and being tied down with children too young. I'd want them to have more of a career and have something of their own. I wanted them to have their own lives." (Karen, mother)

"I really feel that they [Dorothy's daughters] should not have to rely on being married and they should certainly not have to rely on a man. And so they need to be educated so that they can look after themselves." (Dorothy, mother)

"That you want a good education to go into something that you want to achieve and stand on your own two feet and not just be a housewife (laughs)." (Sylvia, mother)

Riddell (1992) in her research found that because mothers were aware of how they managed a dual role in the home and the labour market a minority of them were fundamentally challenging power relations in their own family and they gave encouragement to their own daughters to try and consider alternatives to the traditional paths expected of women. I found this to be the case especially for mothers who had grown up in traditional families where the man went out to work whilst the woman stayed at home to raise children and perform all household duties. These mothers in my sample had been expected to help with household responsibilities whilst their male siblings had not. This feeling of unfairness had led them to seek changes within their own families. Alex had grown up in a North-East mining village and had been determined that her daughters would not be raised in the same way that she had been – childrearing practices had moved away from the childrearing practices of the generation before.

"Cos I look now and I think 'why am I doing this? why am I ironing clothes for my husband?'. And I can't work out whether the set of circumstances, that as we've progressed, meant that I did it automatically from the beginning and as I've got older I've questioned it more and more to the point where sometimes I say "well I'm not going to do this, do it yourself". Now I don't know whether I've influenced my own children in that way, in the same way, although hopefully I've influenced my daughters to not do this (laughs). I suppose I was trying to break the chain." (Alex, mother)

Although Alex's message was heard by her daughter, Danielle, it was rejected. Danielle was studying to become a marine biologist and, although she knew her mother was encouraging her to become qualified and gain a good job Danielle stated that she would leave her job permanently if she had children. Danielle's father worked and, although Alex also worked part-time, because she was always at home when Danielle and her siblings returned home from school Danielle intended to replicate this situation with her own children. Even though Alex had spent many years teaching her daughter to be independent, to consider a well-paid job and not to be servile to her future husband, Danielle intended to revert to a traditional household.

"Mainly because this house has been a traditional house and I've been brought up with my dad's the one that goes out and earns the money and my mum's the one that stays home with the kids until they're old enough for her to go back to work part-time to bring in an extra bit of money. It's just the way I think." (Danielle, daughter)

As Chodorow (1978, as discussed in section 2.1) argued girls learn about gender roles at home with their mothers. Daughters learn that women take the burden of childcare responsibilities and that men engage in paid employment. Irrespective of Alex's message Danielle had internalised notions of motherhood through what she had witnessed in the family home.

Reflecting the findings of Park and Heaton (1987, as discussed in section 2.1), daughters did not necessarily concur with their mothers' aspirations because sometimes they responded "with a complete volte face". It appeared that mothers might be powerless to help their daughters break from a mould that they themselves had found constraining. Although daughters were fully aware about the benefits of education, qualifications, a rewarding and well-paid career leading to a good standard of living it was easy for them whilst growing up to observe their mothers at home performing all the household and childcare duties and thus internalise beliefs about the 'perfect' mother staying at home with her children.

In addition, there were mothers who whilst advocating the benefits of education still considered a mother's place was at home with children of pre-school age (see section 6.6.1).

> "*The only piece of advice that I've said to Jade: 'I would like to offer you, whether you take it on board or not, is that when you choose whatever you are going to do for an occupation, try and choose something that will fit in with children, if you do choose to have children'.*" (Ginny, mother)

This message would be very important in the development of daughters' gender role attitudes because if the mother held traditional gender role attitudes she would pass these on to her daughter. Daughters might internalise their mothers' attitudes about childcare because they saw these attitudes being realised in the practice of their mother's daily life e.g. staying at home to raise a family.

Not all mothers claimed to have had a message that they wished to convey to their daughters. For some mothers the message was that 'there was no message'.

"We always abide by our children's decisions. We don't like to push them into anything they don't want to do." (Ruth, mother)

"I've tried to actually sort of discuss with her things about her life but the decision has always had to be hers. I just think that as a person you should be entitled to make your decisions." (Irene, mother)

6.7.1.1   Receptivity To The Message

Although a mother may have a message that she wished to pass on to her daughter about the value of education it did not necessarily mean that her daughter would listen to the message and act upon it. She may not have heard the message or she may have heard it but then rejected it.

Some mothers thought that if the message were repeated often enough the daughter would have to acknowledge it.

"Well I've said it often enough [do your best].*"* (Grace, mother)

Mothers believed that, even though the daughters did not acknowledge what they were saying, daughters were listening and complying with the message, either wholly or to preferred bits.

"I think she probably would have taken it on board." (Steph, mother)

"Perhaps just the bits she wants to (laughs).*"* (Val, mother)

At times daughters not only listened to their mothers but also appreciated and thanked them. Kirsty was not revising for her GCSEs so her mother put pressure on her to do so and reiterated the importance of the qualifications.

"I can remember her thanking me for putting on so much pressure. She got her results and she said 'thank you for making me do it, thank you for pushing me',

because she knew jolly well she wasn't working hard enough." (Colleen, mother)

Some mothers believed that daughters did listen to the message but preferred to pretend that they themselves had come to such conclusions about education.

"*Yes even if at the time she made out she didn't, she would go away and think about it and then a little while later she'd come and bring the subject up herself. And then we would probably talk about it more calmly (laughs). So yes she listened.*" (Angie, mother)

"*I think she does but she doesn't always want to give you the impression that she's listened to you.*" (Sharon, mother)

"*She wouldn't like to admit it but yes I think she does. She takes my advice but she'd like you to think that she's working it out by herself.*" (Ingrid, mother)

In these instances daughters did not want their mothers to realise how important their opinions were to them instead wishing to appear independent.

Some mothers, however, felt that their daughters did not listen to them. This was not because the mother was a 'woman' but because she was their 'mother'. Although the mother-daughter relationship was very important for certain areas e.g. giving encouragement and support throughout schooling, a mother's opinion was neither sought nor acknowledged and here the mother-daughter relationship seemed quite weak.

"*I don't think that they do. No I don't think children do.*" (Irene, mother)

"*We're the last people they take advice from, us* [parents]." (Mabel, mother)

"*I don't think so. I don't think so...usually by comments of 'whatever mum'.*" (Marilyn, mother)

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Quinn (2004, as discussed in section 2.1) argued that mothers passed on strong messages about learning and knowledge to their daughters and these messages could have a "deep and pervasive influence". My findings reflected this because the mothers in my sample had strong views about their children's education and, in most cases, had a strong message that they wished to pass on to their daughters. Often this message was a result of the mothers' own educational experiences and any regrets that they may have had about their own schooling.

Mothers wished for their daughters a 'better chance in life' because they realised that the labour market was very competitive and that to succeed one needed to be qualified. Mothers were quite adamant in their message to their daughters that education led to qualifications that led to better jobs. Education and formal qualifications were the necessary route and acquisitions to long-term security. They aided entry into the labour market and allowed women to pursue jobs and careers that offered better wages, working conditions and prospects and ultimately a better standard of living.

Mothers viewed education and qualifications as essential for their daughters. Qualifications could help to guard against an uncertain future because mothers feared that their daughters might face particular problems in later life (for example, being a single mother). Such problems could be reduced or eradicated by the security of sound academic, practical or vocational qualifications.

My research revealed the importance of the mother-daughter relationship and the influence the mother had via her spoken/unspoken message about the value of

education and the long-term benefits to be gained from it. Messages not only revealed the mothers' opinions about the value of education but also their beliefs about the role of women in society, the opportunities they believed were now available to their daughters, their views of marriage and motherhood and ideas about the concepts of 'choice' and 'independence'.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS – DAUGHTERS

7.1   The Purpose Of School And Education

Sue Lees (1993, as discussed in section 2.3) analysed girls' attitudes towards school and developed four possible strategies that girls could be pursuing towards the school and its role in their lives. I believed that if girls, who were undertaking their education currently, intended to succeed in the world of employment then they must be 'pro-learning' (irrespective of whether they were 'pro-school' or 'anti-school'). I found that the daughters in my sample were very 'pro-learning' and tended to fall into Lees' category of 'academic and pro-school' as they were eager to gain formal qualifications, did not intend to 'rush into marriage' and viewed education realistically and talked in terms of having a career. The daughters did seem to express an enthusiasm for learning. Although there were daughters that wanted to leave school at the earliest opportunity they did not wish to abandon their education – instead they wished to go to college to gain specific qualifications (usually vocational ones). A few daughters did regard school as a place that was attended for mainly social reasons however they still valued education and the importance of qualifications.

The daughters in the sample were asked about the role of a school in society. The following table shows the responses given by the daughters when asked 'what is the purpose of school?'.

Table 11 – Daughters – The Purpose Of School

	DAUGHTERS	
Formal Education And Qualifications		
General education	40	
To learn to read and write	5	
To gain qualifications	4	
To learn and gain knowledge (including learning about themselves)	2	
TOTAL		51
Skills Required For Later Employment		
Preparation for gaining employment	16	
To learn the skills needed for later life – preparation for the future	15	
TOTAL		31
Social Education		
To be socially capable – mix with their peers	25	
To integrate and communicate with all people (races and religions etc)	2	
TOTAL		27
For Better Opportunities In Later Life		
To be able to have a better life later on	3	
To have choice in later life	2	
TOTAL		5
To Benefit Society		
To be able to conform to society	3	
Learn right from wrong and moral responsibilities	2	
TOTAL		5

Just like their mothers the daughters submitted the category of 'formal education and qualifications' as the main purpose of school. But nearly twice as many daughters as mothers felt that a school's main purpose was purely to offer a 'general education'.

Whereas mothers had valued the 'social education' that school provided as the second most popular category, for daughters it was the skills learned at school that would equip them for later life that was next important. As Cullingford (2002, see section 2.3) argued pupils perceived the underlying purpose of school as to prepare them for the next stage in life, once compulsory schooling has ended, by supplying them with qualifications and skills.

"*To get an education so you can get a good job*". (Simone, daughter)

"*To me it was just a starting point to get you on to further education.*" (Georgia, daughter)

"*To learn social skills and practical skills that you wouldn't learn at home. Ready for a career eventually.*" (Chelcie, daughter)

The daughters believed that education was simply the mechanism by which children were prepared for their future employment – schools taught children what they would need in order to gain a job. They believed that the labour market and the world of employment were going to be competitive and only the educated would truly succeed. They were fully aware that should they leave school without any qualifications they would be destined to work for the rest of their lives in badly paid, unskilled jobs.

"*So you can get a decent job. It used to be that if you had GCSEs you'd get a good job, but then everybody seemed to be doing 'A' levels, so now you need to go to university to increase your options. To get a better job. It's just the way of life.*" (Charlotte, daughter)

"*We've got more options, we've got more choices and you need an education to do any job. A few people keep saying 'oh just join the army, you don't need an education for that' but you do. You still need certain grades to go into the army. Every job needs some qualifications to get into it and if you didn't go to school you're not going to get the qualifications until later on in life and by that time you'll have wasted a lot of time when you could have been working at a job that you were good at and that you enjoyed.*" (Carrie, daughter)

The third most important category was the 'social education' aspect of school. Daughters acknowledged and recognised that at school they were able to interact with their peers and gain the required social skills that would be needed in later life.

"*Mixed sex schools are good because you get to learn how to communicate with everybody. I don't agree with single-sex schools because it seems that you're cut off from...say if I went to the girls' school I'd be almost permanently*

cut-off from the lads and I think that's an important part of growing up." (Danielle, daughter)

And in the same way that mothers valued education as a means to an end – that of providing the daughter with the academic qualifications and skills needed to secure good employment with greater monetary benefits – so, too, did the daughters. Education was valued and perceived to be the route to greater life chances. Daughters knew what their mothers had experienced during their education and what it had led to in adult life and, in some cases, the daughters now wished to achieve more than their mothers had done. The way to a better standard of living etc was through a formal education.

> "*Hopefully to get a good job and come out of it a bit better than they did [parents]. My mum always wanted us to work a bit harder cos she didn't so for the fact that we can learn from her mistakes*." (Annabel, daughter)

Therefore, for daughters the main purposes of school/education were very utilitarian: to gain a formal education, to be prepared for future employment and to learn the skills needed for future life and to become socially capable.

7.1.1 Parental Encouragement And Support

Having seen in section 6.1.1 that mothers acknowledged that the amount of parental support or lack of parental support had influenced their own relationships with their daughters, an analysis was undertaken as to how anxious they had been, as perceived by the daughters, about their daughter's performance at school.

Of the 50 daughters who responded to the question about parental anxiety, it was found that 18 daughters believed that their parents had been anxious that they

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performed well, a further 17 believed their parents had been 'fairly anxious' and another 5 felt that their parents had been 'very anxious'.

> "*Yeah, I think they have been anxious that I do well. I think if I'd got all Ds and Es in my GCSEs they would have been gutted* (laughs)." (Jeanette, daughter)

Only 10 daughters claimed that parents had not appeared to be anxious – instead making the usual caveat that the parents had been more interested in the daughter's welfare and happiness and that she had 'tried her best'.

> "*They're just happy at the end of the day if I've done the best that I can.*" (Emma, daughter)

> "*Not anxious no, just to do the best I could.*" (Tess, daughter)

Of those parents who were anxious about their daughter's performance, the anxiety appeared to be manifested in one of two ways: anxiety that the daughter should not waste her intelligence and be seen to squander the opportunities that education could afford her and anxiety that the daughter should have better opportunities than the parents had had and would eventually gain 'more out of life'. Anxiety did not appear to be related to gaining a 'good job'.

> "*I think they were quite anxious. My dad used to say to me 'you know, you are intelligent, you should do well' so I think they were quite anxious that I reached my potential.*" (Kirsty, daughter)

> "*I think my dad were quite anxious because he always said that he wanted me to do well and get what I wanted out of life. And my mum were pretty much the same.*" (Laura, daughter)

> "*I just think they wanted me to have different opportunities. Like they didn't have when they were younger.*" (Kesia, daughter)

Daughters realised that their parents were anxious about academic performance and results and that because of this they 'pushed' and 'put pressure on'.

> "*Very anxious (laughs). They've pushed and shoved all the way (laughs) 'Get on with your homework' and 'GCSEs – you can only take them once'.*" (Tara, daughter)

However, on the whole this was appreciated and demonstrated that parents, particularly mothers, cared. It also meant that daughters put effort into their school work and desired good grades in their examinations.

> "*I think they wanted me to do well. I've got a friend and their mum and dad weren't bothered about their schooling or anything, so it made her not bother. But I think cos my mum and dad were bothered about me and wanted me to do well then I think that's probably why I have.*" (Fay, daughter)

Another salient feature to be emphasised was that daughters were acutely aware of their mothers' achievements or lack of success during their own schooling. In particular, if the mother had not been academically competent then daughters realised that this was a driving spur by the mothers for the daughters to achieve. If the mother had 'failed' then she certainly wanted her daughter to 'achieve'.

> "*Very anxious. Because she didn't do very well. She left school very early and she's had to go back into education now for her career.*" (Molly, daughter)

> "*Because she never took her exams.*" (Leigh, daughter)

Overwhelmingly the daughters in the sample claimed that their mothers had given much support and encouragement during the daughter's schooling. This support was divided into two types: practical support and emotional support.

The practical support that mothers offered their daughters included: assistance with homework and coursework; help with proofreading and revision; liaising with

teachers and attending parents' evenings; providing transport to and from extra-curricular activities and providing financial support when needed.

However, it was the emotional support that a mother gave her daughter that was greatly acknowledged and appreciated. It was here that the mother-daughter relationship was at its strongest. All the daughters were grateful to their mothers for the support and encouragement that they were given.

> "*If anything has gone wrong, she's always been there to help me pick up the pieces and she's always tried to sort it out and help me. She's just been brilliant really*." (Tanya, daughter)

Almost one-half of the daughters talked about the general encouragement that their mothers had supplied such as giving words of advice or reassurance when things did not go well e.g. poor results in a test or examination. Daughters mentioned how their mothers always encouraged them to 'do their best' and were proud of the daughter's achievements.

> "*She has always tried to push us and told us to do our best. She has encouraged us all the way through*." (Toni, daughter)

> "*She's always been proud of what I've done, never criticised me. I always thought that if I did something wrong she'd always still love me*." (Justine, daughter)

Many daughters talked of their mothers 'always being there' with their emotional support and this sometimes included physical support e.g. always being at home at the end of the school day to welcome the daughter and to enquire about the day's happenings.

> *"She's here most of the time when I come back from school. She always wanted to be there so that I could tell her everything that had happened at school."* (Natasha, daughter)

Talking with their mothers in general or about specific problems was also a form of support that daughters welcomed. And it was in the context of talking to each other that some daughters viewed their mothers as their best friends.

> *"We talk about things a lot."* (Kerry, daughter)

> *"She's more like a friend, me mum, she's not like me mum, she's like a friend and she's always dead easy to get on with so she's always been there for me, no matter what."* (Nadia, daughter)

Again daughters were aware of their mother's own schooling and education and appreciated why mothers were keen that their daughters did well academically.

> *"She never got the opportunity to do it [take examinations] and obviously she's regretted it, you know, cos she did it when she was older. I think she wants us to have what she didn't really so she encourages you to really press on with it really."* (Kelly, daughter)

The daughters were grateful to their mothers and it was the strength of the mother-daughter relationship and the support, reassurance and encouragement it supplied that gave the daughters comfort and allowed them to keep persevering with their studies and education.

> *"It's wonderful, there is nothing she wouldn't do to better my education, nothing. And it makes me feel good. It makes me feel that it is important for me to get all these things."* (Holly, daughter)

Undoubtedly the mothers in the sample offered a copious amount of support and encouragement to their daughters that was readily accepted and appreciated. Both mothers and daughters placed a value upon education, realising its worth for future

careers and ultimately lifestyles. Due to the mothers' own personal experiences they were anxious and willing to assist their daughters by providing them with innumerable practical and emotional support wherever and whenever needed. They helped keep their daughters motivated during the stressful times of examinations or general times of ennui. By 'being there' and talking things through the mothers gave their daughters the assistance and succour needed to help them achieve academic success and set challenging, yet realistic, educational goals and aspirations.

7.2   Decision-Making - Choice Of Subjects At Age 14

Decision-making with regard to subject choice took place at the age of 14 for the daughters in the sample. The formal qualifications to be taken were GCSEs. Obviously, the number of overall passes gained in these qualifications (and in particular at grades A*-C) and the subjects studied were important factors for determining entry into particular areas of the labour market, career progression and ultimately standard of living.

The daughters were asked about the procedures that were followed at the end of Year 9 when they had to select the GCSE subjects that they would study in Years 10 and 11. The results demonstrated the wide variation that occurred within schools. The table below shows that six daughters attended a school where there was a set curriculum in place and no choice was permitted. The rest of the sample was given a choice ranging from 2 subjects up to 6 subjects to select.

Table 12 – Daughters – Number Of Subjects Available To Select For GCSE

	Number of Daughters (60 in total)
Curriculum set by the school	6
2 subjects to be chosen	5
3 subjects to be chosen	15
4 subjects to be chosen	22
5 subjects to be chosen	10
6 subjects to be chosen	2

Due to the fact that there was such a variation between schools as to the number of subjects that needed to be selected it did make an analysis of the figures quite difficult because girls attending one comprehensive school were not being offered the same subjects or number of selections as girls from another comprehensive school. When a girl was only required to select 2 or 3 subjects the school had already made a decision about what other subjects would be studied. Compulsory subjects imposed by a school tended to be languages or a design and technology subject that was usually determined by the resources available within the school. Thus schools were imposing quite a tight curriculum on their pupils.

7.2.1 Constraints Upon The Decision-Making Process

The process for subject selection was quite uniform. Every daughter (except the 6 following a set curriculum) was presented with subjects arranged into categories ('option blocks') and choices had to be made from these blocks. For example, textiles, resistant materials, food technology, CDT, control technology, graphic design, electronics, and design and realisation would all appear under the heading for 'design and technology' (or as many as a school was resourced to offer). Therefore, some combinations of subject choices were logistically impossible, for example, a choice to study textiles (a traditional, female oriented subject) would be

at the expense of resistant materials (a traditional, male oriented subject). Administrative expediency on behalf of schools permitted some combinations in the option process but not others thus reducing daughters' 'freedom of choice' in some cases. For daughters who were already considering future careers this could have an impact. Ella, who knew from an early age that she wanted to pursue some form of childcare e.g. nursery nursing, being a nanny or working with children in a hospital, was unable to study both childcare and food technology – both subjects that were desirable for her future career.

> "*I wanted to do food technology but wasn't allowed to do it because we could only like…because that came under the childcare category as well. There was like three different subjects, childcare, food technology and I think there was woodwork [resistant materials], and we could only do one of them. And I would have liked to have done food technology because it's about food, which obviously I'll be doing with kids, giving them meals if I did nannying…but I couldn't do that because I'd chosen childcare.*" (Ella, daughter)

Such timetable constraints could disadvantage girls because it prevented them from taking subjects that could offer more employment opportunities in the future.

A constraint upon subject choice was the number of teachers qualified to teach a particular subject. If a girl attended a small village school her choice would be quite limited.

> "*We didn't have a lot of choice really. It was like either CDT or art, then the next one was art or food technology and the next one was geography or history. So we didn't really have a lot of choice. Cos our school was such a small school we didn't have a lot of teachers that taught in other areas, we only had those specific areas.*" (Dawn, daughter)

Another constraint upon subject choice was the size of teaching groups. On occasions schools would have more pupils opting for a subject than they were able

to cater for due to resource limitations e.g. number of computers available in a classroom, limited seating etc. Although it would be preferable to encourage some pupils to change their selections because too many had chosen a particular subject quite often these decisions were made by the school with no pupil involvement.

> "…*all that is governed by how many people choose to go where because in the end they just end up splitting you anyway. Because I wanted to do food, but I ended up in textiles because they had too many people that wanted to do food. We were just told in the end. We wrote down on sheets what we wanted to do and then we were told what we were doing. The teachers decided presumably.*" (Holly, daughter)

It was interesting to note that Holly was unable to study food technology and was moved into textiles (another traditional female oriented subject) rather than into resistant materials or control technology. As Holly commented, this was a narrow-minded move by the school:

> "*I was a bit annoyed that I ended up having to do textiles because I'm useless at it.*" (Holly, daughter)

The school had assumed that Holly selected food technology because it was a female oriented subject rather than the fact that she chose it because she enjoyed it and felt she was capable of studying it. By transferring Holly into a class to do a subject that she thought she had no ability at and did not enjoy it was making it harder for her to remain motivated for two years and to achieve success in her final examination. Therefore, by placing her into another female oriented subject without consultation they may have denied her the opportunity to acquire a qualification that could assist her future employability. When subjects were denied to girls it could lead to differentiation in society at a later date.

7.2.2 Parental Involvement In The Decision-Making Process

During the decision-making process of selecting subjects to study for GCSE it was found that the overwhelming majority of daughters made such decisions alone. Only in 4 cases did decision-making occur jointly with parents.

> "*Well I sat down with mum cos dad worked more when I was at school, and she like went through cos we were given a list of what we could do and she thought business studies, she was a big influence on business studies.*" (Kesia, Daughter)

Although parents may have got anxious about their daughter's education and her ability to make important decisions, it was found that parents did let their daughters make their own decisions with regard to choice of subject.

> "*They didn't have a problem with it, they left it up to me. They said if that's what I want to do they were behind me one hundred percent.*" (Ella, daughter)

Although Ball (1981, as discussed in section 3.1) found that parents had a profound influence on decision-making amongst his sample of pupils to the extent that sometimes parents made the final decision about subject choice for their children, and even insisted on a particular combination of subjects that was against the child's own wishes, these were not the findings of my research study. In only one instance did a mother 'demand' that a certain subject be chosen.

> "*The only issue we had on any of the topics with the girls was drama. I wanted them to do English Literature, they wanted to do drama. And I felt English Literature would be a better subject to have under your belt. But that was the only subject I can honestly say that I had any influence on.*" (Tina, mother – all of Tina's daughters studied English literature rather than drama.)

Parents allowed their daughters to make the decisions. However, this may have been due to the introduction of the National Curriculum and thus parents believed

that the important subjects had already been made compulsory e.g. science. In addition, a modern foreign language had to be studied along with ICT and a design and technology subject. Therefore, parents were content to allow their daughters to select which particular foreign language, or which design and technology subject, to study.

"*I spoke to them about it and they were quite happy.*" (Melissa, daughter)

Parental involvement in the decision-making process for subject choice at 14 tended to consist of performing a reassuring role – the daughter would show her subject choices to her parents and they would agree although they had not really been involved in the decision-making process. Some daughters did not even consult their parents about subject choice during this process.

Woods (1979, as discussed in section 3.1) found that during this period of decision-making many parents gave general advice such as "do those subjects you're best at" or "do those subjects you want to". These were common findings amongst my sample of daughters. Their parents wanted them to select subjects that they enjoyed and that they felt they were capable of and had a good ability at. These factors, hopefully, would then ensure that daughters would be content to learn in lessons and have success in their final examinations.

"*To think of my strong points and what I enjoyed. . .what subjects I enjoyed so I knew which ones to pick.*" (Evie, daughter)

"*Because she wanted to [take those subjects] we tried to encourage her. You know, since it's her choice and if she thinks she's capable and there isn't anything any better that she could do then if she's happy to do that then so are we. We just tried to encourage her.* " (Janice, mother)

Therefore, it is argued that daughters' decisions about subject choice at 14 tended to be made in isolation. Consultation did not occur with parents – they were only needed for reassurance once the decision-making had taken place. For their own part parents were happy to leave such decision-making to their daughters – having faith and trust in the daughter's perception of her own ability and performance and happy for her to select the subjects she felt she was best at or enjoyed the most. Furthermore, it was found that any expectations by the school were not considered – it was the daughter's own decision as to the selection of subjects.

7.2.3 Subjects Selected

The following table shows the subjects chosen by the 54 daughters who were offered a choice of subject at age 14.

Table 13 – Daughters – Subjects Selected For GCSE

SUBJECTS THAT WERE SELECTED (54 daughters selected a total of 205 subjects)			
Humanities		**Languages**	
History	30	French	18
Geography	23	German	10
English Literature	3	Spanish	6
R.E.	2	Classics/Latin	2
Computing/Business		**Technology**	
Business Studies	14	Food Technology	7
Office Applications	8	CDT	6
Computing Studies/ICT	3	Textiles	6
		Resistant Materials	2
		Graphic Design	2
		Electronics	1
Expressive Arts		**Sciences**	
Art	24	Chemistry	2
Drama	8	Physics	2
Music	4	Biology	1
Dance	3		
Others			
Childcare	7		
Sociology/Social Sciences	6		
Media Studies	3		
P.E.	2		

When the National Curriculum was introduced in 1988 one of its objectives was to give girls the opportunity to gain qualifications that would equip them for a much wider range of jobs. The National Curriculum restricted choice because a standardised compulsory set of subjects had to be taken. This restriction of pupils' choice of subjects was meant to reduce gender differentiation as it prevented girls from being able to opt out of traditionally male areas of the curriculum such as technical and scientific subjects. Whereas before its introduction girls would have had to have selected chemistry, physics or biology as separate subject options, now

science was compulsory and most schools offered the 'dual award' where all three disciplines were combined. Only in a few instances were the science disciplines still separated and girls had to choose such subjects.

An analysis of the figures showed that 21 daughters selected history, 14 daughters selected geography and 9 daughters chose both these subjects. As 44 (82%) daughters had selected these subjects it would suggest a very limited choice of alternative subjects offered against history or geography in that particular 'option block' and that schools were channelling pupils into either (or both) of these subjects. Other very popular subjects amongst the daughters were art, French, business studies and German.

It had been argued that girls may feel the need to assert their sexual identity via their subject choice. In the past girls tended to rejects the physical sciences and vocationally oriented subjects that related to the trades because they were perceived as being 'masculine' subjects which led to 'male' jobs. Girls wanted to pursue subjects such as the arts, languages, social sciences and home economics (see Wolpe, 1974, section 3.1). Although, as previously stated, it was difficult to make valid judgements about this data due to the wide variation of subjects on offer at different schools, it was found that traditional gendered subjects such as the languages and arts were still popular amongst girls. However, business studies proved more popular than the traditionally female 'office applications' (formerly 'office skills') with the girls.

At the time of interviewing it was compulsory for the daughters to study a design and technology subject. Some daughters were not given a choice as to the subject taken due to resource restrictions or lack of facilities within the school. Of those who could select their technology subject it was found that traditional gendered subjects were still popular: food technology and textiles were the most popular along with CDT (traditionally a 'male' subject).

One daughter, Carrie, selected a design and technology subject not considered appropriate to her gender and then had problems that put her under pressure and caused anxiety.

> "*I originally took electronics as my choice but I was the only girl and the guys [male pupils] were a bit 'iffy' about it. The teacher was really great and he gave me all the support I needed but when it boiled down to it…I didn't really understand it as much. And I figured I'd get a better grade in graphic design than I would in electronics. And I'd be accepted more in graphic design [there were girls in the graphic design class]. There was originally another girl in electronics but she left the first day, she just didn't like it.*" (Carrie, daughter)

Carrie felt that it was the boys' attitude that had made her leave and transfer to another subject.

> "*I would definitely have stuck it a bit longer but I may have still moved because I didn't get it as much, cos I did struggle with it. Because when I did P.E. before I took my choices, for a year and a half, I was the only girl playing football and that didn't bother me. But for some reason they were a bit 'iffy'.*" (Carrie, daughter)

It was found that boys were content to let Carrie be the only girl to play football (something that can be seen as a leisure pursuit) but the same boys were not as tolerant when she wanted to study electronics (a subject considered a 'boy's subject' leading to a 'man's job'). It was possible that they were reluctant to witness a girl

studying and achieving a qualification that could lead to a job in a competitive field that they had traditionally seen as their domain.

Such attitudes and pressure from boys could lead to girls disliking male-dominated subjects and preferring not to select them. Problems could occur if girls in lower years heard that Carrie left because of the boys' attitudes, because they then may have decided not to take the risk of selecting a subject such as electronics and Carrie's experience would have served as a deterrent for other girls. If girls then opted for the 'safe haven' of food technology or textiles then the gender segregation of subjects would continue.

7.2.3.1 Reasons For Selection Of Subjects

Subjects that were going to be studied for GCSE should have been selected on a pupil's abilities, interests and personality. John Abraham (1995, as discussed in section 3.1) categorised the reasons for subject option into nine different types.

1. liking for subject

2. dislike of other subjects

3. usefulness for career

4. good ability at the subject

5. poor ability at other subjects

6. liking for teachers

7. dislike for teachers

8. desire to be with friends

9. new subject

Using this as a basis I analysed the primary reason for subject option and found the following:

Table 14 – Daughters – Reason For Selection Of Subject For GCSE

Primary Reason For Selection Of Subject	
1. Liking for subject	71
2. Dislike of other subjects	31
3. Usefulness for career (+ to acquire new skills)	29
4. Good ability at the subject	26
5. Poor ability at other subjects	9
6. Liking for teachers	0
7. Dislike for teachers	0
8. Desire to be with friends	6
9. New subject (that sounded interesting)	33
	205 subjects selected

I found that the primary reason for subject selection could fall into one of seven categories. When deciding upon subjects to study a lot of factors could have an effect. One daughter described clearly the decision-making process involved in the selection of her 5 options of geography, CDT, German, art and media studies.

> "*I chose geography because I didn't like history. CDT – I picked that because I didn't get on very well with textiles and I just wasn't interested. And I didn't want to choose cooking [food technology] because it's too easy and I don't think cooking's very important. I chose German because I didn't like French. I was doing really well at German actually when I was in the third year, before I was about to start my GCSEs. And in French I was just doing averagely so I thought 'I'll go towards German then'. Art – I was quite pleased with the art, I quite liked that. Media studies – it was against things like drama and I didn't fancy that. It just didn't sort of appeal to me at the time. And I thought media studies sounded quite interesting. I thought 'I'll have a go at that, it sounds quite good really'.*" (Kelly, daughter)

Analysis of the results found that the main reason for selection of a subject was that the daughters liked and enjoyed that particular subject. This, coupled with having a good ability at the subject, was very important because it would help to guarantee examination success. When girls studied a subject that they liked they would want to

learn, would find it easier to do any associated coursework and to revise for final examinations.

Daughters in the sample showed that they were prepared to take the risk of trying a new subject – something that sounded interesting. Another popular reason was the perception that a subject could be useful for a future career or that a subject could teach desired skills. Office applications and ICT were mentioned as subjects that would equip the daughter with skills that could be utilised in the future. It was found that, even at this stage in their schooling, daughters were considering their future career aspirations and were equipping themselves with the skills and qualifications that would aid them at a later date.

The worrying aspect to emerge from an analysis of the results was the number of subjects (15%) that were chosen purely because they were seen as "the best out of a bad lot". When subjects were categorised into 'option blocks' with only a limited choice of subjects on offer girls found that they were selecting subjects to study because of their dislike for the alternatives. Further analysis of the 40 subjects that had been chosen due to 'a dislike of the other subjects on offer' or because of a perception of 'poor ability at other subjects' was conducted. It was found that 23 of these subjects were viewed as a 'positive choice' (e.g. "of those on offer this was the subject that I preferred") whilst 17 of these subjects were viewed as a 'negative choice' (e.g. "I only took this subject because I really disliked the other subjects and I wasn't prepared to study any of them").

Although girls believed that during this time of decision-making they should select the subjects that they enjoyed, were good at or that could prove useful for future careers, quite often the limited nature of the 'option blocks' forced them into selecting subjects that were seen as "the best out of a bad lot". One daughter commented that her mother suggested that she:

"*Choose the ones that you like and you're best at.*" (Sophie, daughter)

However, the following remarks show that most of the subjects she selected were due to the poor alternatives on offer.

- *[French] I don't know, I just preferred the language in preference to German and I think it's because I'd been to France more than Germany really.*
- *[Business Studies] It was a new one, I hadn't done it before and it interested me and also I didn't want to do German, you know, the options that were given, were P.E., and German, so I did business studies.*
- *[Art] I quite liked it and again I didn't like the other options available.*
- *[Geography] I didn't like history and I found it boring (laughs). I don't know...I think I was better at history than geography but I didn't really like it. I suppose it was a bit of a negative choice.*
- *[Graphic Design] Yeah, I just thought that was interesting...I think sometimes it was the best of bad choices but other times, like French, I chose it because I did like it more.*" (Sophie, daughter)

Selecting so many subjects that were considered a 'negative choice' made it harder for a girl to remain motivated within the classroom, achieve examination success and then wish to pursue such subjects to a higher level.

Friendship groups were not considered important. Girls were happy to select a subject even if their friends were not taking it. In addition, the influence of teachers was not considered an important reason for selecting a subject. Although liking or disliking a teacher might have some influence in the decision-making process, it was

never quoted by a daughter as being the main reason for selecting (or not selecting) a subject.

The analysis of the reasons for subject choice revealed that no daughter remarked that a particular subject was considered 'a girl's subject' or 'a boy's subject'. They did not comment that they thought any subjects were appropriate for their gender and that was the reason for selection. Although they may have selected subjects that were considered traditional 'female subjects' such as childcare, this was not the reason why.

Although most mothers in my sample had followed a set curriculum and therefore subject choice had been quite limited and usually gendered – the inclusion of needlework and home economics on the timetable – it could be assumed that they would want to ensure that their daughters had a wide range of subjects to choose from and would want to be involved in the decision-making process. However, it was determined that mothers were content to let their daughters undergo the decision-making process alone and to take full responsibility for the selection of the subjects to be studied. Although mothers may be anxious about their daughters' education (see section 7.1.1) and want them to perform well at school they were happy to allow the daughters to make their own decisions with regard to choice of subject. This may have been due to the introduction of the National Curriculum leading mothers to believe that the important subjects had already been made compulsory e.g. science. In addition, a modern foreign language had to be studied along with ICT and a design and technology subject. Therefore, mothers were content to allow their daughters to select which particular foreign language, or which design and

technology subject, to study. The mothers' involvement in this stage of decision-making tended to consist of performing a reassuring role – agreeing with the daughter's choice of subjects. Mothers tended to give general advice such as "do those subjects you're best at" or "do those subjects you want to" thus ensuring that daughters would be content to learn in lessons and be successful in their final examinations. So it was found that the mothers' own educational experiences did not have any influence upon the daughters' decision-making at this stage in their schooling.

7.3 Decision-Making – Leaving School At The Earliest Opportunity And The Influence Of Marriage And Motherhood

As seen in section 6.3.1 34 of the 60 mothers in the sample had left school at the earliest opportunity. This was in stark contrast with the situation concerning the daughters in the sample as only 2 left school at 16 (Josie and Isabelle). The remaining 58 either proceeded into further education or had the intention of doing so when they finally reached the end of Year 11. I analysed the situations surrounding Josie and Isabelle to determine why they decided to leave at 16.

Josie's decision to leave school was based purely on the desire to begin work in her chosen career. She had always wanted to be a hairdresser and left school to become one. This was against her father's wishes but he did not prevent her from pursuing this career. During the decision-making process Josie did talk with her parents but ultimately the decision was her own.

"My dad wasn't...about hairdressing…because of the money." (Josie, daughter)

"She's always known what she's wanted to do. She's always wanted to do hairdressing and that's what she's doing. Her father would have liked her to go to university. When we went to the open nights at [name of comprehensive school] they said she was capable of staying on and doing 'A' levels and going to university, but again she wouldn't hear of it. She wanted to be a hairdresser and that's what she was going to be. And I suppose in a way we didn't put pressure on her because I had pressure put on me about that private school and hated it. And I'm a firm believer in do what you want to do and be happy. But funnily enough the school put pressure on us because they...when we came out of school on that parents' evening we felt that Josie was going to work in the gutter because hairdressing was a nothing job." (Hilary, mother of Josie)

It was found that Hilary wanted Josie to be happy at school and to do a job that she liked and enjoyed. Hilary herself had been sent to a private school and had hated it. She did not want Josie to be unhappy in the same way that she had been unhappy at school. However, it was interesting to note the stance of Josie's school. It did not approve of a pupil with the capability of going into the sixth form, and then on to university, leaving to become a hairdresser. Part of this attitude would be due to funding issues as schools receive monies for every pupil that enters the sixth form so the school would not have wanted Josie to leave. Although hairdressing could be seen as 'creative and glamorous' it could also be perceived as a job with limited career prospects, long working weeks and low wages.

Isabelle's decision to leave school was also based purely on the desire to begin work in her chosen career. She had decided from an early age that she wanted to do secretarial work and had selected office applications as a subject to study at age 14 because she was already considering her future career. Isabelle was interviewed just before the end of the academic year and she had already secured a job that

consisted of working for a firm for four days and attending college for one day. This meant she would be receiving a wage whilst still gaining qualifications.

Isabelle had discussed this job with her mother, Constance, who, though supportive, still hoped Isabelle might change her mind and pursue a career in childcare.

> "*Isabelle's adamant at the moment she wants to go into office work, she wants to do same as me and go into office work. But the child development I think would be a good step for her so if I could steer her towards that a little bit more then I will. But then again, if she wants to do the office work then I shall just tell her to go for all the qualifications she can.*" (Constance, mother of Isabelle)

However, Constance did mention that she thought Isabelle did not need to remain at school because this job would allow her to gain qualifications whilst earning a salary.

I then compared the reasons given by Josie and Isabelle with the reasons given by the mothers in the sample (see Table 6 in section 6.3.2). There were 5 categories in the table: no sixth form provision; experience of school; pull of the local labour market; family circumstances, and as an interim measure prior to training for employment. The 2 daughters would fit into the category of 'pull of the local labour market' but their reasons for leaving school to gain employment differed from the reasons submitted by mothers. Josie and Isabelle had jobs, and careers, in mind (which they had decided upon at an early age in life) and were actively seeking employment in these fields. In comparison mothers had secured employment because jobs were plentiful and many did not require formal qualifications. In some instances a part-time job had been converted into a full-time job, and for others the reason was to gain independence, a wage and recognition of being an adult. No mother claimed that she made the conscious decision to leave school to pursue a

job that she had been considering for some time. However, the only 2 daughters to leave school early had done so because they were very focused with their decision-making. They wanted to be able to gain qualifications whilst working and wished to embark upon their chosen careers immediately. Due to the nature of the jobs, (hairdressing and secretarial work with training and qualifications included), it made no practical or financial sense to remain any longer within education.

7.3.1 Attitudes Towards Marriage And Motherhood

Whilst no mother had claimed that she had left school early because she did not value education, believing that very soon she would become a housewife and then, ultimately, a mother, all of the mothers were aware of society's attitude that this was to be their role in life. This message had been delivered at home and within the school, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly.

However, I found that the experience at school for daughters was wholly different. They had been encouraged by their schools to think ahead throughout their education and to choose subjects and courses with a view to their future careers (especially the case for those daughters entering a sixth form). Not one daughter claimed that at any stage did a teacher ever make the suggestion that a girl's future was just marriage, (or living with someone), and motherhood. Girls were encouraged to study hard, gain qualifications and pursue their desired careers. The only criticism came from Laura who was dismayed at her school's attitude when a friend became pregnant and was not offered the opportunity to return at a later date to continue with her studies.

"When one of my friends fell pregnant, they were like 'that's it, she's gone'. They didn't even think about options, or GCSEs. I think it was bad in that respect." (Laura, daughter)

At home daughters were all encouraged to consider careers, to proceed to further education and, where appropriate, to continue to higher education. They believed that they would work for most of their lives and this was the reason why education was so highly valued. The girls identified careers, not low paid jobs, for their futures. They put a high priority on developing a career before considering marriage and children.

7.4   Decision-Making – Education After Compulsory Schooling

An analysis was completed with regard to the education undertaken by the daughters once their formal schooling had ended

7.4.1 Progression To Further Education

Since the mid-1980s the trend had been for more young people to stay on at school after compulsory school age, or participate in other forms of education and training. 58 out of the 60 daughters in my study had stayed on, or intended to stay on when they reached the age of 16, within the education system to proceed with further education. 37 daughters were studying, or intended to study, for their 'A' levels, whilst 15 daughters were following a vocational course.

7.4.1.1 Influences On Decision-Making

The majority of daughters claimed that they had made the decision to proceed with further education on their own. Only in rare instances did daughters claim it was a joint decision between themselves and their parents and only 2 daughters said that they had proceeded with further education primarily because their parents wanted them to.

The majority of daughters claimed that the preference of their parents had been for them to proceed with further education (either staying on at school in the sixth form or moving to a college of further education). In some cases this preference was not even made explicit – daughters knew that this was what parents desired.

An analysis of the daughters' perceptions of their parental support showed that it tended to be evenly divided into two:

- mothers who supported their daughter's decision whatever it may have been, either employment or further education (usually based on the grounds of 'as long as you're happy, then we're happy')

  "*My mum and dad supported me, said 'whatever you do then we'll be there'*." (Kesia, daughter)

  "*They were like 'if that's what you want…we're behind you one hundred percent'*." (Ella, daughter)

- mothers who actually insisted that their daughters remained at school or moved to college.

"My mum said 'sixth form, you have to go back'." (Danielle, daughter)

"They wanted me to stay on. I would have had to, I don't think they would have let me leave school at sixteen (laughs)." (Lottie, daughter)

So although the daughters felt they had made the decision themselves they did acknowledge that in some circumstances had they wanted to leave school at the earliest opportunity they would have faced resistance from their mothers.

These perceptions that the daughters held were compared to what the mothers had said in their interviews about the decision-making process that had occurred at the end of their daughters' compulsory schooling. It was found that one-third of the mothers in the sample claimed that as long as their daughter was happy any decision made was acceptable. Another one-third of the sample admitted that they had made it explicit that their daughter should proceed with further education (and this usually meant studying 'A' levels). The remaining one-third of mothers forwarded one of the following three reasons: progression into the sixth form (or to college) was just expected and therefore no discussions took place; that seeing as there were no suitable jobs in the local labour market for 16 years old with minimal qualifications it made sense for their daughter to continue with formal education or that they had actively encouraged their daughter to pursue a vocational course such as nursery nursing.

Although one-third of the mothers claimed that they would be happy with any decision made by their daughter as long as she was happy (either leaving school or remaining in education) some did then admit that should the daughter actually have

wanted to leave school to seek employment they would have resisted this move and tried to persuade her to remain.

> "*No. I'd have been a wreck if she had wanted to leave.*" (Penny, mother)

> "*I would have been disappointed I have to be honest. I would have been disappointed and found it quite difficult to actually get my head around it.*" (Tina, mother)

Very few of the mothers actually suggested to their daughters that they could seek employment if they wished.

> "*No! No way! They would never have said that!*" (Esme, daughter)

The reasons behind the desire for the daughter to pursue further education were mainly to gain qualifications (especially from those mothers who considered that their daughter was suitable for university), to avoid the alternative of settling for a lowly paid, unsatisfying job or to avoid the experiences that the mother had undergone. One mother, Lesley, described how she would have felt if her daughter had wanted to leave school at 16.

> "*I probably would've been horrified actually (laughs) because of the outcome of my life…I would have been pretty horrified. I just would have been very disappointed for her, I think. And worried that it could have stunted things for her, you know, in the same way it probably did for me.*" (Lesley, mother)

Although parents, and in particular mothers, were very influential during this period of decision-making it was found that schools were not considered such an important factor. The main influence that schools had was that many daughters mentioned that sixth forms operated an entry system that was usually based upon a certain number of GCSE subjects being achieved at grades A*-C. This could have a motivating effect in that girls worked harder pre-examination time to ensure that the entry

requirement was met or, as in the case of Paige below, to spur performance at a later date.

> "*I wanted to go into the 6th form and to go into the 6th form you needed 5 GCSEs grade A-C. When I went for my interview I only had a B, 2 Cs, an E and the rest were Ds. I went for my interview and the teacher actually turned round and said 'you're dreaming with them grades, you're a no-hoper'. I decided that 'fair enough, I'll show them, I'm going to do my 'A' levels at college'* (laughs)."
> (Paige, daughter)

Decision-making tended to be carried out in isolation with the daughter deciding whether she wanted to continue her education and, if so, at what type of academic institution. However, the decision to proceed with further education was always met with approval from the mother/parents. There was not a single case where the mother/parents had wished the daughter to seek employment at the earliest opportunity. In addition, although mothers might express the feeling that they would be happy whatever the daughter decided to do (and imply that this would include leaving education), in reality mothers wanted their children to continue with their education, whether it be 'A' levels or a vocational course. If the daughter had expressed a preference to leave education this would have been met with "disappointment", "horror" and "conflict".

As the acquisition of qualifications could determine possible career pathways and opportunities it was imperative to determine the reasons why girls opted to progress to further education.

Researchers had claimed that there was a range of factors that increased the attraction of continuing with education in order to gain qualifications.

The following table shows the reasons given by daughters for progressing to further education (a daughter could give more than one reason). Reasons 1-5 are reasons for progression discovered by Sharpe in her research (1976, as discussed in section 3.3.1). Reasons 6-11 are reasons for progression discovered by Francis in her research (2000a, as discussed in section 3.3.1). Reasons 12-17 are additional reasons for progression that were forwarded by the daughters in my sample.

Table 15 – Daughters – Reasons For Progressing To Further Education

1	To remain with friends	8
2	To gain qualifications	7
3	Enjoy school (know teachers, organisation etc)	5
4	Not feeling mature enough/unable to cope with independence	5
5	Fear of leaving the familiarity and protection of school life	1
6	Importance of being educated (education has a value)	1
7	Usefulness of education	1
8	Meritocracy (qualifications will lead to a good job)	1
9	Need qualification because so many are unemployed	1
10	Status and value of post-16 qualifications	0
11	Qualifications will help in a competitive labour market	0
12	To gain specific qualifications needed for a desired career	13
13	It was expected (no decision-making involved)	9
14	To proceed afterwards with Higher Education	8
15	No desire to enter the labour market	4
16	Past experience of jobs	2
17	To delay decision-making about jobs	1

The additional reasons for progression to further education that were forwarded by the daughters in my sample were examined.

Although it was found that 7 daughters made general comments about gaining qualifications (reason number 2) a further 13 daughters commented that they needed specific qualifications in order to pursue their desired career e.g. nursery

nursing qualifications, qualifications to become a fitness instructor, qualifications for a teaching career.

> "*I thought 'I want to work outside' and I thought 'that means I have to get 'A' levels, I have to go back to school' which made my mind up.*" (Danielle, daughter)

In addition, 8 daughters claimed that they had wanted to proceed with further education purely because they had a desire to go to university to gain a degree and knew that further education was the route that needed to be taken in order to achieve this goal.

Interestingly, 9 daughters felt that further education was just expected of them and there was no conscious decision-making at this point. Options were not discussed with their parents as it was a silent, tacit agreement between all parties, including the school, that the daughter would proceed into the sixth form.

> "*It wasn't really a decision actually. I just sort of carried on without realising it.*" (Justine, daughter)

> "*We didn't really talk about it. It was just the next stage really. I just followed it through. In my mind at school I finished at 18 not at 16. School to me was 'finish at 18'.*" (Cindy, daughter)

The labour market and the daughters' perceptions of it led to some remaining in education. Trying employment, albeit on a part-time basis, was enough to persuade 2 daughters that this route should be left until a later date.

> "*I'd worked through the summer, I'd worked in a factory and I'd had enough of it* (laughs*). Leave it for the summertime* (laughs)." (Imogen, daughter)

4 daughters simply did not want to have to start employment and if no suitable job could be thought of further education was a way of delaying this type of decision-making for another two years, at least.

"*I felt that I only had a few years left of childhood and I didn't want to start work until I really had to…which…some people see that as being lazy but, which in a way it is yeah, but I'd just left school, I didn't really want to go out and start working. It was a major jump for me*." (Carrie, daughter)

Daughters were viewing the sixth form or college as the necessary route to be taken in order to achieve the qualifications that were needed to enter university or pursue a particular career such as nursery nursing. The decision to stay on at school or move to college was not always discussed but was simply taken for granted. Further education was a necessity to achieve girls' aspirations.

If Table 15 above is rearranged to show the reasons forwarded for progressing to further education listed by popularity there are 6 clear patterns:

Table 16 – Daughters - Reasons For Progressing To Further Education By Popularity

To gain specific qualifications needed for a desired career	13
To proceed afterwards with Higher Education	8
To gain qualifications	7
It was expected (no decision-making involved)	9
To remain with friends	8
Enjoy school (know teachers, organisation etc)	5
Not feeling mature enough/unable to cope with independence	5
Fear of leaving the familiarity and protection of school life	1
No desire to enter the local labour market	4
Past experience of jobs	2
To delay decision-making about jobs	1
Importance of being educated (education has a value)	1
Meritocracy (qualifications will lead to a good job)	1
Need qualification because so many are unemployed	1
Usefulness of education	1
Status and value of post-16 qualifications	0
Qualifications will help in a competitive labour market	0

1.   to achieve qualifications (yellow shading)

   a. in general

   b. specific ones needed for a desired career

   c. ones needed to enter university

2.   to meet the expectations of themselves, their parents and the school (blue shading)

3.   to remain with friends (red shading)

4.   to be within the safe environment of a teaching institution (school or college) (green shading)

5.   to avoid the labour market (purple shading)

6.   the value of qualifications and/or an education (orange shading)

In contrast to the sample of mothers, it was found that friendship groups proved an important factor for daughters when considering their future. When friends intended to remain at school it became quite a decisive aspect in influencing decision-making and affecting whether a daughter left or stayed.

Although daughters within the sample did go to college, in particular to study vocational courses, I did find that for some daughters there was a great convenience

to be had in remaining at school. This was especially the case for daughters living in a country village. Rather than travel to the nearest town it was preferable to stay at the local school even if the choice of subjects was limited.

Another important area for consideration by the daughters was the familiarity and protection afforded by a sixth form. Girls stated that they knew the way the school was organised, knew the teachers, knew what resources would be available, and these factors made it an inviting prospect for another two years.

> "*Well I thought I don't wanna go straight out to work and you've got to fend for yourself and all that. I think it's pretty scary. I think you're too young…I think staying on has got a safer aspect to it. I mean you've still got someone kind of telling you what to do…you've still got the school behind you which kind of makes you feel better really*. (Olivia, daughter)

Whilst some girls did move to college to study a vocational course or to do their 'A' levels, college was still seen as a safer alternative to employment. Girls claimed that they did not feel mature enough or independent enough to seek employment and enter the labour market.

> "*I think at sixteen you're too young. You're still immature. I had no idea what I wanted to do. I don't think you can leave and start a job at sixteen*." (Chelcie, daughter)

The local labour market itself had an effect on daughters' decision-making. Girls were well aware of what was available to them should they leave at the earliest opportunity.

> "*I wanted to do more with my life. In [name of seaside resort] the main work is working in hotels either chamber-maiding or whatever or working in old people's homes and I knew that I wanted to do more with my life than that. There isn't much...not many opportunities in [name of seaside resort]. And because I still wasn't...I didn't know what I wanted to do so the longer you stay*

in education (laughs) you've got longer to make your mind up what you'd like to go and do." (Tess, daughter)

Whilst I agreed with Francis that it was the consideration of long-term career prospects that was now paramount within young girls' thinking my findings suggested that girls were more focused with their aspirations. Francis (2000a, as discussed in section 3.3.1) believed that further education was selected because girls placed a value upon education, that it would provide knowledge to aid decision-making, that it would assist in securing a good job, that qualifications would help in a competitive labour market and when there were high levels of youth unemployment. However, I would argue that girls saw further education as the 'stepping stone' to their desired career (which, in some cases, had been decided upon at a young age). Further education provided the qualifications needed to become a nursery nurse or a fitness instructor, or the 'A' levels required to enter university to become a lecturer, archaeologist or marine biologist. Girls were not choosing further education because qualifications might benefit them in the labour market at a future date but because they knew that in order to fulfil their aspirations and desires and to achieve their career goals they would need certain qualifications and they were pursuing these qualifications and/or courses with good reason.

7.4.1.2   Choice Of Course/Subjects Studied

Several decision-making processes occurred once it had been decided not to leave education to seek employment. Daughters needed to decide whether to select vocational courses or traditional academic ones and to decide which subjects to study.

It was found in section 3.1 that subject choice at GCSE level tended to be gendered with girls selecting subjects that were perceived as 'feminine' (languages and arts subjects) and boys selecting subjects that were perceived as 'masculine' (mathematics, science and technology subjects). This gendered split was even more pronounced at 'A' level (see section 3.3.1.1). Therefore, girls were favouring sociology, French, English Literature, biology, and art and design whilst boys were favouring physics, economics, mathematics, chemistry and geography.

The following table shows the 'A' levels selected by 37 daughters in the sample. The 'ticks' denote whether a subject would be considered a traditional 'feminine' subject or a traditional 'male' subject or one that could be taken by both sexes.

Table 17 – Daughters – 'A' Level Subjects Selected

'A' LEVEL SUBJECTS SELECTED (37 daughters selected a total of 115 subjects)		Male Subject	Female Subject
English Language or Literature or Combined	19		✓
Biology	11		✓
Art & Design (or related subject)	10		✓
Geography	10	✓	
General Studies	8	✓	✓
Business Studies	7	✓	
Mathematics	7	✓	
Sociology	7		✓
History	6		✓
Psychology	6		✓
Chemistry	5	✓	
French	5		✓
Economics	3	✓	
Computer Studies/I.T.	2	✓	
German	2		✓
Environmental Science	1	✓	
Law	1	✓	✓
Music	1		✓
Philosophy	1		✓
R.E.	1		✓
Spanish	1		✓
Theatre Studies	1		✓

Of the 'A' levels taken 62% would be considered traditional 'feminine' subjects, 30% would be considered traditional 'male' subjects and 8% are subjects traditionally taken by both sexes. It was interesting to note that no girl selected physics for 'A' level. Paechter (1998, as discussed in section 3.3.1.1) argued that subjects such as the physical sciences and mathematics were rejected by girls because they were seen as being 'masculine and difficult' but these were the subjects that had higher status.

> "*In the end I just chose Sociology because my brother did Biology at 'A' level and found it really, really difficult.*" (Kirsty, daughter)

Two daughters did mention that they had originally taken Computer Studies and found it extremely difficult. One girl dropped the subject whilst the other girl did continue with it but continually regretted that she had not taken history instead.

The preference for gendered subjects is quite apparent in my findings. There was not one girl taking 'A' level courses that were wholly mathematical, scientific or technological. As previously argued by Mitsos and Browne (1998, as discussed in section 3.3.1.1) the choice of subjects at 'A' level influenced future career opportunities and this meant that girls were therefore less likely to participate in careers in science, engineering and technology.

Table 18 – Daughters – Reasons For Choosing 'A' Level Subjects

REASONS FOR CHOOSING 'A' LEVEL SUBJECTS	
Enjoyed the subject at GCSE	14
Good at the subject at GCSE	8
New subject that sounded interesting	7
Needed a qualification in this subject to be able to pursue a desired career	5
Negative Choice (did not like what else was on offer)	2
Considered a good combination for university entrance	1

Although 37 daughters had progressed to further education to take 'A' levels and many of these had stated that they had done so to gain extra qualifications or because they had a desire to go to university, the reason for actually selecting these specific 'A' levels was based more on previous GCSE performance. The dominant influences on selection were enjoyment of the subject and as they had performed well in the GCSE examinations and obviously had ability at the subject had decided to progress the subject to advanced level. Sometimes new subjects were selected

because of interest value, this was especially the case for social science subjects. The reasons do tend to be interrelated.

As discussed by Arnot et al (1999, as discussed in section 3.3.1.1) the selection of vocational courses showed the same gendered split as for academic courses. Girls were predominant in courses such as hairdressing, beauty therapy, nursery nursing and childcare.

The following table shows the vocational courses selected by 15 daughters in the sample.

Table 19 – Daughters – Vocational Courses Selected During Further Education

VOCATIONAL COURSES SELECTED (by 15 daughters)	
Business Studies	6
Nursery Nursing	3
Health & Social Care	2
Leisure & Tourism	1
Performing Arts	1
Public Services	1
3D Design	1

Business Studies was a subject that had more male than female candidates taking the 'A' level and vocational courses. It should not be confused with 'business administration' which covered office skills and would be considered the replacement for previous secretarial courses.

Of the 52 daughters who had already progressed/were about to progress to further education only 1 claimed that the subjects chosen had been as a result of parental intervention.

"When Carrie left school she didn't know what she wanted to do. She wanted to go into the police force or to be a paramedic but she didn't really know what she wanted to do. And I was the one that went down to Connexions and they told me about this public services course and said that if she was interested in going into paramedics or police force then this would be of interest to her…So if you like I persuaded her and she hated it (laughs). " (Bev, mother)

In all other cases final subject choice had been determined by the daughter. Sometimes there was no consultation with the parents at all, at other times decisions were made irrespective of parents' views.

"I don't actually know if she [mother] knows what subjects I did (laughs). *I think she knows I did business studies but I'm not sure about the rest* (laughs). " (Nicole, daughter)

"As soon as I told my dad I was taking those [subjects] he said 'oh no you can't take geography, you have to take maths'. I think I heard the comment that geography is 'A' level 'colouring in' (laughs) so I don't think he rates geography anywhere near maths in status but it is a hard subject." (Danielle, daughter)

Although the mothers in the sample believed that they had discussed the choice of subjects they admitted that their role was really only one of guidance and advice. They acknowledged that final decisions were made by the daughters themselves. Daughters did take into account other factors, for example, one daughter felt that the school had had a strong influence because the selection of subjects on offer was very limited and she had needed guidance. Occasionally friends were an influence or an older sibling who had already taken the subject at an earlier date.

Only in one circumstance was there conflict between a daughter, Molly, and her mother, Dorothy, about subject choice. Molly wished to study for a GNVQ Intermediate in Health and Social Care whilst her mother wanted her to take the GNVQ Advanced course at school or 'A' levels at college. Molly did have the

required grades to go straight on to the Advanced course or to move to college to take 'A' levels but she wanted to study at Intermediate level instead. Daughter and mother argued about the situation but Molly was adamant. The situation was not resolved amicably.

> "*Well she can't make me go to college. I didn't want to go to college at all. I just said I was going to do it* [the Intermediate course]." (Molly, daughter)

In summary, the daughters in the sample were more ambitious concerning their aspirations and their future working lives than their mothers were at the same age as evidenced by the fact that 58 out of the 60 daughters made (or intended to make) the progression to further education. Daughters wanted to obtain qualifications in order to compete in a competitive labour market and because they realised the importance of further education qualifications as a 'stepping stone' to higher education or to pursue a desired career. They accepted that the acquisition of formal qualifications would aid them in securing jobs within a diverse range of occupational careers and industries. They remained motivated because they desired to gain academic and vocational qualifications and they had set themselves targets with regard to their future careers. The daughters were happy to participate within further education and to be successful in their examination performance because they valued it as the pathway to good employment opportunities.

However, although the daughters wanted to acquire qualifications for future careers it was found that the subjects and/or courses selected were still very highly gendered and favoured strongly traditional feminine ones such as the arts, languages and social sciences. Even though subjects were being selected because they were seen as useful for further study or to fulfil career aspirations they still followed a highly

traditional, gendered pattern and could lead to entry into professions that were related to the female identified sector of the labour market.

7.4.2 Progression to Higher Education

Since the 1990s there had been a massive expansion in higher education participation and at the end of the twentieth century women accounted for over 50% of the students in higher education (Gayle et al, 2002, section 3.3.2).

7.4.2.1 Influences On Decision-Making

Of the daughters in my sample who had progressed to further education 27 had made the transition to (or had the imminent intention of proceeding to) higher education. Of these 27 only 3 had attended a private school, the remainder had all attended a local comprehensive school. The other daughters in the sample had decided that, at 17 or 18, they had finished their education and were now seeking employment. At this stage in the decision-making process, daughters were influenced by their own perception of their 'academic ability' (as learnt from their current teachers at school/college) and this was a basis to decide upon/reject higher education.

During this stage of decision-making it was seen that mothers' attitudes had changed and relaxed from the anxiety that surrounded decision-making at the stage of further education. Whilst mothers were determined and anxious that their daughters should enter further education the pressure was relieved for higher education. At this point some mothers acknowledged that their daughter had probably reached her academic potential with the acquisition of 'A' levels or equivalent, or that after having

spent 13 years in education the daughter was now desperate for a break/to leave. It was interesting to note that 4 daughters had taken 'a year out' before progressing to higher education and that another 2 planned to do so. In addition, mothers were highly aware that at 18 their daughters were adults and any attempt to push them into higher education against their wishes could lead to the alienation of the daughter and to the permanent loss of her from the parental home. Mothers were aware that their daughters were of an age to make their own decisions and that 'mother's help' viewed as 'mother's interference' meant that this stage of the decision-making process was a very delicate one as the daughter was legally recognised as an adult.

> "*I would prefer her to carry on her education. It's 18, 19, whatever, but at the end of the day her decision will be her decision. You can only ask somebody, and advise them, you can't make them do something.*" (Trish, mother)

Mothers agreed with the daughter's decision about her educational future even if it was not what they had actually hoped for their daughter. Whilst at the earlier stage of further education there would have been real resistance, and even conflict, at the daughter's decision to leave school, at this stage it was accepted even if reluctantly.

> "*I would have loved her to have gone to university. I suppose I would have loved her...the same as what my mother and father had wanted for me. You know, you always want a bit more, a lot more, for your children. That's what I would have loved for her.*" (Irene, mother)

> "*But like I've said it would be great if she decides to go but if she doesn't it's not end of world.*" (Grace, mother)

When daughters did wish to enter higher education then the decision-making process was carried out jointly between the daughter and her parents. This was due in part to the immense financial implication that a daughter's entry into higher

education would have on her parents. Such decisions were not able to be carried out in isolation.

> "*It was London and it was going to be more expensive. But in the end they both said 'we'll find the money, if you like that place and it's best for you, we'll find the money and you go'.*" (Tanya, daughter)

No daughter had to forward arguments to convince her parents that progression to higher education was the next appropriate step – all parents accepted that their daughters had the intellectual ability to succeed at university. Parents, irrespective of their own educational background, were happy to encourage their daughters to attend university as they themselves placed a value upon education. First generation students were just as encouraged as those who had graduate parents. Mothers, in particular, wanted their daughters to have the opportunities that had not been afforded them and they especially wanted their daughters to pursue the route of higher education if they felt that the daughter had the ability.

> "*I would have been sorry if she'd decided not to go on to some sort of higher education. She's got the ability and I wanted to be sure that she didn't lose out on that opportunity.*" (Lilian, mother)

Of the daughters involved there was only 1 whose mother was adamant that she should go to university to acquire a degree and that leaving education was not an option. All the remaining mothers held the following attitudes towards their daughter's intention to go to university:

- Happy that the daughter had decided to continue with her education but there was no pressure on her to do this and they were happy to support her financially

- Whatever the daughter decided to do (continue with education or leave to seek employment) it would be fine and they would support her

- Knew that this was the next logical step for her career (this was the attitude of mothers whose daughters were taking art and design courses and knew that they had to specialise in a particular area of art in order to be able to pursue a career)

- Higher education was assumed by everyone (the daughter, the parents and the school) and no real decision-making had taken place

As seen above, for some daughters the progression to higher education was seen to be part of a natural course of events in the same way that the progression to further education had been and, similarly, was just expected from all the parties involved. Even in the case of daughters who were to be first generation students progressing to higher education there was still a real feeling of inevitability about the whole process.

> "*My dad was like 'yeah, you'll pass your GCSEs, your 'A' levels and you'll go to university because I never did'.*" (Tabitha, daughter)

In particular, private schools encouraged their pupils to view it as a natural progression and tended not to offer any alternative options or advice. Such views from schools, including comprehensive schools, that entry into higher education was inevitable did not prepare daughters for the problems that arose if the required grades were not obtained for entry into university.

"I got rejected from all 6 [universities]. I was told to expect rejections because English is one of the most popular subjects you can do…I didn't get any offers so it meant I had to sort of rush around on results day to go through clearing. It just seems that I wasn't really prepared for what was going to happen." (Justine, daughter)

"My friend found it difficult when she didn't pass her 'A' levels, like had to get a job, because you never thought that you weren't actually going to pass because they said 'right, university'. They never said 'if you don't pass this is what you'll have to do'. It was always very much geared towards 'you're coming into the sixth form and going to university'." (Tabitha, daughter)

Daughters found that if they had an older sibling who had been to university this aided the decision-making process as parents already knew what to expect and were able to give advice and support to the daughter. During the decision-making process parental support took many forms from helping with paperwork to driving daughters around the country to visit academic institutions and to attend interviews.

Schools also gave valuable support at this time of decision-making although this was usually from subject specific teachers as to the content of a course. Schools also were heavily involved with the administration of university entrance.

"They gave a lot of help with the UCAS forms. It was a big priority for them, they wanted to make sure that everybody filled one in correctly and that everybody sold themselves in the best way that they could. And we had a lot of individual and group tuition on how to fill the forms in and how to write a good personal statement." (Tanya, daughter)

Although many people may be involved in the decision-making process at this stage, ultimately it was the daughter's own decision as to the route taken at age 18.

An analysis of the reasons for progression to further education (see section 7.4.1.1) found 6 main patterns: to achieve qualifications; to meet the expectations of

themselves, their parents and the school; to remain with friends; to be within the safe environment of a teaching institution; to avoid the labour market or because of the value of qualifications and/or an education. However, when it came to progressing to higher education there were only 2 main reasons (and they were heavily interrelated).

1. If the daughter was to enter her chosen career she needed to equip herself with the necessary qualifications and a university degree was an essential qualification to acquire. This was especially the reason given by the daughters following an art and design course or looking to enter a particular career such as nursing or teaching.

2. The daughter had always wanted to go to university and it was expected of her from her family and the school. Progression to higher education was inevitable and she was following a predetermined and desirable route.

The following quote displays how these reasons were interrelated. A daughter knew what her career aspirations were and what she had to achieve to be able to fulfil these goals. The pathway to fulfilling these goals was a predetermined route that everyone expected her to follow.

> "*I knew what I wanted to do and I knew what I had to get to be able to do it. It meant going to university, it meant having 'A' levels, it meant having GCSEs so there wasn't any moment when I thought that I would leave school at 16. It was a natural progression for me.*" (Melissa, daughter)

26 of the 27 daughters gave either of the 2 reasons above as their primary reason for progressing to higher education. The remaining daughter made the following comment:

> "*I'm planning on going to university I think because a) I'm not sure what I want to do anyway and I don't fancy working and b) it sounds like a really good experience and also if you've got a degree under your belt (laughs) it just broadens it a bit more.*" (Kelly, daughter)

Higher education was viewed as the pathway to achieving career goals and, like further education, was seen as a 'stepping stone' to fulfilling future aspirations. Daughters may not have been talking about the value that a degree would hold in the labour market but they were certainly aware of it. Higher education was viewed as a way to prepare them for working life and to be successful in their chosen career. Although not made explicit as to a reason to choosing higher education the daughters were clearly aware that it would help them achieve economic enhancement, increased social status, a better lifestyle and standard of living.

7.4.2.2   Choice of Subject/Course And Academic Institution

The 27 daughters in the sample who had progressed to higher education had studied, or were about to study, the following 17 degree subjects. This shows a diverse range of subjects being studied.

Table 20 – Daughters – Degree Subject Selected

DEGREE SUBJECT	
• Business Studies	6
• Art & Design	4
• English	3
• Archaeology	1
• Biology	1
• Environmental Health	1
• Film, Radio & TV Studies	1
• Geography & European Studies	1
• Heritage Conservation	1
• Industrial Design & Technology	1
• Marine Biology	1
• Nursing Degree	1
• Occupational Therapy	1
• Pharmacology	1
• Psychology & Criminal Justice	1
• Systems Modelling	1
• Teaching Degree	1

Although joint decision-making had taken place with regard to the progression to higher education, when it came to subject/course choice it was carried out mainly by the daughter. Whilst parents could give advice or opinions on different geographical locations and academic institutions they were less able to give advice on particular courses/subjects. If university prospectuses and brochures were kept at secondary school then parents did not have the same access to information as did daughters. In some cases, mothers did not have the knowledge or experience to be able to guide their daughters as in the case of Tina below whose daughter opted to take a Business Studies degree.

> "*I don't know much about it. And it's something, because she's chosen to do that, I've looked into it a little bit more and asked people, so I feel more enlightened. When she first said that to me I was worried because I don't know anything about it and so I was sort of thinking 'oh gosh you hear about*

people doing business studies, there's so many of them doing it, is she going to end up with a job?'. And I had these sort of anxieties." (Tina, mother)

Teaching staff had more influence in this stage of the decision-making process (particularly in the case of vocational courses such as art and design) because when subjects were particularly specific in nature it could be hard for parents to make any suggestions due to their ignorance of the subject under discussion.

"There's product design and industrial design, my mum didn't really know what my subject was at the beginning, she thought I was doing product and I'm actually doing industrial design." (Cindy, daughter)

When deciding upon a subject/course to study, daughters gave the following reasons as to their choice:

- They viewed the acquisition of a degree as the pathway to their chosen career e.g. taking a business studies degree in order to be able to work in Human Resources

- The degree was a natural progression and allowed for specialisation to occur (this was the case for the art and design students)

- They had enjoyed, and been good at, a particular subject at 'A' level so wished to take it to the next possible level

- The belief that such a degree would prove useful in the future for securing employment

- Poor careers advice at school

- A way of leaving their hometown and travelling

It was interesting to note that mothers' reasons for progression to higher education (see section 6.4.2) and daughters' reasons did not coincide, for example, no daughter gave a primary reason for going to university as being the subject/career was appropriate for a woman (teaching or nursing) or that it had been her father's desire. Overwhelmingly, for daughters higher education was the pathway to their chosen career even if they were still a bit unsure as to what their future career might be.

> "*I knew the course that I was doing, it would be worthwhile doing it. I'd get a good qualification and it was such a rounded course I could still, when I'd left, take the pick of what I might fancy to do. So it was a safe course to do.*" (Tess, daughter)

Whilst mothers tended to be happy about daughters' decisions about progressing to higher education and were content to let the daughter select the subject and gave more advice and help about choice of location and academic institution, fathers were more interested in subject choice. If the daughter was selecting a subject that he had an interest in then it made the transition to higher education easier.

> "*My dad encouraged it, absolutely wholeheartedly because it was something he'd always wanted to do and never had the opportunity to. He really wants me to do it.*" (Gemma, daughter – studying Heritage Conservation)

However, an influence on the perception of degree subject, for parents as well as daughters, could come from the media. One daughter had trouble persuading her parents about her choice of degree subject (film, radio and TV studies) because of a negative portrayal by the media of such a degree subject.

> "*I think they were worried because there had been a lot in the papers and things that 'media studies is a useless degree and it's not worth the paper it's written on' and blah, blah, blah....And it took a lot of convincing to say 'this is what I want to do, basically, you've got no choice' (laughs) but I think he [father]*

was just worried about me and that I could come out with a better degree but he's coming round to the idea." (Jeanette, daughter)

Sometimes choice of subject could result from poor careers advice (or no careers advice) at an earlier stage during schooling. When I was at school, for my year group I was the top history pupil and I was encouraged by all teachers to study 'A' level history and then a history degree. Unfortunately nobody mentioned that, at that time, to study a history degree I needed French 'O' level (an optional subject I had not selected) so I found that upon applying to universities I was not eligible to study history. Instead I undertook a sociology degree.

Poor careers advice meant Tanya was unable to fulfil her dream of being a forensic scientist and she had to study for her second choice of career.

"Originally I was going to do forensic science and I was told that 2 sciences were enough at 'A' level but it turns out I should have done chemistry, physics and maths…. I was given the wrong careers advice so I did the wrong 'A' levels to be a forensic scientist which is why I'm doing archaeology (laughs)." (Tanya, daughter)

It had been noted earlier that relatively few young women were choosing science or science-related subjects at degree level and that the traditional gender split was still evident (see section 3.3.2.2). Female students were mainly concentrated in the typically 'feminine' subjects such as the arts and languages whilst male students were mainly concentrated in the typically 'masculine' subjects such as mathematics, physical sciences, engineering and technology. The following table shows the degree subjects selected by the daughters in the sample. The 'ticks' denote whether a subject would be considered a traditional 'feminine' subject or a traditional 'male' subject or one that could be taken by both sexes.

Table 21 – Daughters – Degree Subject Selected By Traditional Gender Split

	Male	Female		Male	Female
Business Studies (6 daughters)	✓		Industrial Design	✓	
Art & Design (4 daughters)		✓	Marine Biology		✓
English (3 daughters)		✓	Nursing		✓
Archaeology	✓	✓	Occupational Therapy		✓
Biology		✓	Pharmacology	✓	
Environmental Health		✓	Psychology		✓
Film Studies	✓	✓	Systems Modelling	✓	
Geography	✓		Teaching		✓
Heritage Conservation	✓	✓			

An analysis of the subjects taken revealed that 52% of daughters were taking a subject considered traditionally 'feminine', 37% were taking a subject considered traditionally 'male' and 11% were taking a subject that could be considered appropriate for both sexes (archaeology, heritage conservation or film studies). Although it could be argued that the gender split was still apparent, the choice of degree subjects within a traditional 'feminine' area appeared more widespread e.g. occupational therapy, marine biology, environmental health.

An interesting aspect with regard to choice of subject/course was that parents emphasised to their daughters that should they get to university and decide that the course was not to their liking that this was not a major issue. Parents would be willing to help fund the daughter should she change to another course irrespective of how far she had actually progressed with her original choice.

> "*Even if she'd decided once she'd started that it wasn't right for her we told her that she could go back and try something else.*" (Florence, mother)

After examining the subject/course selected I conducted an analysis to determine the reasons why daughters selected their chosen academic institution by using the findings of Conner et al (1999, as discussed in section 3.3.2.2).

The following table shows how many daughters gave the reasons submitted by Connor et al as their reasons for selecting their chosen university.

Table 22 – Daughters – Reasons For Selecting Their Chosen University

That the institution offered the right subject/course	25
The overall image of the institution	1
The social life on offer	2
The teaching reputation at the institution	0
Good future employment prospects	0
Entry qualifications*	2

2 daughters had deliberately chosen universities asking for low grades to ensure that they would gain a place

The daughters in my sample had primarily chosen their academic institution for higher education purely because of the course that had been offered which they considered was the 'best on offer' or needed 'for their future career'.

> "*I knew the course was really good cos I'd had a lot of people say it was…at the time it was the best technology place in the country.*" (Cindy, daughter)

In line with Connor et al the daughters in my sample had claimed that travelling distance from the institution was not considered relevant. This was borne out by the fact that the shortest distance travelled to university was 40 miles and the furthest distance travelled was 300 miles (average distance from home being 115 miles). 3 daughters did mention that they had wanted to travel (those living in a small village) and the move to university was seen as an 'escape' from their hometown.

"I always knew I wanted to go quite far away. I just thought it would be good to make a new start somewhere else. I didn't want to be too near home that I could just, if something goes wrong, come back. I've got to face it on my own." (Alicia, daughter)

Although finance was a consideration it still did not deter the daughters from travelling to their desired university to undertake their chosen subject/course. Again, the influence of an older sibling helped here because if an older sibling had travelled far to go on to higher education parents were more relaxed about the prospect. Only 3 mothers expressed any anxiety about their daughter moving away and wished she had chosen a university closer to home.

"I'm not happy, I'm not happy, believe you me, because I shall miss her dreadfully but that's what she's going to do and I shall be there one hundred and one percent behind her. I shall sit here and cry loads (laughs)." (Phyllis, mother)

Although mothers might have been anxious about their daughters leaving home, irrespective of distance, they acknowledged that this was the pathway to future career realisation and thus gave their support.

"It's very strange when your child leaves home. But if it's going to better them and further their life and make it better then that's what you do." (Sandy, mother)

Only two daughters claimed that it had been the location of the university that had been more important than course content. They desired to move to a particular city (for the social life offered) and then looked to see what courses the universities in the locality were offering.

2 daughters stated that they did not have a choice of university. One had been rejected by all 6 chosen universities and had gone through 'clearing' and the second,

who wanted to study Environmental Health, had not secured sponsorship and only one university would accept her without her having a sponsor.

Although it was found that the course/subject was very important the status of the university was not. Only one daughter mentioned such an aspect as having an effect on her decision-making and this was actually her parents' influence.

> "*They [parents] were interested in the course and they want me to get into a good university. By that I mean preferably one that isn't an ex-poly, a redbrick*." (Holly, daughter)

For the daughters in my sample it was choice of subject/course that dictated the university attended. Daughters were determined to pursue their chosen subject/course, especially if this was seen to lead on to their chosen career (important for the art and design students who needed to specialise), and were happy to travel any distance to do so.

Throughout the decision-making processes related to progression to higher education it was found that mothers and fathers had different roles to play. Brooks (2004, discussed in section 3.3.2.1) claimed that research on parental involvement in educational decision-making displayed clear disparities between the involvement of mothers and fathers. For the daughters in my sample the level of involvement of mothers and fathers was substantially different. Fathers had a role in confirming choices and had more involvement if the course selected was of particular interest to them (see quote by Gemma on page 245).

> "*My dad's always been interested in history anyway so he was pleased that I was doing something that he could relate to* (laughs)." (Tanya, daughter – studying Archaeology)

Mothers undertook responsibility for, and were more involved in, practical activities such as visiting universities and helping with the completion of related paperwork and the choice of location and academic institution.

In summary, during the decision-making process relating to higher education, a mother's attitude was more relaxed as she acknowledged that her daughter was legally recognised as an adult and that all decisions would ultimately have to be the daughter's. Decision-making about progressing to higher education was carried out jointly between the daughter and her mother/parents. This was due partly to the immense financial implication that entry into higher education would have on the parents. Mothers tended to hold the following views about their daughters at this stage of the decision-making process: happy that she wanted to proceed to higher education (no pressure to do so) and she would be supported financially; just as happy if she decided not to go on but seek employment instead; higher education was the next logical step to reach her chosen career (e.g. art and design) or it was just assumed by everyone (the daughter, the parents and the school) that higher education would be pursued. Reasons for progressing to higher education for daughters fell into 2 main categories: (1) to enter a chosen career needed specific qualifications including a university degree or (2) the desire had always been to attend university and this was expected from all concerned parties. Finally, higher education was viewed as the pathway to achieving career goals and, like further education, was seen as a 'stepping stone' to fulfilling future career aspirations.

7.5   Choice Of Career

An analysis was undertaken to determine the careers that the daughters were planning coupled with a review of the careers advice that they had received whilst at school.

7.5.1 Careers Advice

Careers classes/lessons happened with differing regularity for the daughters depending upon the school they attended. Most mentioned that such classes occurred for 'an odd day' towards the end of the last year of compulsory schooling when decisions had to be made with regard to leaving school or continuing with further education. Some schools did provide weekly, fortnightly or monthly classes but these tended to be rare. In some schools careers advice was only given to those expressing an intention to leave. Those going into the sixth form did not have to attend any careers lessons but instead attended sessions that provided information about 'A' level subjects and sixth form life. Those already in the sixth form attended sessions about progression to higher education and the UCAS procedure.

Careers advice was given mainly by a professional 'careers advisor' who visited the school and gave pupils careers interviews.

> "*I had an interview with a careers advisor. And she asked me questions, 'what I liked doing, did I like working with people? did I like working with children?' and then she determined for me whether I'd prefer this job or the other. And eventually we worked out that I'd like to be a nursery nurse* (laughs)." (Paige, daughter)

However, most of the daughters commented that they did not find these sessions helpful although it should be noted that at this stage of their schooling all but 2 of the

daughters intended to proceed to further education and most were unsure as to a specific career.

"*They sort of like had us all in a group and just went round and asked...but didn't go into detail of why we wanted to do this and what us next move were going to be after school really.*" (Ella, daughter)

In some instances schools employed a careers teacher (usually also responsible for teaching a curriculum subject), or had a dedicated careers office where pupils could access brochures, leaflets and information packs. Some pupils also had access to a computer based questionnaire that listed possible jobs based on the pupil's interests and likes/dislikes. Daughters found that careers teachers did not really know about specific careers and just gave general comments about the suitability of curriculum subjects.

"*At the time I wanted to teach and she went through everything that I needed and what 'A' levels really to do.*" (Nadia, daughter)

It was very important to examine the role of careers advice within schools. As Marks and Houston (2002, as discussed in section 4.1) argued it was essential that girls received careers advice "which does not make outdated assumptions". Of the daughters who did receive careers lessons most of them disregarded any advice given by the careers advisors – believing it to be unhelpful and of a quite general nature. However, advice that was based on traditional gender roles could seriously affect the girls involved. Annabel had originally wanted to pursue a career that was considered a traditional 'male job' but because of the advice of her careers advisor entered a traditional 'female job' instead and was employed as a clerical officer. It would now become difficult for her to move out of this career route.

"I wanted to become a mechanical engineer and she [careers advisor] said 'you can't do that, you're a girl' so that's when I did typing and things like that and went to college and thought about working in offices. I was only 15 and she said 'mechanical engineer, that's a man's job' and that's when I thought I might do office work." (Annabel, daughter)

In addition, girls needed to be able to make appropriate long-term plans that would avoid the loss of earnings and promotion due to poor occupational judgements made whilst still at school. They relied upon their careers advisors to inform them about the pay advantages of non-traditional routes – the fact that boys with the same educational qualifications as they had who entered a manual trade such as plastering or plumbing would earn far more than they would if they entered an industry such as childcare. Girls sought the knowledge that was needed to be able to make informed decisions about their future but often this knowledge was not available or forthcoming.

"I went once and they were totally unhelpful. At school they didn't write down the reasons why you went into a particular career and the pay scales that you might be looking at. Because at 16 you've got no idea what wage is a good wage, have you? There were none of that at all." (Leanne, daughter)

Although careers advice was offered to daughters on a more frequent basis than was offered to their mothers it was questionable whether the advice had improved greatly. Schools were prepared to offer much advice to pupils wishing to proceed into the sixth form and would give indications as to the suitability of certain 'A' level subjects with regard to future university entrance. However, for those wishing to leave the advice was more limited and even, in some instances, damaging to a young girl's career potential such as the advice to Annabel above and to Tanya (see p.246). Improvements were still needed in careers advice and guidance to encourage girls to consider jobs that had traditionally been dominated by boys and

when girls did state an intention to pursue such jobs then concrete and correct advice was essential. At present, careers advice is failing to support entry into non-traditional areas of employment.

7.5.2 Desired Careers Whilst Growing Up At School

After the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and equal opportunities legislation it was an important task to widen girls' horizons with regard to the occupational opportunities available to them. The following table highlights the careers that the daughters had considered whilst they were growing up. I have categorised the careers into those that I perceived as 'traditionally female', those that I perceived as 'traditionally male' and those I perceived as usually undertaken by both sexes. I acknowledge that other researchers might challenge the gendering of some of the occupations, for example, many women are now doctors and the title 'air hostess' has now been replaced by 'cabin crew' and many men pursue this occupation.

Table 23 – Daughters - Careers Considered Whilst Growing Up

TRADITIONALLY MALE CAREER	Vet (7) Solicitor (6) Doctor (5) Pilot (2) Business Person (2) Accountant, Mechanical Engineer, Optician, Astronaut, Bank Manager, Archaeologist, Footballer, Forensic Scientist, Funeral Director, Hotel Manager,
UNDERTAKEN BY BOTH SEXES	Police Force (6) Journalist (3) Armed Forces (3) Film Work, Zoologist,
TRADITIONALLY FEMALE CAREER	Teacher (13) Art and Design Work (8) Interior Designer (2) Caring Professions = Nurse (6) Nursery Nurse/Childcare (6) Physiotherapist (3) Psychologist (3) Occupational Therapist (2) Social Worker (2) Veterinary Nurse, Midwife, Speech Therapist, Creative Professions = Beautician/Make Up Artist (3) Chef (3) Ballet Dancer (2) Actor, Dancer, Hairdresser, Photographer, Singer, Musician, Sportswoman, Secretarial (2) Air Hostess, Horsemanship, Leisure Industry, Librarian, Linguist, Marine Biologist, Waitress

[*can select more than one career*]

Daughters were prepared to consider a variety of jobs whilst they were growing up and to consider professional ones previously associated with men's work.

"*I went through everything (laughs). I wanted to be a vet, I wanted to be a doctor, I wanted to join the RAF, I wanted to be a nurse, to be an actor, singer, dancer…I wanted to be a chef, that was another one I went through. I even considered being a funeral director, I was interested in that (laughs). Yeah I wanted to do everything and nothing, all at the same time*." (Imogen, daughter)

However, there were still some gender stereotypical jobs present in the choices of the daughters, for example, teacher, nurse and secretary. It was found that daughters were considering an increased diversity of choice and greater aspiration

with regard to their future occupations but there was still a tendency for them to select caring or creative jobs. Few of the daughters desired a predominantly technical, business or scientific job.

It became clear that whilst the daughters were growing up they and their mothers discussed future careers and that mothers were involved, sometimes heavily, in this decision-making process. Mothers might give quite general advice along the lines of 'do what you think you would like to do that would make you happy' or 'you're quite good at this, have you thought of a career as such and such?' but sometimes advice and guidance was more direct.

> "*My mum's forever suggesting things (laughs). Working with people or perhaps working with computers.*" (Cassie, daughter)

> "*Together we went to the lifetime careers and just talked through options because I really did not have a clue what I wanted.*" (Leanne, daughter)

The following table is a list of the careers suggested to the daughters by their mothers. I have categorised the careers into those that I perceived as 'traditionally female', those that I perceived as 'traditionally male' and those I perceived as usually undertaken by both sexes. I acknowledge that other researchers might challenge the gendering of some of the occupations.

Table 24 – Daughters – Careers Suggested To Them By Their Mothers

TRADITIONALLY MALE CAREER	Legal Work, Doctor, Business Person, Computer Analyst
UNDERTAKEN BY BOTH SEXES	Human Resources, Police Force, Armed Forces, Banking, Zoologist
TRADITIONALLY FEMALE CAREER	Teacher Art and Design Work Caring Professions = Nurse, Nursery Nurse/Childcare, Physiotherapist, Midwife, Radiographer Creative Professions = Beautician/Make Up Artist, Hairdresser, Sportswoman, Secretarial/Office work, Leisure and Tourism Industry, Librarian, Retail Work, Travel Agent, Environmental Health Officer, Croupier, Food and Nutrition Industry, Hotel Work

Although this list contains many jobs it can be seen that the majority fall into the category of being 'traditional female' jobs and therefore would be low paid with poor economic status.

As well as mothers participating in the decision-making process, fathers also contributed.

"*I can remember my dad was all for me joining the RAF…very supportive and he was planning me starting driving lessons as soon as I turned 17 so I could go in fully ready for everything.*" (Imogen, daughter)

However, sometimes fathers perpetuated the belief that a girl had to undertake work that was ascribed as 'women's work' even when there was strong opposition from the mother.

> *"Danielle used to talk with my husband. I mean at one time she had a burning ambition to be a waitress. And he encouraged that. And I'd say things like 'don't you want to set your sights a little higher, don't you want to own the restaurant?' (laughs). And my idea would be to say to the girls 'don't always look at things that you think are only acceptable for women, look further afield. Don't always look at the obvious'. I don't think you always want to look at things like teaching, working in a bank, cashiers in supermarkets…you don't have to be a nurse. You know, I don't want them to limit themselves to just traditionally female. I think that's because I didn't, you see, I didn't limit myself to that and I enjoyed my working time because it was different to what my friends did.* (Alex, mother)

Immediate family and friends could have a powerful influence on career perception and on the decision-making process as a whole.

> *"I suppose it's the people close around me that influence me the most. Like my sister, she seems to be doing very well. She's achieved what she set out to do so that's what I'm hoping to do."* (Jaime, daughter)

A very interesting point when considering the daughters' attitudes towards their future goals was that although they might have mentioned glamorous jobs or professional jobs with high entry requirements whilst they were growing up, they became very realistic when it came to selecting subjects for study and the reality of actually qualifying for such positions.

> *"When I was little I always wanted to be a doctor, but that was quickly nipped in the bud when I realised I wasn't clever enough."* (Gemma, daughter)

> *"I used to want to be an optician when I was about fourteen, because my dad is one, and when I did work experience I went to an opticians. But I don't think I was good enough at Science or worked hard enough at the Science subjects to be an optician."* (Kirsty, daughter)

Girls were now prepared to consider a far wider range of occupations than was reported in studies in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, there was still a tendency to select jobs that were categorised as being 'traditional female' ones.

7.5.3 Influence Of The Media On Perception Of Careers

One-third of the daughters in the sample claimed that the media in particular and wider society in general, did not have any impact or influence upon their decision-making with regard to the choice of career. However, for two-thirds of daughters in the sample the media had a strong influence upon decision-making and affected their perception about future careers.

> "*I think the decision to do media studies [at university] has probably been influenced by the sort of things I've watched and the image that is given off. I think I've been influenced by the things I've seen and watched on television and listening to the radio, I think that's definitely influenced me.*" (Jeanette, daughter)

The portrayal of particular careers on the television and in films could influence daughters in a positive way. Daughters mentioned 'The Bill', 'Casualty', animal documentaries and the news as being very influential. The following illustrates the influence of the media on three daughters, one hoping to join the police force, one studying to become a criminal psychologist and one hoping to study law at university:

> "*The Bill. And detective programmes and stuff like that. They made me want to go into the police force.*" (Molly, daughter)

> "*I suppose a reason why I'm doing Criminal Justice [at university]...films, criminal films, I'm really interested in them.*" (Kirsty, daughter)

"A lot of films, court case films, and documentaries on law. The news...a lot of the crime on the news and things like that, that's put a lot of influence on to me wanting to study law." (Paige, daughter)

Two daughters mentioned 'Silent Witness' a television programme about a female forensic pathologist. They hoped to pursue similar careers having gained an interest about forensics from the television programme but also admiring the strong, female character who was central to the programme. The daughters in the sample were well aware of the media and how it could broaden their horizons with regard to the availability of careers – not just by introducing them to a wide and diverse range of jobs but by showing strong and successful women undertaking such jobs. It was noticeable that the daughters did not mention any influential males with regard to careers – they quoted successful women.

"When I was little I used to say 'I want to be like Kate Adie'… for journalism or wanting to be a newsreader." (Justine, daughter)

"I suppose when you do see things in the media like women that are all powerful and, you know, it's quite good (laughs).*"* (Sophie, daughter)

"There was a t.v. programme called 'Rosie O'Neill', she were a lawyer. I used to say 'that's it, that's what I'm going to do'." (Jenna, daughter)

"The only thing that really got me into wanting to be a make-up artist was fashion magazines like Vogue and supermodels." (Chelcie, daughter)

Undoubtedly the media played a powerful part and had a tremendous influence upon girls' perceptions of careers and what was available to them. In particular the portrayal of successful women working in professional jobs and in positions of authority and power had created an interest amongst girls in undertaking such jobs. Female role models were showing girls the opportunities that were available to them.

7.5.4 Attitudes Towards Education And Its Role In Securing Jobs

It was important to determine the attitudes that the daughters held about the role and value of education in helping them to meet their career aspirations. It was found that the daughters definitely held the view that education had a value and that it was this that was the pathway to a future satisfying job and economic success. Without an education and accompanying qualifications the future seemed bleak.

> "*You'll probably just end up in like a dead end job or something you didn't enjoy doing. I think to get where you want you've got to have a good education, to try and do well for yourself.*" (Fay, daughter)

> "*Most of the jobs you have to have so many qualifications. I mean even for a Saturday job you need so many good grades before they'd even let you work just on a till, helping in a shop. And that's just like for a simple job, it's not even full-time or anything, so I suppose you need better grades than that to get a decent job.*" (Bethany, daughter)

The daughters acknowledged that qualifications played an important part in realising career aspirations and goals and that each level of qualification (GCSE, 'A' level) was the progression and the route that was needed to attain success. Even with qualifications the daughters knew that they would have to work hard to succeed.

> "*Every time you pass a course that's another step up the ladder towards a career…You start at the bottom and work your way up…even if it takes years you get there in the end.*" (Dawn, daughter)

However, education was seen as a necessary route rather than a sacrifice to be made to ensure future goals were achieved.

> "*If you go through the education system, get a degree in the subject that you want to carry on in, and you get a job doing what you want to do, then it was all worthwhile going through it.*" (Danielle, daughter)

The ultimate goal for the daughters was happiness within their career – they expressed the opinion that it was 'important to be happy in a job'. Following this was the acknowledgement that a 'good job' led to 'good money'.

> "*You need an education in order to get a career or at least a decent wage.*" (Paige, daughter)

> "*As my mum says you don't get anywhere without a degree. She says 'you have to have a degree to get a decent job to get some decent money'.*" (Danielle, daughter)

Education was seen as the key to career success – it was the determining factor that would put the daughters on to the occupational career ladder so that they could commence their working life.

7.5.5 Final Careers (In Or Working Towards)

The following table shows the careers that the daughters were actually employed in or the careers that they were working towards through a final course of education (usually at university or an art college). I have categorised the careers into those that I perceived as 'traditionally female', those that I perceived as 'traditionally male' and those I perceived as usually undertaken by both sexes. I acknowledge that other researchers might challenge the gendering of some of the occupations.

Table 25 – Daughters – Careers Employed In Or Working Towards

TRADITIONALLY MALE CAREER	Archaeologist/Heritage Conservationist (2) Civil Engineer (1) Commercial Lawyer (1) Pharmacologist (1) Industrial Designer (1) Welder (1) Car Sales Person (1)
UNDERTAKEN BY BOTH SEXES	PR/Marketing/Human Resources/Computing (4) Theatre/TV/Radio (2) Criminal Psychologist (1) Environmental Health Worker (1) Police Force (1)
TRADITIONALLY FEMALE CAREER	Teacher/Lecturer (6) Graphic Designer (2) Artist (1) Interior Designer (1) Caring Professions = Nursery Nurse (3) Nurse (1) Occupational Therapist (1) Paramedic (1) Creative Professions = Hairdresser (1) Secretary/Office Work (4) Buyer (1) Marine Biologist (1)
No idea – still in full-time education (17) No idea – 2 were 'temping' and 1 had just had a baby	

40 daughters were in full-time employment or just about to finish their education. Their occupational careers showed a far-reaching and diverse choice. 8 daughters were employed/seeking employment in jobs that would be considered 'traditionally male' e.g. welder, car sales person and civil engineer. A further 9 daughters were employed/seeking employment in jobs that were usually undertaken by both sexes e.g. police force, business work, arts and media. A final 23 daughters were employed/seeking employment in jobs that would be considered 'traditionally female' e.g. teacher, nursery nurse. However, within this category were jobs of a more professional nature such as lecturer, buyer, marine biologist. There was indeed a

shift from the situation in the 1970s and 1980s when girls would mainly consider a very limited range of occupations which would be those that were linked to 'women's work' and where the majority of employees were females and also where income levels and prospects were poor and restricted.

In addition to analysing the jobs that the daughters were already employed in or working towards, it was important to ascertain their views about these jobs and the opportunities that had been presented to or denied them. It was found that daughters displayed a lot of dedication and determination when discussing their career aspirations. As well as working hard academically they researched their chosen jobs to ensure that they would know what would be required of them at a later date as demonstrated by Molly below who wished to become a policewoman.

> "*I've got loads of information on it and I've visited police forces and that. And I'm quite enthusiastic about it.*" (Molly, daughter)

Interestingly daughters were receptive to the idea of pursuing more than one course of study to ensure that they had 'something to fall back on' if they did not enter their desired career as in the case of Chelcie below who undertook employment in an office.

> "*I was also interested in beauty and make-up. I went to a beauty school to do beauty therapy and I did my Level 2 because I always wanted to be a make-up artist and do beauty and things like that.*" (Chelcie, daughter)

Daughters were aware of the opportunities that surrounded them: they made goals not just for entry into their chosen profession but also for promotion at a later date. They did not wish to acquire a job – they wished to acquire a career. They believed they had the potential to succeed and that the world of work was open to women.

They felt that there was an abundance of careers potentially appropriate for them and this was demonstrated in the great diversity in their aspirations.

"*Women can do just as many careers, they've got just as many career opportunities as men.*" (Paige, daughter)

"*I want to do well for myself. I think that I'm heading towards that. And I hope to do well. I want to work my way up and maybe open my own nursery in the end. I just want to do well for myself.*" (Fay, daughter)

Although the daughters displayed a brutal honesty in the calculation of their abilities and what they could realistically achieve (as demonstrated by Gemma and Kirsty who dismissed careers such as doctor or optician because of the stringent entry qualifications, knowing they were 'not clever enough') this did not mean that the daughters would accept any job. They set themselves goals and targets and to achieve anything less was unacceptable.

"*I always promised myself I'd never end up sitting at a desk. That's why I didn't want to do my BTEC, cos I thought once I've got my business qualifications that's it, I'd be trapped. And then I think, 'oh well, if I go to college and do typing I'm gonna be even more trapped. I don't wanna type all day'.*" (Nadia, daughter)

However, some daughters actually in employment had not found the pathway to a successful career as easy as they had envisaged or been led to believe by others.

"*I was claiming income support for quite a while, for nearly a year. I found it difficult to get a job working with kids. I remember when we were at college we were always told 'that when you leave here you'll always get a job like that [snaps fingers], there'll always be people wanting you to look after children', and it took me ages to get a job. One that I wanted.*" (Ella, daughter)

Georgia had studied art and design for four years at two different colleges and had been horrified to discover that upon leaving college at the age of 21 to seek employment she was dismissed as 'being too old'. She was unable to secure any

employment in the field that she had trained for. Instead she worked as a buyer for a fashion store.

> "*I was working in a factory when I came out of college…I went to college for four years and came out with...I didn't get a job in what I wanted to do. Now I find I'm, if you like, over-qualified, under-experienced and too old. And that's when I came out of college*!" (Georgia, daughter)

Daughters were placing a high value on work and education and they were prepared to work hard to realise their aspirations. However, there was still a tendency for girls to select traditional gender-specific occupations. The role that gender played in girls' selection of occupations did mean that it would affect their future position in the labour market, financial remuneration and standard of living.

In summary, although the majority of daughters received careers advice it was dismissed as being irrelevant and unhelpful and was seen to reinforce traditional choices. Therefore, improvements (in the form of concrete advice) were still needed to encourage girls to consider jobs that had traditionally been dominated by boys. However, it was seen that girls were now prepared to consider a far wider range of occupations than was reported in studies in the 1970s and early 1980s (the media had a powerful influence) although there was still a tendency to select jobs that were categorised as being 'traditional female'. Daughters did place a high value on education as the pathway to success and they were prepared to work hard to realise their aspirations. In doing so they adopted realistic approaches to decision-making with regard to their future employment.

7.6   Women In The Workplace

An analysis was undertaken to determine the daughters' views about career women, role models and whether they perceived gender discrimination to be found within the workplace.

7.6.1 Perception Of Career Women

The daughters were asked what the term 'career woman' meant to them as this was a phrase that was used a lot in the media at the time of the interviews.

Overwhelmingly the daughters believed that it was a woman who was very focused in what she was doing, she knew what she wanted and she had set targets for herself.

> "*Somebody who knows what she wants. Somebody who's going to work hard to get what she wants. Somebody who's willing to work hard to get where they're going.*" (Danielle, daughter)

Most of the daughters believed that a woman pursuing a career could have a relationship with a husband/partner and also have a family (although she may need the assistance of a nanny or childminder). In fact, several daughters believed that to be a happy and successful career woman a family background was essential.

> "*You need a life. I think you need a relationship to help you along. Cos if you are like one hundred per cent career woman all your decisions are like 'you', you can't go home and have a break from it all. You go home, and you'll sit down, 'nothing to do, nothing on telly, I might as well do my work' but if you go home to someone or a family or whatever, I think it's a break for you too.*" (Dawn, daughter)

> "*A lot of women now have got children and are married and have got houses and homes and still manage to have a good career so I think somebody who's*

got an equal balance – a social life and a boyfriend or a partner. She knows what she wants. She just wants to be successful." (Nadia, daughter)

They believed she was in a good job (often managerial or her own boss) and was seen to be successful, ambitious, confident and independent. She earned a 'decent salary', had her own car and was well dressed. She was happy in her job and enjoyed her career because, although dedicated, she would have to work long hours.

"*Someone who's ambitious, wants to go as high as she can in her chosen career.*" (Natasha, daughter)

These findings confirmed and contradicted the findings of Thomas (1990, as discussed in section 4.3.3). They concurred with the positive attributes discovered by Thomas such as women being viewed as 'ambitious', 'single-minded' (the daughters in my sample tended to use the word 'focused') and 'independent'. However, the daughters did not use the negative words or phrases that Thomas had found such as 'selfish' and 'could look after herself'. The only negativity from some daughters in my sample was that the kind of woman considered a 'career woman' would only care about her job to the exclusion of everything and everyone else and therefore should have to be single with no family.

"*I think if you want a career you can't have a career and a family at the beginning. You've got to have the career first and then start on the family.*" (Ella, daughter)

Although the daughters felt that any woman could become a career woman it was interesting to note that the majority of daughters claimed that they did not know anybody who would fall into this category. Even if their own mother was working full-

time she was dismissed in the same way that female teaching staff were not viewed as career women.

Some daughters indicated that they felt that they themselves would be working and pursuing careers successfully and would also be able to incorporate a family with a career.

> "*I hope so. I think it's going to be difficult though. I think it'll be difficult but I think you can.*" (Chelcie, daughter)

Some daughters who were already in employment were beginning to consider whether they and their peers/colleagues could be classed as career women.

> "*I think because we're all just out of university I don't think I can say any of us are yet. I think it's more somebody who's been working for like five years and has decided that they are really going to build on their career rather than people who've only been working for a year or two years and they're just in their first jobs and still finding their feet and stuff.*" (Tess, daughter)

Daughters were aware that it was only women who were labelled in this way – a form of discrimination being perpetuated via the media.

> "*You imagine how a man would be but it's a woman. You don't say a career man, do you, you just think it's normal, but a career woman has to do a man's job. It's just a stupid way of thinking about it.*" (Alicia, daughter)

> "*I think the media invented the term to imply that this woman has a job* (laughs). *They feel they need to be able to categorise it somehow.*" (Tanya, daughter)

7.6.2 Perception Of Gender Discrimination

All the daughters in the sample had undertaken their schooling and further education after the implementation of sex discrimination legislation and equal opportunities policies. They had grown up having been accustomed to the principle of equality in

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law from an early age and had also seen women enter the workforce in great numbers occupying a wide range of jobs. As commented by Tinklin et al (2005, discussed in section 4.3.2) young people (including the daughters in my sample) were acutely aware about equal opportunities and believed that males and females should have the same opportunities and expectations within the workplace. The daughters in my sample held modern views about the roles of men and women at work. However, only just over half of the sample of daughters forwarded comments about gender discrimination because the rest felt that they could not comment as they had never been in employment and were not aware of what happened within organisations.

Of the 37 daughters who forwarded comments about gender discrimination 33 claimed that there was a gender bias within society and that men were favoured above women. These daughters also believed that, despite sex discrimination legislation and equal opportunities policies within organisations, gender discrimination still occurred leading to men securing employment in the top positions and gaining the accompanying benefits.

"*It [society] does favour men, definitely.*" (Kelly, daughter)

"*I think men are still favoured, I think they are thought more of than women. I think men do get better jobs and more opportunities.*" (Toni, daughter)

"*Where mum works it's all men and all the men seem to get the company cars, I mean mum is in the same job as a man at the same level but he gets the company car and mum doesn't.*" (Jeanette, daughter)

Although 44 mothers in the sample made comments about gender discrimination compared to 37 daughters, it was interesting to note that more daughters than

mothers believed that society favoured men and that gender discrimination still occurred (33 daughters as opposed to 28 mothers).

The main area of gender inequalities that daughters were aware of was education. They were aware that men were head teachers and heads of departments but that women were ordinary teaching staff.

> "*There seems to be more males in power, you just need to look at our school and you can see it's all males in the top jobs and all the women have been there just as long. It does seem to be that there's a lot more males in high powered jobs.*" (Melissa, daughter)

> "*I think men are still favoured to have more responsibility. At school, the heads of science and maths were men although the teachers were women. I'm sure that's how they [the men] got the jobs.*" (Jenna, daughter)

As found by Francis (2000a, see section 4.3.2) daughters who were or had been in employment in a male dominated area (e.g. car sales person, welder) mentioned that they had themselves personally experienced gender discrimination. This was also the case for daughters studying a traditional male subject.

> "*Most definitely in my subject they do. I mean on my course, industrial design and technology, there were 50 boys and 6 girls and when I went out on placement, the male teachers tended to favour my teaching partner because he was a male. I was doing the same as him, in fact I had a better degree at the end, but he was preferred because he was male. And my teacher used to come out with sexist comments.*" (Cindy, daughter)

The daughters believed that discrimination still occurred partly because of society's perception about job roles – beliefs that certain jobs were for women and certain jobs were for men. People were still channelled into gender appropriate jobs. As Tinklin et al (2005, see section 4.3.2) discovered young people believed that entering non-traditional occupations might encounter prejudice.

"Shop assistants, you usually find they're female. And where I work [name of retail store] there's no male shop assistants at all. They're all female. The manager's male but the rest are female." (Bethany, daughter)

"There's still a lot of jobs that are only considered for boys. It's not often you see a woman mechanic or something like that. And I don't think many people would accept someone like that because they are set in their ways." (Jaime, daughter)

However, daughters felt that over time this would change as more girls entered traditional male jobs and more boys entered traditional female jobs.

"I think it's specific to your job role definitely. It is like girls go into certain jobs and boys go into certain jobs. But I think it's changing." (Leanne, daughter)

Daughters did think that women may still have difficulties in obtaining employment if employers thought they may leave to have children.

"Well they say it's all equal but there's bound to be gender discrimination all the time. It doesn't matter what the laws are. If I went for a job and the interviewer was a man and he thought 'oh she's got kids' but he didn't say that was the reason I didn't get the job it would still be because of that." (Molly, daughter)

Although daughters believed that opportunities were now available within the workplace for women to succeed in their chosen career and that they were educationally equipped to secure well paid, managerial positions, they were aware that they could face discrimination in the future and that in society men were still favoured over women.

7.6.3 Perception of the Future

After having ascertained daughters' views about career women and gender discrimination I proceeded to find out about how they envisaged and anticipated their own futures, especially with regard to employment. The daughters in the sample

were aged 14-23 and they were asked what they imagined they would be doing in general in 5 years' time. Obviously this meant the daughters had to anticipate what they might be doing at the ages of 19-28 which is a large age range. The unprompted answers are below:

Table 26 – Daughters – Anticipation Of Future Five Years Ahead

Starting in employment (good job)	20
Gaining promotion within employment	8
Still in education	13
Travelling abroad	10
Married/Living with partner	3
Not married	3
No children	2
Having had children	1
Have own house	1

28 daughters thought that they would be in employment – either starting out on their career or in the process of 'working their way up' and looking for promotion. They frequently used the expression 'in a good job' and thought that they would have achieved what they desired. These daughters did not mention motherhood (or living with someone) but instead focused upon their career and what they hoped they would be achieving. This was important because men tended to construct their identity in terms of the sort of job they would be doing whilst women tended to construct theirs in terms, not only of their job, but also of whether they would be married or single. It was found that daughters talked of employment, education and travelling – not of marriage and motherhood. If children were mentioned it was to state that motherhood was to be delayed until a career had been established.

> "*I want to have a good job and earn lots of money before I start to have children but I do want to have children.*" (Isabelle, daughter)

13 daughters believed that within the next 5 years they would still be pursuing educational qualifications (usually a degree at university).

"*Hopefully just finishing my course at university.*" (Laura, daughter)

10 daughters expressed a desire to travel abroad and, as found by Lees (1993, discussed in section 3.2.2) this was seen as something that had to be achieved before 'settling down with a career'.

"*I would consider living, moving, emigrating, whatever, although I do come from an extremely close family, but I want to broaden my horizons. And I've always wanted to be a bit more adventurous. I want to work with people in Africa or South America.*" (Charlotte, daughter)

Only 3 daughters thought that they would be married/living with someone with 1 thinking she might have had children. 3 daughters expressly said that they would not be married as their career was more important.

The daughters in the sample were then asked what they imagined they would be doing in 10 years' time. This meant the daughters had to anticipate what they might be doing during the ages of 24-33 and I discovered that those at the lower age range at the time of interviewing (under 16) found it difficult to answer this question. They could not envisage what they might be doing in their mid-20s. It was the daughters who were older and were already in employment, or about to leave university, who were able to consider such a long time frame. The unprompted answers from those responding to the question are below (a daughter can give more than one response):

Table 27 – Daughters - Anticipation Of Future Ten Years Ahead

Employed in a good job	28
Running my own business	2
Married/Settled down with partner	17
Having had children	10
Not settled down/not married	6
Living on my own	2
No children	4

[can give more than 1 response]

30 daughters claimed that they intended to be in employment (using the expression 'in a good job') or running their own business. They were focused upon what they wished to achieve and accepted that it might take time.

"*Working, perhaps not at the level I'd like to be, not as high as I'd like to be, but working my way up to the level I would want to be at.*" (Jeanette, daughter)

"*Hopefully running my own business (laughs).*" (Toni, daughter)

In addition to gaining employment in the job that they desired, the daughters also wanted the possessions that such a salary could afford. If they were earning money and were independent then they wished to exploit their wealth.

"*Hopefully in a nice house with a new car* (laughs)." (Gabrielle, daughter)

17 daughters thought that at this age they would probably be married/settled down with 10 of them thinking that they would probably have had children. Society's attitude that women should be married/living with someone and having children was still pervasive even though it was to a lesser degree than for teenage girls/young women in the 1960s and 1970s.

> *"I see myself with a decent job, a degree, having travelled a lot. Having a decent career before I think about having children. Maybe married. It always seems to me that when somebody says 'in ten years' time' you don't think of it as that far away but then you think you'll be twenty-seven, twenty-eight, and you think 'God I've got to be married by then or otherwise I'm going to be 'left on the shelf'' sort of thing.*" (Danielle, daughter)

In contrast, 8 daughters claimed that they would be independent and living on their own/not settled down, in order to focus upon their career. This reflected the findings of Arnot et al (1999) who claimed that young women no longer sought economic dependence on a man or a husband but wished to take their own place in the world of work and now held different values.

> *"I don't want to have children and stuff. I want to be working my way up trying to get as good a job as I can with promotion." (*Natasha, daughter*)*

> *"I may be with someone but I don't really like the sound of children [shudders]. Maybe at some point but not too many of them. I'm not very into children.*" (Kelly, daughter)

Attitudes towards marriage/living with someone and motherhood had changed. These stages in the life cycle were not as important as they had been for the daughters' own mothers. These were things that could be delayed and the intention was to delay them until a career had been established. Children were indeed viewed as an interruption to a career so were to be postponed until as late as possible.

> *"I'm not one of those people who think 'oh I have to get married, I have to get married'. I'm not really that keen on marriage. I don't see children in the future much. I have to get my career before that. I think that's more important.*" (Molly, daughter)

> *"I think I'll be dedicated to my work. And socialising at weekends and things like that. No family, nothing like that, no husband or family or anything like that. That's not till late cos I think you only live your life once and once you're settled, or you have children, then that's like half your life over.*" (Olivia, daughter)

Daughters wanted to develop their career at work and become established. They held high, although it could be argued that some were unrealistic, expectations of their careers.

7.6.4 Working Life

As all the daughters had expressed their desire to gain employment and, in most cases, were actively pursuing qualifications (sometimes involving quite a lengthy period of study) in order to enter their chosen field, they were asked whether, when they initially commenced work, they would work full-time or part-time. 7 daughters felt that it would be part-time because they still wished to study whilst working or that, due to the nature of their chosen work e.g. nursery nursing, lecturing, most jobs were of a part-time nature and it would take a while to build up to full-time hours. The remaining 53 daughters stated that they wished to take up full-time employment.

> "*I want to work full-time. If I have to work part-time I will but I'd rather be working. When I start working I want to be working full-time in a proper job and really getting my head down.*" (Evie, daughter)

The daughters acknowledged that being employed in a 'good job' was important because it allowed for independence, material possessions and, should it be required at a later date, the opportunity to return after the birth of children.

> "*I've always wanted a good job and I've always wanted a job that I can go back to, you know, if I got married and had children.*" (Jade, daughter)

The 53 daughters were then asked what they thought would happen about their career should they decide to have a family. It was found that the majority of daughters felt that they would marry/live with someone at a later date and eventually

have children. Invariably they claimed that motherhood would lead to their career being interrupted and they acknowledged that childcare responsibilities would shape how their careers progressed. They believed that such childcare duties were not compatible with a full-time job. My findings reflected the findings of Marks and Houston (2002, see section 3.2.2) that, although the daughters originally had strong intentions to pursue a career, after having gained further educational qualifications, and in some cases higher educational qualifications, these plans would be influenced by the expectation of having to combine work with motherhood.

"*You have to have a break.*" (Kelly, daughter)

"*That's when you have to go part-time innit, but, you know, it's only for a bit really.*" (Esme, daughter)

Although for some daughters children were not viewed as a future full-time vocation they were considered a future interruption of working lives. Only two or three daughters claimed that they would hire childminders or nannies, or put their children into full-time nurseries so that they could return quickly to their job.

"*I would try to work full-time and maybe hire a nanny or somebody. But if not I think I'd have to go part-time but I don't think I'd enjoy it as much [not working full-time]. I'd like to get more involved [at work] and know what's going off. I'd feel like I was missing out on what I used to have.*" (Laura, daughter)

Daughters did wish to combine motherhood with paid employment and were aware of the possible option of returning to work after the birth of children. However, in the majority of cases this would not be an imminent return to work. These daughters all stated that they would stay at home with their children for at least two years. It was noted that childrearing and childcare were viewed by the daughters in the sample as being a woman's responsibility and were an unavoidable and unalterable fact of life

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(only 2 daughters mentioned about future husbands staying at home to look after children). The daughters appeared realistic in their views that they would primarily be responsible for childcare tasks and duties, possibly for many years, whether they desired so or not.

Although daughters saw motherhood as an interruption in their working lives they did not view it as conflict – most seemed quite happy and willing to give up work for family commitments. However, it was the length of the interruption to their career that was surprising. Many daughters felt that they would stay at home with the children until the children were of school age.

> "*I think if you have family, family comes first, [give up work] not forever but perhaps for the first maybe couple of years and then go back into full-time work. But I see myself as a full-time worker.*" (Georgia, daughter)

> "*I see myself as full-time. Up until I have a family. Then I will completely give up a job until the children are, at least, at primary school…I wouldn't want to miss out on seeing my children grow up so I wouldn't work while they were at school.*" (Emma, daughter)

Some daughters wished to replicate the lives of their own mothers by either working part-time so as to be at home when their children returned from school, or by remaining at home all the time.

> "*Until they don't need me any more which, like my mum, would be till they're maybe sixteen or grown up and moved out of the house.*" (Danielle, daughter)

This demonstrated an unrealistic view of the labour market. It was not feasible to expect to pursue a well paid, demanding career that would allow a woman to remain at home for 16 years (or 11 years for the child to reach secondary school age), and then to return to the same position. With the advancements in technology such a

length of time absent from the workplace would make it extremely difficult for a woman to return to her previous employment. Daughters were embarking upon careers that required many years of preparation and study (e.g. pharmacology, civil engineering, lecturing) but were then expecting to shelve the career for several years in order to raise families.

The desire to remain at home with children had evolved from attitudes held within the daughter's own family and home. Mothers had a terrific influence here – either implicitly, because they themselves had remained at home to raise children and had been a role model in this respect, or explicitly by telling their daughters that a mother's place was in the home with her young children.

> "*I'd like to have a career to start with and then get married and have kids and then stay at home to look after them. I think that you follow what your mum has done. You see your mum, it looks like she enjoys herself (laughs). I think maybe I'd like that lifestyle – stay at home. I'd like to have a career to start with and then once the kids are grown up then have something to fall back on.*" (April, daughter)

Several mothers in the sample commented that they believed it was important that their daughters should spend time at home with young children. Although they had supported their daughters through their schooling and had favoured further education and, in places, higher education they wished their daughters to forego their career in order to perform childcare duties.

> "*I think it's very difficult to combine a family with a career full-time. And I hope I've influenced Emma in a way that she's thinking about not leaving her children with somebody else while they're tiny. I would never do that. I don't agree with it. If you really are career minded and it really is a high class career, something like that, and you want to follow it through then you should put it on hold while you have your family or you shouldn't have a family at all because I don't think it's right that you have children and two months later somebody else is looking after them.*" (Ingrid, mother)

For some daughters in the sample their careers were envisaged to be short-lived, despite the years of training. Tabitha who was just finishing her university degree and wished to embark upon a managerial career within human resources (like her father) wanted to pursue her career until motherhood and then remain at home with the children (like her mother) to become a part-time worker at a later date. After spending years training and gaining qualifications she intended to work only part-time throughout her working life once she had had a family.

> "*I think I will probably work full-time until I'm about 35 and then I'll stop. I'd like to stay at home and look after my children. And then go part-time once they had gone to school. And then part-time for the rest of my working life.*" (Tabitha, daughter)

It appeared that some daughters were happy to literally cast aside their careful academic and career planning for the sake of domestic/childcare responsibilities.

Although all the daughters acknowledged the interruption that children would make to their working lives only one daughter, Carrie, mentioned the hard work that was being put into her career at the early stage and all the qualifications and studying that was needed to pursue a career. She was the only one to comment upon the time and work that had been invested into a career and state that she was not surrendering it for the sake of a family.

> "*I'd go back hopefully full-time if my job would let me, if not then part-time. If I do become a paramedic I'll have worked hard to become one, because I know there's obstacles still to jump, and I wouldn't want to give it up after all the years of working for it.*" (Carrie, daughter)

In summary, my findings showed that daughters believed that they would work for most of their lives and this was the reason why education was so highly valued. The

girls identified careers, not low paid jobs, for their futures. They put a high priority on developing a career before considering marriage and children.

Reflecting the findings of Banks et al (1992, see section 3.2.2) it was discovered that, although daughters considered themselves future 'career' women, they still believed that they would pursue a prolonged period of social and economic independence before settling down to marriage/living with someone when a domestic career would take over. Whereas mothers in the sample talked about 'juggling' the dual responsibilities of work life and home life this was something that daughters did not mention. Most of the daughters intended to avoid such a 'juggling act' by not working when they had young children.

Marriage was no longer viewed as an inevitable fact of life with daughters talking of living with a partner or living alone. However, for the majority of daughters in the sample motherhood was viewed as inevitable, as was the accompanying childcare responsibilities, and they felt these would be a major part of their lives. But, motherhood was not viewed as the end of a promising career, merely an interruption. Daughters did foresee a return to work after children and a few mentioned the possibilities of putting children in full-time nurseries or employing a childminder. Nevertheless, the majority put employment second to domestic responsibility and were not prepared to contemplate non-maternal childcare. They assumed that they would be able to have a family and a career and could have both without sacrificing the quality of either.

The length of their domestic career varied but was usually seen to be at least 5 years (children starting primary school) stretching up to 11 years (children starting

secondary school). When the daughters returned to the labour market after the birth of their children they imagined that it would be on a part-time basis to fit around their childcare responsibilities. However, this demonstrated an unrealistic view of the labour market as it was not feasible to expect to return to a well paid, demanding career at a high position after having had at least 5 years at home. With the advancements in technology and the ever changing workplace that feature in a competitive global environment such a length of time absent from the labour market would make it extremely difficult for a woman to return to her previous employment. As Perrons and Shaw (1995, see section 4.2) argued although part-time employment did enable women to combine paid work with childcare responsibilities, such jobs tended to have limited prospects for career advancement. Part-time work could have an adverse effect on women's employment status and financial security.

Although all daughters claimed they wanted a career and used the term 'a good job' they also insisted that a 'career woman' could have a family and it was this area that showed great inconsistencies. The reality was that the daughters wanted a family some time in the future and, although they said to the contrary that their career was important, they would effectively sacrifice it in order to remain at home with their children. No matter how exciting, glamorous or well-paid the contemplated career nearly all daughters stated that they would give up work to have children and many claimied that they would not return to work until the children were either of school starting age or school leaving age.

Daughters were placing a high and equivalent value upon both career and family role but these were seen to run subsequently with the family role succeeding the career role. Daughters were embarking upon careers that required many years of

preparation and study (e.g. pharmacology, civil engineering, lecturing) but then expected to shelve these careers for several years in order to raise families. These daughters who wished to pursue successful careers but also desired to care full-time for their children, were demonstrating that they could hold both traditional and egalitarian values. Although independence was often necessary due to the substantive number of divorces in society, and a successful career could lead to financial security, this generation of daughters intended to act in the same manner as their mothers and remain at home for several years with young children. The daughters were not considering how this period of time away from employment would affect their careers.

7.7 The Ways Mothers' Educational Experiences Affect Their Daughters' Educational Experiences

30 daughters in the sample stated that they did have some form of regret about their education, 12 claimed that they had no regrets and the rest did not comment. It was interesting to note that, although most of these daughters had only very recently finished their education, or indeed were still progressing through it, they had regrets. Although the daughters claimed that they had been thoroughly involved in all aspects of educational decision-making (see sections 7.2.2, 7.3, 7.4.1.1 and 7.4.2.1) half of the sample claimed to have regrets.

Table 28 – Daughters – Regrets About Their Education

1.	Wish I had worked harder and done better (gained more qualifications or better grades)	16
2.	Selected wrong subjects at GCSE	6
	Selected wrong subjects at 'A' level	4
	Selected wrong course at university	2
3.	Chose the wrong secondary school	4
4.	Stayed on at school instead of going to college	3
	Went to college instead of joining a training course	1

[can give more than 1 response]

Regrets tended to fall into 4 categories: working harder, wrong choice of subjects, wrong choice of secondary school or wrong decision about further education.

The main regret was not having worked harder and therefore not gaining as many qualifications, or higher graded qualifications, as they believed they had been capable of achieving. This, too, had been the number one regret of their mothers.

"*I regret not working harder but at the time I were too young to realise what it meant.*" (Leanne, daughter)

"*I could have done more revision and got better grades.*" (Laura, daughter)

"*I regret the fact that I didn't work harder at my 'A' levels. I messed up all my coursework pieces. And I regret that because I know my grades would have been better.*" (Jeanette, daughter)

"*If I'd tried a bit harder, I mean I did eight GCSEs and they were all Ds. I think if I could have tried that bit harder they could've all been Cs and I'd be pleased to bits. I was so disappointed when I got my results.* "(Courtney, daughter)

These findings reflected the findings of Cullingford's research (2002, see section 2.3.3) that the major regret of pupils was that they realised that they could have achieved more by working harder. As highlighted by Courtney above the daughters expressed a personal sense of disappointment that they had not fulfilled their

potential. They did realise the difference between what had been achieved and what 'might have been'.

Several daughters felt that they had made wrong subject selections at GCSE level or for their 'A' levels or had selected the wrong course at university, whilst 4 daughters regretted their choice of secondary school.

3 daughters wished that they had gone to college rather than remaining at their schools' sixth form. 1 daughter regretted spending four years at college to become qualified only to discover that she was unable to secure employment in her chosen field. She felt that, with hindsight, she should have joined a training programme which would have ensured employment.

> "*When you look at the respect that I'm working in a factory…I went to college for four years and didn't get a job in what I wanted to do. Now I find I'm, if you like, over-qualified, under-experienced and too old. And that's when I came out of college. So there were a couple of regrets. I think if I went back and did it again I'd probably, maybe not go to college but maybe, do a YTS or training job.*" (Georgia, daughter)

Of all the daughters claiming to have regrets only one blamed her school for these regrets and felt that her lack of success had been imposed upon her.

> "*I wish I hadn't taken French but not because of the subject but because of the teacher. I wish I hadn't taken German but that was only because the teacher was ill and we missed out great chunks of it until the new head [teacher] came in. It's not down to the choices I made, it's down to the school. I think if I'd have gone elsewhere and made the same choices I wouldn't regret them.*" (Holly, daughter)

The other daughters acknowledged that it was due to their own decision-making or that their personal remorse was due to the fact that they had been responsible for

not working hard enough to achieve what they wished. The daughters blamed themselves for any regrets that they had.

7.7.1 The Mother's Message To Her Daughter

The daughters in the sample were asked whether they thought that their mothers had tried to convey to them any form of educational 'message'. Although most of the mothers had claimed that they had indeed tried to impart something to their daughters it was important to discover whether the daughters had 'heard' the message.

Whilst the main message that mothers had tried to 'get over' was about the importance of education and qualifications and how they could lead to a well-paid job and the career of choice, this was not the main message that the daughters heard. The table below shows the messages as heard by the daughters who felt their mothers had a message.

Table 29 – Daughters – The Mother's Message As Heard By The Daughter

Do your best	11
Work hard and gain qualifications	5
Education is very important	4
Be happy whilst at school	3
Be 'independent ' – do not rely on a man	2
Do not waste your opportunities	1
Allow yourself to have 'choice' in life	1
You have the opportunity to have things I never had	1
Take your education as far as you can	1

Daughters believed that the main message was 'do your best'. They believed that their mothers would be happy with their educational successes/failures as long as effort had been put in.

"*Try your best.*" (Cassie, daughter)

"*It was just a simple message, 'do your best' but it's quite a powerful message.*" (Carrie, daughter)

'Work hard and gain qualifications' and 'education is very important' were considered the next important messages.

"*She's told me that education is important and you do need it to fall back on. I think so you can have choices really.*" (Kirsty, daughter)

"*She's always had a message telling me that if I keep on with my education and try hard and try my best then I will get what I want out of life.*" (Laura, daughter)

These messages were also tied in with other areas that mothers had believed important – the concept of 'choice' in life and that education would lead to success in a career and/or material possessions later in life. Education was seen as a 'means to an end' in this respect – it was something that was inevitable if rewards were to be gained at a later date.

The message about being 'independent' and self-reliant was only mentioned twice and in both cases by daughters who had been raised in a home headed by a single mother. They were aware of the need to develop marketable skills so that they could earn sufficient money to support themselves and any future children. Karen, who had been widowed when her daughters were young, had been adamant that education was important and this message had been heard by her daughter Chelcie.

"*She was quite straightforward. She's always said to us 'I want you to be independent'. Because of my dad really...when he died. She always said when my dad died she didn't know how to change a plug and she didn't want that for us. She wants us to know things. She was quite straightforward.*" (Chelcie, daughter)

Only 1 daughter claimed that her mother's message was related to the opportunities that were accessible now and that had been unavailable at the time of her mother's schooling.

"*I think that she wants me to take advantage of the opportunities that I've got nowadays that she didn't have. And she wants me to do well and carry on as far as I can.*" (Jaime, daughter)

Although mothers may have been emphasising the importance of education, 3 daughters felt that their mothers thought that happiness was more important – make the most of your education and the opportunities available but enjoy your school days.

"*'Don't waste it. Don't waste the time you've got at school. You're supposed to enjoy it. You're not going to get anything like it after you've left school. Do well. And try and enjoy it as much as you can'.*" (Bethany, daughter)

7.7.1.1 Receptivity To The Message

Although a mother may have had a message that she wished to pass on to her daughter about the value of education it did not necessarily mean that her daughter would listen to the message and act upon it.

Overwhelmingly the daughters who believed their mothers had had a message claimed to have listened and, in addition, to have 'taken it on board'. My findings reflected those of Quinn (2004, discussed in section 2.1) that the messages passed on to daughters from their mothers could have a very strong influence with regard to education, learning and knowledge.

"*I listened to it and I suppose I've complied as much as I can.*" (Bethany, daughter)

"I think I take it on board. When I was doing my GCSEs I used to get a bit stressed, cos like, "no you can't go out, you've got to do some revision, you've got your exams coming up". And at the time I'd think 'Oh God!' but afterwards I'm glad that I stayed in and did listen to her. So I did take it on board." (Kirsty, daughter)

Not only did the daughters listen and 'take on board' the message but they also appreciated what their mothers were saying. They assumed that their mothers had their best interests at heart and any conflict was actually for a purpose.

"I used to think my mother's just doing this to make my life Hell but that's a teenager thought, isn't it, that's puberty for you (laughs). But now, I can see her point. And I'm glad that she feels like that for me because it's meant that I've got the best education I can. I am receptive to her message." (Holly, daughter)

Sometimes, though, a daughter might hear the message but find it difficult to comply.

"I listen to it. I don't know whether I always do what she said but I've probably listened to it" (Tammy, daughter)

In agreement with what several of the mothers claimed, some of the daughters preferred it if it looked as though the daughters had come to these conclusions without the mothers' help. In some instances they may even have made it seem as though they were rejecting the mother's message although they were actually 'taking it on board'. This may have been a form of 'independence' that the daughters wanted to express and something that the mothers had actively been trying to encourage.

"I come over as rejecting it but I do actually take it in. I have a bit of a moan, but I do actually take it in. I do actually do it in the end because it does niggle at you if you don't but everything she does say I usually take on board." (Cindy, daughter)

"Yeah I do. I know it might not seem that way to her but I really do." (Kesia, daughter)

Some of the daughters felt that receptivity to the message only happened when they became older. Listening to one's mother and acknowledging and accepting what she said could only occur with maturity.

"I never used to but I think that now I'm older I do a lot more. I listen a lot more to what she has to say. As I got older I just started to appreciate what she was telling me. And when I think back now what she was telling me was absolutely right." (Laura, daughter)

"I think I realise that now but I didn't at school. But obviously it did mean something to me because I got a job, a career. I'm trying to better myself. I'm looking for jobs all the time in the job centre, for better jobs, to further my career." (Chelcie, daughter)

However, not all daughters did accept their mother's message even though they did hear it. Daughters may have thought they were too young to act upon the message (those who were only aged 14 or 15) or rejection occurred because the daughters wanted to be responsible for their own decision-making or were not prepared to accept what their mothers said. This was not because she was a 'woman' but because she was their 'mother' and the daughters did not see the mother role as having any status. This could be part of the separation process where the daughter strives to find her own identity, achieve maturity and independence.

"I didn't listen. Oh I know it sounds horrible, didn't bother about what she was saying. It was more 'well it's my life, I'm going to do what I want to do' sort of thing, which I did." (Imogen, daughter)

"Yeah. I just wanted to make my own mind up. I used to ignore my mum. And it's just the thing in't it, it happens." (Courtney, daughter)

"Because it's my mum (laughs)." (Simone, daughter)

"Same as anybody at that time you generally don't listen to your mum and dad (laughs)." (Leanne, daughter)

7.7.2 Relationship With Mother

It was quite evident from the research interviews that all the mother-daughter pairings had a healthy relationship as identified by the fact that they had agreed to participate in the research and talk about their education and the mother's involvement in her daughter's education, schooling and life. Any maladaptive mother-daughter relationship would not have allowed an interview to take place. Relationships were based on communication, the daughters discussed talking with their mothers and how this was a source of 'closeness' and mothers thought this an important aspect of their relationship.

> "*We talk about things a lot.*" (Kerry, daughter)

> "*We're one of these families where we sit down and talk about everything. Sometimes it's around the table (laughs). It's like "Neighbours'. We discuss everything really.* " (Ruth, mother)

Such emotional interaction was described as 'close' and some daughters claimed to 'get on really well' with their mothers. A mother may be, for example, classed as 'a really close friend'.

> "*Me mum was always there for me. I don't know, she's more like a friend, me mum, she's not like me mum, she's like a friend and she's always dead easy to get on with so she's always been there for me, no matter what. So she's supported me all the way through school.*" (Nadia, daughter)

Daughters were deeply grateful for the support and encouragement that they received from their mothers finding it emotionally rewarding, a form of acceptance and a source of constant security. The mother-daughter relationship and the succour it provided gave the daughters confidence which could be crucial for academic success.

"I tend to get worked up, and my mum's like, 'sit down, don't worry' and it always tends to work out okay." (Melissa, daughter)

"Well during my GCSEs she helped me revise and stuff. It was quite hard because my mum and dad left school when they were 14, and they're quite old parents, but they've always been there. And I appreciate what she's done for me. Not many other mothers would sit and revise. My friends, none of their mothers would. So I am grateful." (Melissa, daughter)

In addition, the mother-daughter relationship could become stronger as the daughter got older. Not only did the daughter hear any message being given but she was more receptive to listen to her mother.

"She's really influenced me and encouraged me to try things. I were a lot more willing to sit down and talk to my mum. As I got older, I've grown close to my mum so the message has become more clear." (Laura, daughter)

Also personal family circumstances could strengthen the mother-daughter relationship.

"Probably my parents splitting up has influenced the way I think about things." (Molly, daughter)

"Because me dad has always looked after me mum, he's got it in the back of his head 'oh well she'll, you know, find someone who'll look after her anyway', whereas me mum, because it were late on in life that she started doing things for herself and got a career and whatever, she didn't want me to make the same mistake, so I think she were that bit more encouraging." (Evie, daughter)

Mothers invested time, effort, money and emotion into their daughters' education and it was via the mother-daughter relationship that the impact of the mothers' values had the greatest effect upon the daughters' educational experiences and career aspirations.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

8.1   Main Findings

The simple way to sum up this research would be that mothers, via the crucial mother-daughter relationship, convey very important messages about the value of education to their daughters. Although daughters react positively to these messages, actively gain formal qualifications and pursue further, and sometimes, higher education, in order to pursue their chosen careers, they were prepared to shelve these careers in order to perform childcare duties at home and to replicate the same lifestyle that their mothers had had.

To expand upon this, the main conclusions that arise from the data about "how the educational experiences of mothers affect their daughters' educational experiences and career aspirations" are detailed below.

Mothers had contributed to a change in the educational aspirations and achievements of their daughters. The mothers had invested time, effort, money and emotion into their daughters' education and were encouraging and supporting their daughters to acquire the skills needed to succeed in the labour market, to achieve as much as possible at school and to ascend the educational hierarchy as far as they wished. They wanted their daughters to fulfil their potential and to be happy. They were also encouraging their daughters to challenge and resist sexism and were positively encouraging non-traditional interests. All these hopes and aspirations for

their daughters were passed on via the strong mother-daughter relationship and the messages being conveyed. These messages had a very strong influence upon the daughters with regard to education, learning and knowledge. And it was via the mother-daughter relationship and the messages contained within that the daughters' educational experiences and career aspirations were affected. The mother-daughter relationship was far more prominent and crucial than any peer relationship, father-daughter relationship or school-pupil relationship. It was found that the strength and power of the mother's message was greater than that found in the research by Quinn (2004, see section 2.1) and had more impact than suggested in the research by Mann (1998, see section 2.1).

Daughters were deeply grateful for the support and encouragement that they received from their mothers finding it emotionally rewarding, a form of acceptance and a source of constant security. The mother-daughter relationship and the succour it provided gave the daughters confidence which could be crucial for academic success. The daughters acknowledged the importance of education and qualifications and knew that these were essential for success in the labour market. They desired careers and were happy to embark upon several years of study to acquire relevant qualifications to be able to enter their desired occupation. However, the most startling conclusion was that, although daughters desired rewarding and well-paid careers, they were prepared to shelve these careers, for at least a minimum of five years, in order to perform childcare duties and responsibilities at home. This intention to remain at home was more prominent than shown in the results found by Marks and Houston (2002, as discussed in section 3.2.2). Although hearing their mothers' messages about the value of education and the benefits it

entailed, and making declarations that they wanted a career, their long-term intention was to revert to the same lifestyle that their mothers had had and remain at home with young children. Despite the recent educational successes of girls and women's increased representation in the workplace, gender continues to influence girls' behaviour. Gender roles in the family have remained largely unchanged since the times of the mothers' schooling and these appeared to have the greatest impact on a daughter's long-term career aspirations. Until such times as men willingly become 'house-husbands' (in marriages where the wife is actually the main income earner at the time of a child's birth) or the Government offers mothers free full-time childcare provision for pre-school aged children so that they can financially afford to return to employment, then women will continue to take on the main responsibility for childcare and this will usually be at the expense of their career.

The following is a discussion about how my research findings contribute to theoretical debates and how they are positioned with reference to contemporary literature.

Whilst previous sociological research studies had found that girls suffered low self-confidence, low self-esteem and that the male-dominated curriculum hindered their progress (Spender, 1982; Stanworth, 1983; Mahony, 1985; Licht and Dweck, 1987; see section 2.2) my findings showed that girls did not allow perceived discrimination in the classroom to hamper them or make them dismiss the system of education. Daughters were aware of the benefits of education, viewed it as the route to greater life chances and seized the important educational opportunities offered to them.

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Measor and Sikes (1992, see section 2.3) and Delamont (1980, see section 2.3) had argued that in the 1970s and 1980s girls had been oriented towards the home and child-rearing and because of this they left school under-qualified and unprepared for paid work in the labour market. In comparison my findings indicated that girls believed that the labour market and the world of employment were going to be competitive and only the educated would truly succeed. They were fully aware that, should they leave school without any qualifications, they would be destined to work for the rest of their lives in badly paid, unskilled jobs. Therefore, my findings suggest that the attitudes of young girls had altered from those held by girls in the 1970s and 1980s and now they wanted to be as educated and qualified as possible. In addition, daughters wished to achieve more with their lives than their mothers had done. These results reflect and update the findings of Cullingford (1990, 2002, see section 2.3) and Keys and Fernandes (1993, see section 2.3) because now the main purposes of school/education were very utilitarian: to gain a formal education, to be prepared for future employment, to learn the skills needed for future life and to become socially capable.

Prior research had uncovered numerous reasons why girls remained within education once past the end of compulsory schooling. Sharpe (1976, see section 3.3.1) argued that girls remained at school for purely social reasons such as remaining with friends. Powney (1997), Jones (2003) and Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001), as discussed in section 3.3.1, argued that the decision to remain within education related to more society-wide factors such as the rise in unemployment during the last couple of decades, coupled with an occupational shift away from industry and manufacturing, the reduction in the availability of long-term

apprenticeships schemes, the changes in the financial support available by the Government for young people, the introduction of the Education Reform Act, the opening up of higher education to more young people, and changes in the expectations of society with regard to the value of education. Although these factors might have an impact upon young girls' decision-making there are other factors that play an important role. My findings demonstrate that girls are not persuaded about decisions by their peers (as opposed to Sharpe's findings) and that they do not progress to further education purely because they have rejected the alternative options. It was not the conditions of the local labour market and the opportunities that they were/were not afforded or any Government policy that influenced their decision-making.

Francis (2000a, as discussed in section 3.3.1) argued that further education was selected because girls placed a value upon education, that it would provide knowledge to aid decision-making, that it would assist in securing a good job and that qualifications would help in a competitive labour market, and when there were high levels of youth unemployment. My research findings concur with those of Francis but also suggest more. They show that girls have taken a step further from Francis' conclusions that girls thought qualifications would be 'an insurance or an investment' to 'combat any disadvantage they might face as a result of discrimination in the employment market'. The daughters, indeed, were considering long-term career prospects but were more focused with their aspirations. Further education was viewed as the 'stepping stone' to their desired career and they were pursuing qualifications and/or courses with good reason. Further education was the route to higher education or the pursuit of a desired career.

However, although daughters were keen to enter further education to acquire qualifications that were regarded as useful or to fulfil career aspirations, the subjects/courses that were selected still followed a highly traditional, gendered pattern (favouring the arts, languages and social sciences) that could lead to entry into professions that were related to the female identified sector of the labour market. This is evidence of a continuing, worrying pattern that concurs with the research findings of Mitsos and Browne (1998) and Marks and Houston (op. cit, see section 3.3.1.1) because, as they argued, educational attainment influences access to the labour market and the opportunities within it.

With regard to the attitudes and beliefs held amongst girls/young women my research findings contradict the findings of Walkerdine et al (2001, see section 3.3.2) who had argued that the progression to higher education was different for girls from working-class families compared with girls from middle-class families. Walkerdine et al had portrayed working-class girls as having negative attitudes about education and not wanting to be like their parents, that they had wanted to improve on their parents' lives and it was this desire that had motivated them regarding higher education. The daughters in my sample, irrespective of socio-economic background, had been very positive about education and their relationships with their mothers. The main motivation for succeeding in education now was because they knew that being better qualified benefited them more as individuals. They were self-interested because they wished to pursue careers and satisfy themselves as independent women by being self-fulfilled in all areas of employment.

For daughters, higher education was viewed as the pathway to achieving career goals and, like further education, was seen as a 'stepping stone' to fulfilling future aspirations and being successful. Thus, my results reflect those of Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (op. cit, as discussed in section 3.3.2) who argued that girls were clearly aware that higher education would help them achieve economic enhancement, increased social status, a better lifestyle and standard of living. My research findings also update previous research studies because they present evidence about how daughters demonstrated a belief in 'delayed gratification' – they postponed entry into the labour market so that when they did finally enter it equipped with academic/vocational qualifications they would be better positioned to secure employment with preferential pay and prospects. They were 'investing in the future' rather than seeking employment at 16 in order to 'live for the moment'. They demonstrated that they acknowledged a clear link between academic achievement and success in future working lives. Like Sharpe (1994) who claimed that girls now had "a greater sense of the equal importance of women, and their own individuality and independence" (see section 3.2.2) the daughters in my sample wanted to reach self-actualisation of their goals and because of this they were focused, ambitious and determined to achieve self-realization.

Girls/young women were now prepared to consider a far wider range of occupations than was reported in studies in the 1970s and early 1980s (Oakley, 1974; Rauta and Hunt, 1975; Sharpe, 1976; see section 4.1). Francis (2002, see section 4.1) argued that girls were now more willing to consider jobs traditionally performed by boys and my research findings support this. However, as discussed by Arnot et al (1999, see section 4.1) that the number of girls choosing such jobs was still limited as the

majority tended to pursue occupations associated with feminine roles, the results of my research reflect such findings. Such occupations were those that were linked to 'women's work' and where the majority of employees were females and also where income levels and prospects were poor and restricted. Warrington and Younger (2000, see section 4.3.1) had pointed out that, because of the values and assumptions of a patriarchal society, the areas of the labour market dominated by women will continue to be undervalued in 'pay, status and position'. Although the daughters were considering an increased diversity of choice and greater aspiration with regard to their future occupations there was still a tendency for them to select caring or creative jobs. And, therefore, the role that gender played in girls' selection of occupations meant that it would affect their future position in the labour market, financial remuneration and standard of living.

Wilkinson and Mulgan (1995) and Arnot et al (1998; 1999, as discussed in section 3.2.2) had found girls to be very positive about the future, confident about their prospects and keen to translate educational achievements into success at work. My research findings support this and it was because of this positivity and confidence that daughters were prepared to work hard to gain academic/vocational qualifications. They believed they had the potential to succeed, that they were educationally equipped to secure well-paid, managerial positions and that the world of work was open to women. They felt that there was an abundance of careers potentially appropriate for them and this was demonstrated in the great diversity in their aspirations. My findings thus contradict those of Furlong (1993, see section 4.1) who argued that girls kept job aspirations low and considered only local job opportunities for girls with similar social backgrounds and educational experiences.

Instead my findings complement those of Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (op. cit, see section 4.1) who found that girls had an increased interest in jobs of a professional nature.

However, daughters believed that society still favoured men and that gender discrimination still occurred within the workplace and this occurred partly because of society's perception about job roles – beliefs that certain jobs were for women and certain jobs were for men – and that people were still channelled into gender appropriate jobs. They believed that entering non-traditional occupations might encounter prejudice. My research findings, thus, concur with those of Francis (2000a) and Tinklin et al (2005, as discussed in section 4.3.2) that young women believe in the principles of equal opportunities but believe that discrimination, real or perceived, still occurs within the workplace.

Arnot et al (1999, see section 4.3.3) had demonstrated that girls now acknowledged an awareness of the growing status and earning power of women within industry and society and how they were able to have successful careers and my research findings support this argument. Francis (2000a, see section 3.2.2) argued that girls saw their chosen careers as reflecting their identity rather than just being something they did before they got married and she attributed this to equal opportunities programmes and the numbers of women participating and succeeding in the labour market who became role models for younger girls. In addition to these factors, my research findings demonstrated the importance to girls/young women of the role of the media, an awareness of the increasing divorce rate and increased number of lone-parent families headed by a woman. Due to all of these factors daughters wished to be

highly qualified. They did not mention motherhood (or living with someone) but instead focused upon their career and what they hoped they would be achieving. These findings are very similar to those of Lees (1993, see section 3.2.2) but whereas she claimed that daughters wished to postpone marriage and motherhood because they acknowledged their own mother's experiences and lives and little autonomy, the daughters in my sample talked about delaying marriage and motherhood because they wished to establish themselves in a career first and to become fulfilled employment-wise. This was a conscious decision and it was the realisation of their own goals that was important and it is this finding that builds upon the findings of Lees.

Marks and Houston (op. cit, as discussed in section 3.2.2) had discovered that although young girls originally had strong intentions to pursue a career their future plans were influenced by the expectation of having to combine work with motherhood. My research findings are comparable as the daughters in my sample had ambitions and goals but, even after having gained further educational qualifications, and in some cases higher educational qualifications, were prepared to interrupt their plans for motherhood. However, my findings suggest that motherhood was not viewed as the end of a promising career, merely an interruption, and there was no perceived conflict – most daughters seemed quite happy and willing to give up work temporarily for family commitments. They did foresee a return to work after children although the majority put employment second to domestic responsibility and were not prepared to contemplate non-maternal childcare. They assumed that they would be able to have a family and a career and could have both without sacrificing the quality of either. I would concur with Warrington and Younger (op. cit, see section

4.3.1) who believed that women having career breaks would be welcomed by men, because as radical feminists would argue, within a patriarchal society, if women leave the workplace on a temporary basis they have less economic independence and it also allows men to proceed with their careers with limited female competition.

Although my research findings support those of Ex and Janssens (1998, see section 2.1) that girls/young women are now beginning to hold more non-traditional and egalitarian attitudes about motherhood and women's role, my findings suggest that major changes in childcare duties between the sexes are unlikely to happen in the near future. The daughters in my sample desired to remain at home with young children and then return to the workplace at a later date to pursue their career. Thus, whilst it could be argued that perhaps this intention of theirs is a future, and strong, form of feminism where a woman will stay at home having an idyllic and halcyon time with her children for several years and then return to her former workplace position and proceed to progress with her career, (and the woman that returns swiftly to the workplace, with her baby in full-time nursery, pursuing a rather weak form of feminism) I would argue that ever accelerating technology and the rapidly changing work environment within a patriarchal society is not assisting women who wish to take time out to have children because they are being left behind whilst their former male colleagues are advancing.

Mann (op. cit, see section 2.1) argued that mother-daughter relationships assisted girls' educational achievement by emphasising independence, providing emotional support and influencing girls' values and my research findings support this. It is during the examination of the mother-daughter relationship where it is possible to

witness how the 'private' has become 'public' because the mothers were very evident at home (it was their domain) and in 'personal' domestic relationships but they were rigorously supporting their daughters' engagement in the very 'public' sphere of education.

Whereas Walkerdine et al (op, cit, as discussed in section 2.3.1) had argued that it was middle-class parents that were prepared to push their children to achieve and maintain a high academic performance my research findings showed that it was all mothers, not just middle-class ones. Whilst my results did concur with those of Walkerdine et al that mothers emphasised how education could 'fulfil potential, give more choices and provide possibilities for the future' my findings displayed how mothers had taken this further. They did not want their daughters to take on any job, they wanted their daughters to have careers that gave job satisfaction and helped them to be independent and fulfilled women. In addition, my research findings complement those of Quinn (op. cit, see section 2.1) who argued that mothers pass on important messages about learning and knowledge to their daughters and that these messages have a powerful influence.

Feminist theory within the field of education had revealed how in-school experiences, and gendered opinions regarding subjects being considered male or female, had greatly affected the educational experiences of girls and ultimately their career choices. Spender (op cit, as discussed in section 2.2) had shown how women's experiences had been ignored and were considered insignificant, and how girls at school were 'invisible'. She had also argued that the curriculum was biased towards boys and that gender inequality occurred in classrooms, and, along with Stanworth

(op. cit) and Mahony (op. cit), she claimed that girls were frequently marginalized in the classroom. My research findings revealed that, although girls may still talk of gender discrimination within the classroom, study academic subjects and pursue occupations linked to the traditional feminine role, they listened to their mothers about the importance of learning, knowledge, and the benefits of education and therefore became engaged in their learning, sought a worthwhile education and set themselves realistic, yet challenging, targets for the future. By listening to their mother's messages, via the mother-daughter relationship, daughters' educational experiences and career aspirations were influenced greatly, more so than via any school-pupil relationship, peer relationship or father-daughter relationship.

The above conclusions have arisen from my research which was conducted and written from a feminist perspective and like many feminist researchers this research was started from my own personal standpoint. Similarly to Farganis (1994, see section 5.1) I have shown how gender has affected the lives of these women and girls (my mothers and daughters). Their everyday unique experiences of school, the education system and, where applicable, the workplace have been described, analysed and interpreted. And although these life experiences may be interpreted differently I agree with Spender (1983, see section 5.2) that they are all equally valid.

I felt that it was very important that women moved from the 'private' sphere into the 'public' sphere so that their voices could be heard. It is important that what women are talking about privately is brought into the 'public' domain so that others may hear what is being said, be sensitive to these voices, listen to, and acknowledge women's experiences. Therefore, I investigated areas that would have been considered

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'private' such as attitudes at home and, in particular, the crucial mother-daughter relationship. I also looked at the area of education which is in the 'public' sphere. This meant I was able to examine the 'private' in the home and the 'public' of education and attempt to make it 'almost one' during the investigation. Based in feminist theory I have, thus, considered how women's involvement in paid employment has impacted upon their lives rather than just looking at the 'private' sphere of the home where childcare tasks and duties are performed. In my discussions of the 'private' and 'public' spheres I have acknowledged that they will take a gendered form because mothers have a particular "social positioning within the private domestic sphere of home and family life" (Ribbens and Edwards, 1998, quoted in section 5.2). Alongside David (2003, see section 5.1) I have argued that women are very involved in educational activities and these have become public and that they need to be considered adjacent to their experiences within their personal family lives to show how there is a changing relationship between the two. In the same manner as Ribbens and Edwards (op. cit, see section 5.1) I have attempted to examine women's 'private' and 'personal' worlds and then make them 'public' for an academic audience. I have explored aspects that occur within the domestic and 'private' lives of mothers and their daughters (the decision-making that occurs within the mother-daughter relationship with regard to education) and have listened, recorded, understood, interpreted and re/presented my respondents' voices. I have taken their private relationships, experiences and understandings and have brought them into the public domain.

The conclusions detailed above have obviously been constrained by my general approach to the research. I have considered the issue of how mothers construct and

deal with the 'public' and 'private' boundaries in their own daughters' lives with regard to their education. What has struck me as significant in the research findings is based on my standing as a feminist and my interpretations are based upon who I am as a woman.

I am aware that the final text is my interpretation of the accounts given by my respondents. I endeavoured to hear and to re/present faithfully the voices of the mothers and daughters but everything is based on my prior assumptions and expectations and I acknowledge that my particular values and life experiences will have affected the interpretation of the research findings. And like all feminists I have reflected critically upon my own experiences and how these have affected the research and my view of the knowledge produced. I join the feminist writing that considers the processes underlying the retention of research respondents' voices whilst undertaking data analysis, interpretation and writing up. And, I believe, at the final presentation of the research findings, I have taken the knowledge discovered from a domestic and personal setting (the respondents' 'private' sphere) and brought it accurately into the 'public' domain of academic research. I would argue that my results stand alongside social feminist writing because I, too, have taken the personal/political one step further by stating that the 'personal' matters incredibly. It is the bonding with children, via the mother-daughter relationship, that is essential, and this is conducted in the 'personal' sphere (away from the distractions of the 'public' workplace) and it is important that this is recognised.

My research findings are based on a substantial study (120 depth-interviews) and I would claim that they detail a true reflection of UK society at that time and a true

reflection of the attitudes of a body of women/girls. As sixty mothers and sixty daughters held these attitudes they have to be a reflection, and representative, of UK society in some respect. I appreciate that I cannot generalise and argue that all of the female population of UK society held these attitudes but I can certainly claim that part of it did. There has been much academic research on minorities in society e.g. young girls who have babies before they have reached school leaving age and academically successful 'high fliers' but I have written about the majority in society – real girls and their real lives and their relationships with their mothers (a group of people that has had less written about them). By doing this I have clearly shown how attitudes have changed over one generation and how the mother-daughter relationship is a crucial element in the way young girls' educational experiences and career aspirations are created and affected.

8.2   Recommendations For Further Research

The research that has been undertaken into the topic of "mothers' educational experiences and their effects on their daughters' educational experiences and career aspirations" has highlighted areas that could be considered for further research. Firstly, it must be acknowledged that the research that was undertaken was a 'snapshot in time'. It revealed the attitudes and opinions of sixty mother-daughter pairings at the end of the twentieth century and, in particular, the beliefs of young teenage girls. As times change and new developments and policies are introduced into the sphere of education so, too, will the experiences change of each generation of school children. In order to discover such changes in attitudes and opinions then research would need to be undertaken with a new generation of school girls and their mothers. In addition, it must be noted that by being a 'snapshot in time' the

research reflected the attitudes and opinions held within UK society at that time. There was a surge of media interest in the phenomena of 'Girl Power' and 'career women' and it seemed as if men's role in women's lives was almost expendable. Research conducted at another time would reflect the mood of society and the current vogues and trends occurring then.

As further research would be conducted in the twenty-first century then there could be a greater likelihood that the mothers who were interviewed had themselves undertaken further education and, possibly, higher education. Middle-class girls who undertook their education in the late 1970s and early 1980s were far more likely to have attended university than the mothers in my research. Mothers having had first hand experience of higher education could possibly affect their daughters to a greater degree. In my research it was found that the influence of mothers ended at entry into further education so it would be interesting to observe whether this was still the case or whether mothers' influence proceeded to higher education. University educated mothers may very well have a different outlook on a woman's role in the workplace and how working women should combine motherhood.

Another area to consider would be research with mothers that had not been educated within the UK as this may have considerable impact upon their daughters' experiences and attitudes. In addition, interesting results may also be discovered with mothers that had returned to education later in life such as those that had attended night-school classes to gain academic qualifications.

Further research would be able to identify where daughters developed their attitudes about it being a woman's primary role to undertake childcare duties and responsibilities. Although I have concluded that mothers played a very important role due to their own actions and that schools played almost no part, (schools were seen to actively encourage girls to consider employment and attitudes about girls only 'getting married and having babies' were virtually non-existent) it is society's role in attitude development that needs to be examined further.

Another factor to consider is that my research was based entirely on the mother-daughter relationship and the role of the father on his daughter's educational experiences and career aspirations was only touched upon lightly. Further research would be able to examine the impact and influence of the father upon educational decision-making.

An area to consider for further research could be research of a longitudinal nature because this would be able to investigate whether daughters did achieve their career aspirations and did, indeed, enter the occupations of their choice. Revisiting the sixty daughters from my research after 10 and 20 years had elapsed from the time of the original interviews would reveal actual career realisations and also determine events surrounding motherhood.

During the last three decades sociologists have researched into the experiences of girls at school, their academic aspirations and future career aspirations. As girls' educational attainment improved significantly at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century so, too, their attitudes and values changed

including those relating to education. My research has added to the findings of contemporary literature by evidencing how girls' attitudes towards education and future careers have changed over one generation, when compared with the attitudes held by their mothers, and how mothers have greatly influenced their daughters' educational decision-making processes and career aspirations through the very important 'private' and 'personal' mother-daughter relationship.

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APPENDIX A

MOTHER-DAUGHTER PAIRINGS

	MOTHER	SECONDARY SCHOOL	DAUGHTER	AGE	SECONDARY SCHOOL
1	Alex	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Danielle	17	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
2	Angie	Single-sex Secondary modern	Tara	19	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
3	Barbara	Single-sex Comprehensive	Jasmine	15	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
4	Bernadette	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Kerry	16	Single-sex Private school
5	Beryl	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Sadie	15	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
6	Bev	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Carrie	18	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
7	Bonnie	Single-sex Secondary modern	Tabitha	20	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
8	Brenda	Single-sex Secondary modern	Charlotte	20	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
9	Cherry	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Laura	17	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
10	Chrissie	Single-sex Grammar school	Holly	18	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
11	Colleen	Single-sex Grammar school	Kirsty	19	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
12	Constance	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Isabelle	16	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
13	Dee	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Georgia	23	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
14	Delia	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Fay	21	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
15	Diane	Single-sex Grammar school	Jaime	17	Mixed-sex Comprehensive

	MOTHER	SECONDARY SCHOOL	DAUGHTER	AGE	SECONDARY SCHOOL
16	Dorothy	Single-sex Private school	Molly	16	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
17	Eileen	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Tanya	21	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
18	Ellen	Single-sex Private school	Jeanette	18	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
19	Estelle	Mixed-sex Secondary modern	Olivia	16	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
20	Fern	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Nadia	19	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
21	Fiona	Single-sex Private school	Alicia	20	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
22	Florence	Single-sex Secondary modern	Tess	23	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
23	Ginny	Single-sex Grammar school	Jade	16	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
24	Grace	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Gabrielle	17	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
25	Gwen	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Leigh	16	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
26	Hazel	Mixed-sex Secondary modern	Bethany	17	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
27	Heather	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Cassie	16	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
28	Hilary	Single-sex Grammar school	Josie	18	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
29	Ingrid	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Emma	20	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
30	Irene	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Esme	20	Mixed-sex Comprehensive

	MOTHER	SECONDARY SCHOOL	DAUGHTER	AGE	SECONDARY SCHOOL
31	Janice	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Megan	16	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
32	Jo	Mixed-sex Secondary modern	Annabel	20	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
33	Joan	Single-sex Grammar school	Tammy	18	Single-sex Private school
34	June	Single-sex Private school	Gemma	21	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
35	Karen	Single-sex Secondary modern	Chelcie	22	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
36	Lesley	Single-sex Private school	Kelly	17	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
37	Lilian	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Nina	18	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
38	Mabel	Single-sex Secondary modern	Courtney	21	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
39	Marilyn	Mixed-sex Secondary modern	Imogen	17	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
40	Marlene	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Nicole	20	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
41	Muriel	Mixed-sex Secondary modern	Toni	22	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
42	Nancy	Single-sex Secondary modern	Thea	23	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
43	Pauline	Mixed-sex Secondary modern	Ella	20	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
44	Penny	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Evie	19	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
45	Phyllis	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Melissa	18	Mixed-sex Comprehensive

	MOTHER	SECONDARY SCHOOL	DAUGHTER	AGE	SECONDARY SCHOOL
46	Pippa	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Kesia	17	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
47	Pru	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Simone	14	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
48	Ruth	Mixed-sex Secondary modern	Dawn	19	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
49	Sandy	Single-sex Technical School	Lottie	22	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
50	Selina	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Paige	20	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
51	Sharon	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Justine	19	Single-sex Private school
52	Shirley	Single-sex Private school	Daisy	17	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
53	Steph	Mixed-sex Secondary modern	Cindy	22	Single-sex Private school
54	Sylvia	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Leanne	23	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
55	Tina	Mixed-sex Secondary modern	Sophie	18	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
56	Trish	Mixed-sex Grammar school	Phoebe	18	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
57	Tracy	Single-sex Private school	Natasha	16	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
58	Val	Mixed-sex Comprehensive	Jenna	21	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
59	Violet	Single-sex Grammar school	Kirsten	16	Mixed-sex Comprehensive
60	Yvonne	Single-sex Private school	April	15	Single-sex Private school